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DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

Luca Bigazzi a jeho kinematografie:

analýza stylu kamery a svícení

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Cinematography

MASTER'S THESIS

The cinematography of Luca Bigazzi:
an analysis of his camera work and lighting style

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Thesis advisor: Ervin Sanders

Examiner: Marek Jicha

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Declaration

I declare that I have prepared my Bachelor's Thesis/Master's Thesis, Dissertation independently on the following topic:

The cinematography of Luca Bigazzi: an analysis of his camera work and lighting style

under the expert guidance of my thesis advisor and with the use of the cited literature and sources.

Prague, date:

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Abstrakt

Diplomová práce se zabývá tvorbou Lucy Bigazziho, jednoho z nejdůležitějších současných italských kameramanů. Analýza jeho filmů ukazuje, jakým způsobem svými úvahami o kinematografii a jedinečným vizuálním stylem ovlivnil spolupracovníky, i italský film v posledních 30 letech.

Abstract

This research looks at the work of Luca Bigazzi, one of nowadays most important Italian cinematographer. Through an analysis of his films it will be shown how his personal ideas about cinema and unique visual style influenced his collaborators and more in general the Italian cinema of the last thirty years.

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I. Introduction

A. Intention of the Thesis: identify the cinematographer's themes and influences to see how his visual style has developed, looking at his light and camera techniques

The following thesis aims to analyze Luca Bigazzi's most prominent films, starting from the independent low-budget projects of the early 80s up until the fruitful collaboration with Paolo Sorrentino, which will span for more than a decade bringing him a number of awards and worldwide recognition. This research will illustrate his distinctive visual style along with his unique ideas about cinema.

It is important for this dissertation to notice three aspects of Bigazzi's career: first of all he never studied cinematography in any film school and started out not as a cinematographer but as script supervisor for commercials, secondly he believes that films must have a political or social purpose and thirdly he often describes his own approach to light and camera as mystical¹.

Bigazzi's first steps in the filmmaking industry are in an opposite direction compared to his ambitions, in fact at the beginning of his career he was working as a script supervisor in many commercials shot in Milan between the late 70s and the early 80s. However, he always had an interest for photography and he remembers his first years in the industry as shallow, boring and uninteresting. In an interview he gave two reasons explaining his dislike toward the world of commercials: he saw many directors of photography lighting faces or scenes with the only purpose to sell a product, something that was completely against his ideas of cinema, and also he said

¹ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 610-612 p.

of himself to be the worst script supervisor that the industry had ever seen, making the Italian commercials of the 70s-80s full of continuity mistakes². Luckily in 1983 a young director, Silvio Soldini, came to Bigazzi and proposed him to shoot a short film. That was the starting point of his career.

The study of Bigazzi's cinematography will cover also his involvement in the Italian political scene of the late 70s. This aspect is extremely important to understand Bigazzi's choices not only in terms of script and stories to tell, but also in terms of lighting and camera. In fact Bigazzi is known to have refused international, big budget productions in favour of smaller independent films even in the latest years of his career, even after winning an Oscar. His decisions trace back to the time he was an active member of the political fights happening in Italy, he always thought about the movies he was doing that they had the duty to tell something about society and to take a clear position regarding the issues present in the story. This political approach to the films influences also the technical aspect of his cinematography, as he declared in a interview:

“What I said before, about my political formation, I believe explains many things. I had an idea of cinema as a necessary and powerful tool not only for telling stories but also for revealing the hidden aspects of society. We live in a world where an ideological mantle covers the real structure of the society. Just as it digs into individual stories, cinema can dig into the social dimension. Stories - assuming you are interested in telling them - should not be stifled or rendered unnatural by the photographic artifice. We have to pretend that the lights used to tell a true story have a plausibility, a credibility. I'm not talking about the realism of the stories. Even the light of a science fiction film can be plausible, that is, having its hidden nature; even

² Esposito, Andrea. *Intervista a Luca Bigazzi: Dagli esordi a "La grande bellezza"* 29 September 2016 <https://www.fanpage.it/intervista-a-luca-bigazzi-dagli-esordi-a-la-grande-bellezza-video/>

in that case it is possible and must be avoided that the viewer perceives it as a photographic artifice. The viewer must feel natural what he is looking at. If we believe that cinema can be an instrument for the struggle for the transformation of society, and I believe it, we must make sure that the lights have an adequacy to the framed subject and a plausibility for the spectator. Making a film without additional sources of light, discovering that it is possible to photograph without lighting artifices was a great achievement for me, personal and artistic, if not even political. It is a freedom, a heritage that I carry within me and that allows me elasticity and flexibility towards the needs of directors and stories; in contrast to the rigidity that I certainly would have acquired more if I had attended any film school.³

These words explain clearly Bigazzi's beliefs on cinema and photography, arts that are interweaved with a social and political aspect. From this second point, his understanding of cinema as a political tool, it is easier to point out also his mystical approach to lighting and camera. Mystical is a misleading word if taken out of the context where Bigazzi uses it, but it helps in giving an idea of his practical way to photograph a film. He doesn't want to use many lights, they could give away the realism of the picture, and at the same time he prefers to give space and freedom to both actors and camera to move around the scene and create the composition that best represents the intentions of the director. In this regard Bigazzi speaks about mysticism: in his opinion a wrong light doesn't exist, it's only a matter of slightly move the camera or the actor to achieve the correct image for the story. This is the core of Bigazzi's cinematography, as it will be shown and analyzed throughout this thesis: for him the most important part of the film is the story and the messages that carries

³ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 213-235 p.

within, the photography comes after the director's vision and the actors performance and its only purpose is to serve them and translate in images the essence of the film.

