

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Themes in Bertolucci's Films

Family

Luna The key to this film is the chaotic relationship between Joe and his mother, Caterina. Lonely and introverted, Joe seeks friendship in drugs and girlfriends. Later, after learning that the man he thought was his father is only a step-father, he seeks his real father. Mother-son and father-son bonds are the twin drivers of the plot.

Stealing Beauty In this film, too, a young person searches for her father. Lucy suspects that he is a man whom her mother knew in Tuscany, where she goes to find him. In the end, Lucy discovers that a sculptor, Ian, is her father, which provides a heartfelt ending to the story.

Me and You In this late film, Bertolucci explores the dynamics of the relationship between step-siblings. The two characters, Lorenzo and Olivia, are designed to be as different as possible: boy and girl, aged 14 and 25, with different mothers. They have different histories and don't remember the same things about their childhoods, which makes their slowly developing rapport more poignant.

The Sheltering Sky The family relationship explored in this film is a ten-year marriage between Port and Kit, two Americans who decided to leave New York in search of adventure. Although Port and Kit snap at each other, they are sometimes gentle and caring. That is the tragedy of the story: despite their best efforts, they don't seem to know how to love each other.

The Grim Reaper The bleak atmosphere of this early film is expressed in the loneliness of its characters. During the course of all the vignettes, we do not meet a single happily married couple or a harmonious relationship. The prostitute lives alone. Natalino, the murderer, is a loner. The soldier pesters women on the street. Bustelli cheats on his fiancé, who mistreats him anyway. The gay man is by himself. Luciano and his friends spend their time disrupting lovers, and the only pair they encounter argue among themselves about what to do with Luciano when he is caught.