

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Themes in Bertolucci's Films

Appearance vs Reality

The Last Emperor At the heart of this complex epic story is the search for historical truth, the attempt to disentangle truth from memory, prejudice and political ideology. Everyone seeks it, and views it from their own perspective, whether ideological or personal. But no one seems to know what it is, not even the director, who wisely did not assume an omniscient point of view in telling the story. A good example is Pu Yi's re-education in a prison. The Communist prison governor makes a speech, in which he says, 'The only way to change is to discover the truth and look at it in the face.' The re-education programme includes new history books, documentary film, interrogations, summoning witnesses and, most important, the prisoners writing their own biographies.

Before the Revolution A similar conflict between official ideology, of the Communist Party, and social reality is a theme in *Before the Revolution*. Fabrizio is an enthusiastic consumer of the party's slogans and doctrines, but they do not help him navigate the dilemmas he meets in his personal life. As a result, he abandons the party and returns to his bourgeois upbringing.