“In a work of art the form cannot be separated from the content: as enchanting as a show, it must be understood as the bearer of a meaning that goes beyond visual value.”⁴

⁴ Panofsky, Erwin. *Meaning in the visual arts*. 1st ed. Chicago, US. University of Chicago Press. 2008

B. Biographical data on Luca Bigazzi

Luca Bigazzi was born in Milan on December 9th 1958. After high school he wanted to pursue his political vocation by studying History at the University of Milan, but he couldn't do that since he was living alone and he had to find a job to pay for himself. He started working in the advertising field in 1977 as a script supervisor, but at the same time he cultivated his passion for photography.⁵ His debut as director of photography took place in 1983 with Silvio Soldini with the film *Paesaggio con Figure – Landscape with Figures*, presented at the Locarno Film Festival. Little by little he devotes himself more and more to the cinema, abandoning the advertising field. The partnership with Soldini continued for many other films and with him he won the David di Donatello for best director of photography in 1999 with the film *Pane e Tulipani - Bread and Tulips*. In 1994 he was called by Gianni Amelio for *L'America* with whom he won a David di Donatello and a Nastro d'argento. Also in 1999 for *Così ridevano – So They Laughed* by Gianni Amelio and Francesca Archibugi's *L'albero delle Pere – The Pear Tree* wins the Osella d'oro in Venice. He also collaborated with many other important Italian directors such as Mario Martone, Giuseppe Piccioni, Cipri and Maresco.

The turning point of his career happened in 2004, when the producer Nicola Giuliano forced him to work with Paolo Sorrentino on the *Le Conseguenze dell'Amore - The Consequences of Love*, with which he won the Nastro d'argento in 2005. After that he started to take care of the photography of the next Paolo Sorrentino's films starting from then *L'Amico di Famiglia - The Family Friend* (2006), *Il Divo* (2008), *This Must Be the Place* (2011), with which he won the David di Donatello for best director

⁵ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 305-307 p.

of photography in 2012, *La grande bellezza – The Great Beauty* (2013), winner of the Oscar for best foreign film in 2014, and finally *Youth - La giovinezza* (2015), best film at the European Film Awards in 2015. In 2016 Bigazzi and Sorrentino started working on the tv series *The Young Pope* and their last movie *Them - Loro* (2018) is going to be presented as the Italian entry at the Oscars in 2019.⁶

⁶ Istituto Luce. *Luca Bigazzi - direttori della fotografia - filmografie*. 4 August 2018
<http://www.filmitalia.org/p.aspx?t=filmography&si=4&l=it&did=8371>

II. Early Films

A. Experience with 16mm: *Paesaggio con Figure (Landscape with Figures; 1983)*: Analysis of film's technical choices and style

Paesaggio con Figure represents the cinematographic debut of Luca Bigazzi, along with his former high school classmate and future collaborator, the director Silvio Soldini. After two years spent in New York studying directing, Silvio Soldini comes back to Milan and starts working as a translator for American TV series, hoping one day to work as a film director. He doesn't know anybody working in the Italian film industry, not in Milan nor in Rome, and finally he decides to contact Luca Bigazzi to shoot his first project in Italy. The two of them know each other since the time of high school, when they constantly went to Milan's small and independent cinemas to watch documentaries, low-budget films and Italian features of the late 70s and early 80s. Moreover Silvio Soldini thought that the most obvious choice was to ask to Luca Bigazzi to be the cinematographer his first film because he always had a passion for photography, from high school throughout the long period spent working as an assistant director for commercials in Milan.

The collaboration started in the winter of 1981, a moment of the year when Milan is grey cold and dense of fog, with a noir script that was supposed to be shot on Super 8 and last around 30 minutes⁷.

⁷ "We thought it would be a 30 minutes short film, but it slowly grew to 70 minutes (Silvio Soldini)."

Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 1911-1914 p.

After a while, at the completion of the script, they decided that the project was best suited for 16mm black and white and in the autumn of 1982 they started shooting. They had no budget at all for the film: the crew was composed by friends, the lights were taken from their houses, the camera (an ARRI 16mm) was rented for the modest price of 30€ (15.000 lire) a day and the shootings were happening in the weekends or in the nights after work.

In the words of Silvio Soldini:

“I remember that one morning, [Luca Bigazzi] was going back home at 6 AM with his car after two nights of shooting and one day of work, when he fell asleep and bumped into a parked car; luckily he was driving slowly.”⁸

In the summer of 1983 *Paesaggio con Figure* was selected by the Locarno Film Festival and with this recognition both Silvio Soldini and Luca Bigazzi started to gain national exposure as director and director of photography respectively.

Bigazzi didn't attend any cinema school before shooting *Paesaggio con Figure* and the only sets he was on prior to this film were commercials, where the job of the director of photography was lighting to sell a product and not to tell a story⁹. Even if with many difficulties and anxieties Luca Bigazzi managed to successfully shoot his first feature film, especially thanks to the new technological advancements of the early 80s.

⁸ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 1905-1906 p.

⁹ Esposito, Andrea. *Intervista a Luca Bigazzi: Dagli esordi a "La grande bellezza"* 29 September 2016 <https://www.fanpage.it/intervista-a-luca-bigazzi-dagli-esordi-a-la-grande-bellezza-video/>

“If I did it [*Paesaggio con Figure*] it was because my debut, in the early 80s, was in a moment when important technical evolutions were happening. More sensitive emulsions and lighter cameras started to be produced. Thus there was the possibility, for whom like me just started to work in the cinema industry, to shoot without the heavy technical equipment – camera and lighting wise – that was normally necessary during the 70s. Now not only the 60 ASA film was on the market, but also the first colour films rated 320 ASA. The black and white film was 200 ASA and me and Silvio [Soldini] decided to pushed it one stop in order to use it at 400 ASA, in this way we were able to expose with normal household lights, neon tubes and generally any light that could be found in a flat. *The technical issues became artistic problems, they became choices.* It was not necessary anymore to employ a big, enormous variety of lights, it was not necessary to utilize huge generators and gigantic crews. It was possible to shoot a film with friends and few means.¹⁰”

The most interesting part of this passage is that the technical improvements of the time made it possible for a technical choice to coincide with an artistic one. This connection and close relation between available technology and narrative needs of the film will become the trademark and one of the most praised virtues of Luca Bigazzi, as it will be shown again further on.

¹⁰ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi.* 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 328-335 p.

B. Experiments with B&W filters on color film: *Morte di un Matematico Napoletano* (Death of a Neapolitan Mathematician; 1991): Analysis of film's technical choices and style

After his debut in 1983 Luca Bigazzi worked with other young directors in independent low-budget films and also with Silvio Soldini in other two features. All of this was happening in Milan in the late 80s, thanks to group of amateur and independent filmmakers called *Indigena*. Bigazzi throughout his whole career worked with many directors at their debut film, he always said to prefer an interesting script and a motivated director rather than a commercial big budget film. His belief finds another confirmation in 1991, when he starts working side by side with the newcomer theater director Mario Martone at his first feature *Morte di un Matematico Napoletano*. Curiously enough this is also the cinematographic debut of the actor Toni Servillo, with whom Bigazzi collaborates until now. However this is not a case, Bigazzi continuously highlights the strong connection that is built between director of photography, camera operator (he does both) and actor during the shooting of a film. He talks about *symbiosis* when describing the complicity between camera and actors and he believes that the camera should be free to move along with them in the space to help them to forget about it and allow them to dig deeper in their performance. This is another important quality of Luca Bigazzi, the understanding of the central role of the actor which affects his whole system of lighting and camera. This point will return later in the analysis of his films.

Also *Morte di un Matematico Napoletano* defines the beginning of the second phase of Bigazzi's career: from the amateur films of the 80s in Milan to the more ambitious

productions of the 90s in Naples. The change of city is significant and directly influences the aesthetic choice of Bigazzi's photography. From the grey and foggy Milan to the colourful and chaotic Naples. *Morte di un Matematico Napoletano* was a period movie, set in the Naples of 1950s. Since the budget was still very low for a feature film Bigazzi and Martone decided to use a yellow filter for B&W film on the colour stock. The film laboratory in Rome, where the film was supposed to be processed, criticised heavily the choice of Bigazzi and didn't want any responsibility with the final result of the developing process. They strongly suggested Bigazzi to wait for the post-production before applying the yellow tint, but he was against this method because in his opinion the effect would be "*too artificial and dangerous for the blacks.*"¹¹ In the end the determination of Bigazzi prevailed and the laboratory accepted to develop the film. Later in the same year the film went to Venice Film Festival and once again Bigazzi's experimental choices proved him right: the film won the Silver Lion and the Jury Prize.

However it would be misleading to believe that the visual concept in Bigazzi's movies, along with the decisions about the cinematography, are only taken by him. On the other hand he always talks to the director and would never take a decision without consulting him first, in his words:

"I never did and I would never made a decision about photography if it is not shared first with the director. I can intervene in first person on the set, in some decisions to

¹¹ "I have always thought that the effects done in post-production are too artificial and dangerous for the blacks."

take during the shooting of a single scene, but never beforehand, when the director conceives the visual structure of the film.¹²”

This extract perfectly shows Bigazzi’s conception of collaboration between director and director of photography: the task of the director is to create the visual style of the film and the task of the cinematographer is to translate his images onto the film. A director of photography, Bigazzi said, is never responsible for a good picture, which is the result of a combined effort of director, actors, set designer, costume designer and finally cinematographer, but is always responsible for a bad one, for not being able to translate correctly the vision of the director¹³.

“I am only the responsible of the visual translation of the film, of its visual coherence. I am not the one who have to perform complex tasks: the actors have to. I only have to do a good photography in the shortest possible amount of time. I believe that this is the heart of my work.¹⁴”

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Bigazzi’s idea of cinematography is to leave as much time and space possible to the director and to the actors in order to improve their performance and consequentially the final result of the film. He finds upsetting to move the light set-up more than once while shooting a scene and prefers to create a 360° lighting environment to leave both the camera and the actors free to move and improvise. For this exact reason Bigazzi not only prefers to imitate

¹² Sparti, Rosario. *Intervista a Luca Bigazzi, direttore della fotografia di Paolo Sorrentino*. 18 February 2017. <http://www.minimaetmoralia.it/wp/luca-bigazzi-paolo-sorrentino/>

¹³ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 907 p.

¹⁴ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 569-571 p.

the natural light of a space without employing a big number of different lights, which would only slow down and at the same time make the light more artificial, but also thinks that the more time is spent on lighting and placing the camera the less will be left for the actors, whom he believes are the central part of a film. He hates when a director or an actor has to wait for lighting or camera adjustments, ideally he always tries to light a scene once and then move the camera around to find the best angle for light and actors.

III. Collaboration with Paolo Sorrentino

A. *Le Conseguenze dell'Amore* (*The Consequences of Love*; 2004):

analysis of film's visual style and innovations

2004 signs the start of the fruitful collaboration between Luca Bigazzi and Paolo Sorrentino. While Bigazzi had quite a long career behind him, since he started in 1983 and continued steadily until then, Sorrentino started much later. As a matter of fact Sorrentino's first feature was released only in 2001 and *Le Conseguenze dell'Amore* was just his second film as a director. Regardless of the experience gap between them, Sorrentino had a very precise idea of the film and since the first meetings him and Bigazzi started disagreeing and arguing. Especially during the first day of location scouting, when asked to light as silhouettes the characters on the roof of a building for both frontal and reverse shot, Bigazzi firmly told that was not possible to light in such a way, or at least it would have took a very long time to position again the lights, but Sorrentino was not convinced and said that it could have been done quickly and easily, so they started fighting and by the end of the day no one of them was considering to work with the other anymore. Only thanks to the intervention of the producer Nicola Giuliano, the two of them kept working together on the film¹⁵. This is how the episode is described by Bigazzi:

¹⁵ “[*Le Conseguenze dell'Amore*] was my first collaboration with Paolo [Sorrentino], and during the first day of location scouting we argued so much that I decided to not shoot the film with him and that he did not want to see me anymore. It was the producer Nicola Giuliano to forced us to work together.”

Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 1295-1299 p.

“It was a shot where the gangsters who had to interrogate Toni [Servillo] got – with their automobile in a car elevator – on the roof of a hotel in Naples. Paolo [Sorrentino] requested me to light them as silhouettes and I thought that even if it was a difficult task it was possible, since it was a huge terrace in between two neighbouring buildings. But then, with a second camera position 180° opposite from the first shot, I was asked to light them again as silhouettes. I told him that we would have had to move all the lights that we had already placed. He wanted to do it anyway, and I answered him that he should have done it himself. Actually it was possible to do it in an easier way than I had originally thought. It was my mistake to exaggerate the difficulties of that shot. He was right. Paolo [Sorrentino] always puts you in front of challenging tasks, apparently unsolvable. Thanks to him I discovered that everything can be done, both for what concerns lighting and camera¹⁶.”

To explain the problem even further, the shot Bigazzi is talking about takes place during the night, therefore it wasn't possible to use natural light but only artificial sources.

After this problem they kept working on the film together and other challenging shots were designed and executed. It is interesting for this analysis to focus on one shot of the film: a continuous dolly movement that shows the main character decision of breaking up his routines and rules, even if this will lead directly to his death.



¹⁶ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 1304-1310 p.



As it can be seen the shot finishes as it starts. The movement in between consists in a dolly going forward and a jib arm moving up, to which is attached a rotating head. Once on top of the character's head the camera rotates and shows his face, while he starts to lay down (images 2,3,4). Then at the end of the rotation the camera moves back on the dolly until the starting point, where the character finally stands up and returns in his first position. Not only the movement is complicated and the focus extremely hard to keep, but also it has to be considered that this shot took place in a real location, which was initially considered too small by Bigazzi, but in the end was selected anyway after the director continued to defend it firmly¹⁷.

“ [...] during the location scouting of the *Le Conseguenze dell'Amore*, Paolo Sorrentino chose for the main character Servillo/Di Girolamo a minuscule hotel room at the fourth floor, without balconies, basically impossible to light without a cherry picker (which we could have never afford). Once inside it Luca looked at me in a way that seemed to say: “Why did you bring me here, what can I do?”. But when the

¹⁷Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 1766 p.

director told him how good and how perfect it looked, and after walking in circles like a lion in a cage, he simply said: "Alright". With a complex system of tubes anchored to the ceiling and pieces of wood outside the window, he solved the problem.¹⁸ "

Not only the two shoots mentioned above are a good example of the complexity and the sophisticated visual style of the movie, but also another one will help to show how much Bigazzi's cinematography was influenced by the meeting with Paolo Sorrentino. It's a shoot that takes place towards the end of the movie, when Di Girolamo is escorted by the gangsters to the interrogation room, and it considered by Bigazzi himself as the most difficult of his career¹⁹. It's an 8 minutes handheld shot where the camera starts in Di Girolamo's room, tracks backward in the corridor and enters in a small elevator, where there was only space for the actor and Bigazzi so the 1AC was forced to take another one²⁰. Then, once arrived to the ground floor, the camera moves into the hotel's hall and leaves the character with a short pan to start a point of view, in that moment all the extras were looking directly in the lens. Afterwards the camera walks down a staircase, crosses another corridor, turns 180° to enter in a congress room and finally turns again 180° to stop on the close up of Di Girolamo. From this moment the interrogation scene started: the camera was still rolling, but Bigazzi was sitting on an apple box²¹. The sequence was shoot on an ARRI 535 with a 300m magazine to be able to shoot for 8 minutes, however the final

¹⁸ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 1780 p.

¹⁹ Silvestri, Roberto. *Loro e "lui" sotto la lente di Luca Bigazzi*. 28 April 2018 <https://www.alfabeta2.it/2018/04/29/loro-e-lui-sotto-la-lente-di-luca-bigazzi/>

²⁰ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 762 p.

²¹ Esposito, Andrea. *Intervista a Luca Bigazzi: Dagli esordi a "La grande bellezza"* 29 September 2016 <https://www.fanpage.it/intervista-a-luca-bigazzi-dagli-esordi-a-la-grande-bellezza-video/>

weight of the camera was huge and Bigazzi complains about how the last part of the scene shows some shakiness due to the physical difficulties of the shoot²² .

As it can be seen the beginning of the collaboration between Bigazzi and Sorrentino, even if with some turbulences, shows that the two of them were able to come up with a new and unique visual style for the film. Bigazzi always said that for him the most important thing is to serve the director, as the camera should serve the film, and this principle applied also for the cooperation with Sorrentino, which after *Le Conseguenze dell'Amore* kept going for many other movies.

“All the visual ideas of a film come almost always from the directors. Then it is the job of the cinematographer and the other technicians to realize them. I’m guilty if they cannot be done or are done wrongfully, if I can’t translate in images what the director wants, but at the same time I have no merit in the beauty of those images. My duty merges with the work of the director.”²³

²² Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 785 p.

²³ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 907-909 p.

B. *Il Divo* (2008): the third film with Sorrentino and the development of a common style

Il Divo is about the life both private and public of the Italian politician and seven times prime minister Giulio Andreotti, who was a central figure during the terrorist attacks and political instability of the 70s, 80s and early 90s. The film and its visual style are inspired by the newspapers and archive footage of the time as well as the direct experience of Bigazzi and Sorrentino, who even met Andreotti in person during the preparation of movie.

To further contextualize the setting and the atmosphere of those years it must be said that in Italy, from the student demonstrations of the '68, started a long period of political struggle between the Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democracy), the old party that ruled since the end of World War II, and new socialist parties that were trying to renovate the rigid Italian social structure. Moreover violence and fights broke out between the most extremist wings of the political spectrum, which led directly to a period of terrorist attacks known as Anni di Piombo (Years of Lead). To assure some kind of stability and public safety, in those years many civilians were killed and curfews were common, Andreotti started to strike alliances among the different parts of the parliament and also with the terrorist groups and Italian organized crime. Of course a direct involvement of Andreotti with both terrorists and crime bosses was never proven, but many trials were held and many journalists and judges were killed before or during the investigations.

Given the ominous and mysterious figure of Andreotti, Sorrentino wanted to reproduce with darkness the places where the prime minister used to work and live.

“Andreotti’s office, in the daylight scenes, had to have the blinds closed and the artificial practical lights on. It was an idea of Paolo (Sorrentino) and it guided my lighting style for the film. The idea came from a meeting he had with Andreotti in his office, dark and enveloped in darkness even during the day. The reality of things, places and faces is and must be the source of continuous inspiration for whom tries to do, with passion and awareness, our job. The observation of reality gives advices that not even the most fervid imagination could come up with.²⁴”

Bigazzi accepted the proposal of Sorrentino and started to research and study the real places and the newspapers from the time in which Andreotti ruled. As he himself admits, the photography of a film comes firstly from the encounter and discussion with the director, but then comes also from the personal and cultural competences of an individual.

“My life, my artistic and musical knowledge. I treasure of everything I experience, I could never face life with indifference or distraction. I have to understand what is the ‘sign’, visual and photographic, of the times I’m in to. If I didn’t live personally in the years of Andreotti I couldn’t have known how to light a film such as *Il Divo*.²⁵”

Those times and their protagonists were grim and sinister. This is reflected in the visual approach and lighting of *Il Divo*, which is characterized by dark interiors and deep, menacing shadows.

“These choice made things much more simple, because I had to put less light, and not ‘more light’. I only had to understand how and where to put it, that ‘small amount

²⁴ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 611-615 p.

²⁵ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 620-622 p.

of light'. In this way everything was simpler and faster, according to the modest budget of the film, a budget which was not worthy of a work of such importance and quality. On the other hand an easy lighting set up was in agreement with the needs of the script and this gave to the director the chance to do all the shoots he wanted, quickly and freely. I don't want other credits, also because the principal choices are made by the director.²⁶”

As it can be seen in the following pictures Bigazzi choose a strong light-to-shadow ratio as well as an illumination the mainly comes from above, helping to draw shadows on the faces of the characters. Besides, the choice of having lights on the ceiling was not a novelty for Bigazzi who in more than one occasion affirms that this method leaves to the actors, the director and the camera free to move and frame in the best way possible for the story.



²⁶ Ballatore, Sofia. *Luci sulla città, dalle tre ciminiere al Beltrade: La Milano di Luca Bigazzi*. Il Giorno. 11 February 2018. <https://www.ilgiorno.it/milano/cronaca/intervista-luca-bigazzi-1.3719180>



In the above stills can be noted the repetitive use of top and spot light, which leaves the characters surrounded by darkness. The shadows are everywhere in the film, from the themes of the story to the actual frames, represented sometimes as silhouettes and sometimes as dark objects obstructing the foreground and limiting the visible space around the actors. The effect is of entrapment and oppression, feelings that were very common and diffused among people in those years.



It is clear that both in the intentions of the authors and in the visual style of the film, the shadows are the visual representation of the secrets and lies that imbued the house and government of Andreotti. Furthermore the almost complete absence of

backlight drowns the characters in the shadows around them, merging them with the darkness they're living with.

It is important to notice that even if this was quite an important project for both Sorrentino and Bigazzi, with a numerous crew and famous actors, the budget was nonetheless small for such a production: around 6.7 millions of euro. Besides the amount of locations in which the movie had to be shoot was extremely demanding and therefore the number of shots that had to be completed per day was affected by these factors²⁷, making it a real challenge for Bigazzi. According to the situation Bigazzi, as he did before in his movies, decided to go for simple light set ups that would leave freedom to the actors and the director not only in terms of framing and space, but also in terms of rehearsals and time. In fact a shorter time for placing the lights resulted in more time for the actors to play their characters and having most of the lights on the ceiling allowed for the camera to frame at 360°. In this way the director could get the performance he wanted from the actors and the cinematographer was able to move quickly between the shots and therefore between different locations. The photography of Bigazzi is characterized by his respect for actors and director, he prefers to have an easier lighting if that can allow them to work better and more efficiently.

“Given the enormous amount of shots and different sequences that had to be done in a single day, it was not possible to linger for hours on a single shot. It's a great lesson. It's nice to work quickly. The concentration is undeniably higher. And then it is in the imperfection that resides the magic of Paolo's (Sorrentino) cinema, and of authors' cinema in general. [...] I have learnt to settle down also for respect of the

²⁷ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 803-808 p.

crew, the actors, who are often victims of exhausting pauses, and to treasure the mistakes.²⁸”

Bigazzi merges practical and technical limitations with artistic reasons²⁹, trying to accurately translate in images the film and creating the light that best suits it.

“[...] the more I work and the more I realize that the aim of a film is not to have a beautiful light or frames, but actors that play at their best, because they feel at ease. Any artifice the actors ask must be granted. I don't care about lights or colours, but about the actors, that they can express themselves at one hundred per cent.³⁰”

The film was shot on Fujifilm Eterna 500T 8573 with Arricam LT, 435 and 535. The lenses used are Zeiss Ultra Prime.

²⁸ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 1364-1369 p.

²⁹ “[...] he doesn't distinguish between the technical factor and the artistic reason”

Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 1834 p.

³⁰ Ballatore, Sofia. *Luci sulla città, dalle tre ciminiere al Beltrade: La Milano di Luca Bigazzi*. Il Giorno. 11 February 2018. <https://www.ilgiorno.it/milano/cronaca/intervista-luca-bigazzi-1.3719180>

C. *La Grande Bellezza* (*The Great Beauty*; 2013): use of colours and camera movement

La Grande Bellezza is the fifth film that Bigazzi and Sorrentino shot together and it is mainly known because in 2014 it earned them an Oscar for best foreign film. It's a movie characterized by continuous camera movements and a precise colour dramaturgy: if in *Il Divo* the use of shadows had a dominant role, in *La Grande Bellezza* the colours have the same importance. Moreover the camera flies constantly throughout all the scenes, which is quite interesting for Bigazzi's style considering his distrust of the steady cam system. It is of course, as it has already been analyzed, a priority for Bigazzi to find the correct visual approach for a particular story and for *La Grande Bellezza* evidently it was the steady cam, but he always said to prefer the camera handheld and he only used the steady cam rarely. In *Le Conseguenze dell'Amore* is almost completely absent, replaced by the handheld camera and dolly shots, while in *Il Divo* appears more times but, in Bigazzi's words, "disguised as a dolly"³¹.

"I hate the steady cam, regardless of the fact that I don't know how to use it. It gives an impression of fake stability, it produces a floating effect that makes the viewer feeling as if it was in an aquarium. In my opinion the oscillation that makes 'imperfect' the handheld camera is much more natural than the alleged stability of a steady cam.

When the handheld camera succeeds to imitate the rhythm of the actor's walking, the effect is similar to a dolly, with realistic and natural oscillations, almost unnoticeable, similar to the human movement. Besides the steady cam is imprecise

³¹ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 728 p.

and requires a lot of space. The camera is meant to be operated with the eye in the viewfinder, while the steady cam operator has to inevitably see through a monitor, which prevents him, for example, to check the focus, one of the principal factors in the job of a operator. As a tool it disgust me. Of course if I had to walk on a staircase

I would like to take advantage of the comfort of a steady cam. Sometimes we decided to use it: *Il Divo*, *This Must Be the Place* and *Romanzo Criminale* are filled with sequences shot with that camera. The scene of the dancing party in the house of Cirino Pomicino in *Il Divo* is a long master shot done with the steady cam. In that case the operator Alex Brambilla did a perfect job, the ‘aquarium’ effect is not noticeable at all. Paolo (Sorrentino) wanted a high angle shot and we built a wooden platform on which the steady cam operator climbed up and then down, imitating a dolly. As you can see I don’t reject the steady cam, but in general I prefer to use the handheld camera, directly, and work with my eye on the viewfinder, as an old conservative...³²”

The comparison of two different steady cam sequences of *La Grande Bellezza* will help in defining this particular use of the camera movement and more in general the visual style of the film. In the first sequence takes place one of the many flashbacks about the main character, Jep Gambardella (Toni Servillo), who remembers parts of his childhood and adolescence while living the late years of his life as a failed writer and gossip journalist in Rome.

³² Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 718-730 p.

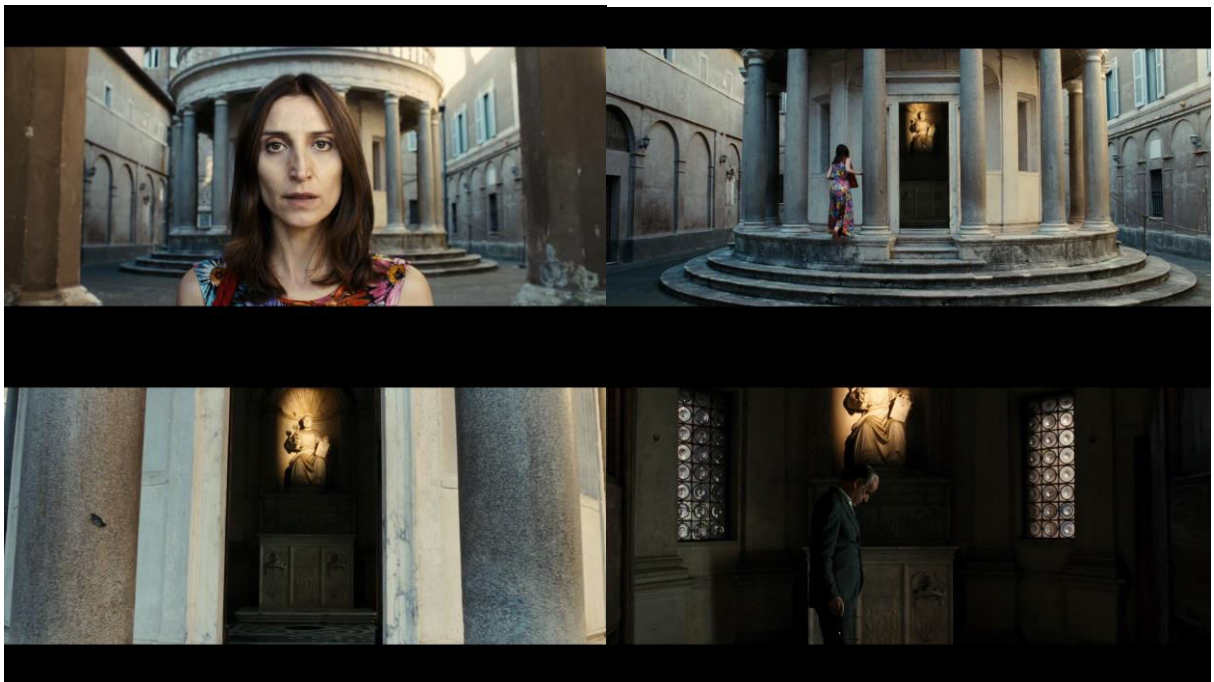


The above sequence starts on the roof of Jep Gambardella's flat, with the camera approaching him from the back after a 180° pan showing the sunset over Rome. The steady cam shot is cut when almost in a close up of Jep and continues seamlessly in the next shot, still on a steady cam, inside a garden. The camera moves on a gravel path towards a wall (images 2 and 3), only to stop in front of a nun (image 4) revealing that now it is a subjective point of view. Then another cut takes place moving back to an objective framing, where a kid is running in a similar path as the camera did before, maybe suggesting that the previous point of view could have been the one of the boy. But in the end another cut brings the camera even further back showing the nun, the boy and also a girl running in the garden and at this point is impossible to decide if it is an objective or a subjective frame, because it could be

either an objective one following the kid playing or another subjective of a third kid running behind them.

It can be seen how not only the steady cam is used to achieve shots that would be impossible to do with an handheld camera, but also to create a continuous stream of images that melt and fuse together resembling the fading memories of the main character, Jep Gambardella. Again Bigazzi seems to join technical aspects with artistic understanding of what the film needs and how it should be represented.

In the second steady cam sequence something similar happens, but this time is even more exaggerated and visible: in fact it's a single long shot without editing cuts, during which takes place a shift from subjective to objective point of view.



The shot opens with a close up of a woman talking directly to the camera, then she walks towards a small church and the steady cam follows her up until the moment when she leaves the frame and the camera alone enters in the church. At this point

the main character, Jep Gambardella, comes into the shot turning the subjective point of view, established at the beginning of the sequence, into an objective one.

This particularly evident narrative device aims to make the audience aware that they are witnessing the memories and thoughts of Jep Gambardella and not a faithful representation of reality³³. It is evident one more time how the visual style of the movie serves the intention of the story to portray the detached and abstract atmosphere of Rome's aristocracy along with the dreamlike life of its characters.

Given the fact that *La Grande Bellezza* is set nowadays in the extremely kitsch environment of Rome's celebrity parties, the colour palette is various and significantly wide, covering all the colours of the visible spectrum. However only few specific tones stand out throughout the film, especially a range of red-orange-yellow opposed to one of blue-cyan-green. As it can be noted in the next pictures the colours representing the present and the current life of Jep Gambardella are the warm ones, while the ones describing his past are cold.



³³ Ballatore, Sofia. *Luci sulla città, dalle tre ciminiere al Beltrade: La Milano di Luca Bigazzi*. Il Giorno. 11 February 2018. <https://www.ilgiorno.it/milano/cronaca/intervista-luca-bigazzi-1.3719180>

The colour scheme of the protagonist and the spaces around him always have a warm hue. As it happened on *// Divo*, Bigazzi keeps to match the characters with the surrounding around them in order to show the connection between their personality and places where they live. If in *// Divo* were the shadows to seal this relation, in *La Grande Bellezza* are the colours. In addition now Bigazzi can play with the chromatic contrast between them to enhance and further develop the story.



As it has been said before the colour palette belonging to the past of Jep Gambardella's life is different from the one representing his present, it's characterized by colder colours which absorb the entirety of the frame³⁴. Green at first to symbolize the childhood and the early years of his life and blue later to represent the adolescence and the first love of Jep: memories in direct opposition to his bleak present, both visually and colour wise.

³⁴ Ballatore, Sofia. *Luci sulla città, dalle tre ciminiere al Beltrade: La Milano di Luca Bigazzi*. Il Giorno. 11 February 2018. <https://www.ilgiorno.it/milano/cronaca/intervista-luca-bigazzi-1.3719180>

The film was shot on Kodak Vision3 500T 5219 with Arricam LT, 435, 535 and 535B. The lenses used were a combination of Zeiss Ultra Prime and Angenieux Optimo optics.

La Grande Bellezza was an important step for the collaboration between Sorrentino and Bigazzi and helped to strengthen their cooperation both on the narrative and visual aspect of filmmaking. On top of that winning the Oscar allowed them to have enough recognition to finally get a proper budget for their next film *Youth*.

D. *La Giovinezza (Youth; 2015): change to digital and HDR*

Youth is the first film of Sorrentino and Bigazzi which was shot on digital, to be more precise on RED Epic Weapon with Zeiss Ultra Prime. Although Bigazzi already shot a feature in digital, *Certified Copy* (2010) by Abbas Kiarostami on RED One, Sorrentino was very sceptical about it and didn't know how it could influence the image of the movie, on which he always wants to have complete control. Switching from a familiar medium as film to a new one like digital seemed to Sorrentino too much of a gamble, but Bigazzi managed to convince him and in the end he was pleased with the result.

Being this their sixth film together in a ten years long collaboration, meant that they knew exactly how to work with each other and what they wanted from a visual point of view for the film. This common understanding and complicity between them showed concretely during the shooting, when they had to frame or set a shot. As it has been said before, Bigazzi tries to light every time to give the maximum space to both actors and camera, while retaining a natural atmosphere according to the narrative needs of the movie. This method brings more freedom in terms of framing and camera movement, but reduces the available space for the lights. Now, for the first time, Sorrentino and Bigazzi can rely on the digital format to address this specific problem and to compromise between space and light. The Red Epic allowed them not only to shoot at 1600 ASA without noticeable noise, which would have not been possible when pushing a 500 ASA stock to 1000 ASA, but also to use the HDRx feature for the most complicated shots in terms of lighting. In this way they were able to shoot only with available or practical light, making the shooting faster and thus giving more time to actors and camera. Compared to the film, a medium described by

Bigazzi as heavy and slow, an invention of two centuries ago³⁵, the digital technology is lighter, faster and more versatile allowing for faster set ups and more shoots to be completed during one day.

“Nothing in the world could make me go back to working with traditional film stock. The freedom and rapidity that digital cinematography has granted us is a complete break with the methods of the past. When you imagine that we filmed 30 to 40 scenes per day with Paolo, using two cameras, often in 360° on every set, you can imagine to what extent digital cinematography has changed our lives. Compared with the last film we did together (*The Great Beauty*), I can tell you that I really felt the difference, be it in terms of exposure – we went from 500 ISO, pushed up to 1000 ISO with a lot of graininess, all the way to 1600 ISO with almost no interference – or in terms of shooting flexibility, especially thanks to HDR.³⁶”

It is in fact the HDRx feature that impressed the most Bigazzi, because it can record simultaneously two frames: one with the correct exposure and a second one darker of two to six stops. While the higher sensitivity of the camera allowed him to shoot night exteriors at 360° only using practical lights, the HDRx system gave him the possibility to shoot day interiors against a window without the use of extra lights that would compromise the integrity and realism of the environment. All together the digital format granted Sorrentino and Bigazzi to shoot quickly and more without compromising with camera angles or lighting positions.

³⁵ Esposito, Andrea. *Intervista a Luca Bigazzi: Dagli esordi a "La grande bellezza"* 29 September 2016 <https://www.fanpage.it/intervista-a-luca-bigazzi-dagli-esordi-a-la-grande-bellezza-video/>

³⁶ Reumont, François. *Cinematographer Luca Bigazzi discusses his work on Paolo Sorrentino's film "Youth". Luca Bigazzi falls for HDR.* AFC Cinema Association Française des directeurs de la photographie Cinématographique. 24 May 2015. <https://www.afcinema.com/Cinematographer-Luca-Bigazzi-discusses-his-work-on-Paolo-Sorrentino-s-film-Youth.html?lang=fr>

“Yes, I’m a fan of the Red Epic because it has this feature that doesn’t exist on other cameras. Indeed, it takes care of almost 80% of the lighting problems that I might run into on set, such as having to put gels the windows when shooting inside during the daytime or having to manage the excessive contrasts by re-lighting massively and struggling to keep it looking natural.

So I use very little lighting, and I still have enough flexibility in colour timing to keep the details on the faces or on sunbathed objects... What I like also about that feature is that you can activate it when you need it (it doesn’t have to be constantly activated), because as we know, having an extreme useful exposure range isn’t always necessary for a given image.³⁷”

Here are some examples of the scenes that were shoot either in extreme light conditions using HDRx or at night with 1600 ASA.



³⁷ Reumont, François. *Cinematographer Luca Bigazzi discusses his work on Paolo Sorrentino’s film “Youth”. Luca Bigazzi falls for HDR.* AFC Cinema Association Française des directeurs de la photographie Cinématographique. 24 May 2015. <https://www.afcinema.com/Cinematographer-Luca-Bigazzi-discusses-his-work-on-Paolo-Sorrentino-s-film-Youth.html?lang=fr>



As Bigazzi himself explains, the necessity to be able to cover a night scene (image 1) at 360° brought him to use only practical lights along with setting the RED sensor at 1600 ASA.

“For example, there is a party scene at night in the gardens of the hotel, with shots taken from all angles (360°). In order to successfully film it, I used a range of LEDs manufactured by the Italian brand Via Bizzuno. They aren’t designed for the cinema, they’re usually used for lighting buildings, and so I could put them inside of the frame.

Because Paolo and I were each operating a camera, we were often filming from all angles. At 1600 ISO, it worked very well.³⁸”

This is one of the most interesting and challenging night shots of the film both in terms of camera and lighting. Regarding the HDRx many remarkable shots can be

³⁸ Reumont, François. *Cinematographer Luca Bigazzi discusses his work on Paolo Sorrentino’s film “Youth”. Luca Bigazzi falls for HDR*. AFC Cinema Association Française des directeurs de la photographie Cinématographique. 24 May 2015. <https://www.afcinema.com/Cinematographer-Luca-Bigazzi-discusses-his-work-on-Paolo-Sorrentino-s-film-Youth.html?lang=fr>

brought to attention, as shown in images 5-6-7-8, but the most outstanding one happens during the final sequence of the film, when the main character Fred Ballinger (Michael Caine) performs for the last time with an orchestra.



The scene takes place in a concert hall and both musicians and audience are framed at the same time. Obviously the light difference between the audience and the orchestra is huge but, to further complicate the shot, the background of the stage is completely white thus creating another obstacle for the cinematographer that now has to expose for the darkness of the audience, the brightness of the musicians and the white wall behind them. Since the orchestra was forcefully back lit by the white background Bigazzi used again the HDRx feature to be able to retain details in the faces of the actors and in the meantime in the highlights.³⁹ Additionally, Bigazzi used the same light set up to expose the audience as well, according to his idea of lighting for the space to let the camera free and not for a particular shot or close up. Moreover throughout all the film and especially in this sequence there is a massive employment of steady cam and camera movement, which complicates the use of HDRx. In fact the HDRx feature records two frames, one correctly exposed and one underexposed, instead of a single one that can be merged in post to reproduce in the image a higher dynamic range (HDR) than the camera could normally do. Yet the two

³⁹ Laws, Zach. 'Youth' cinematographer Luca Bigazzi on accepting beauty of the Swiss Alps. 13 July 2016. <https://www.goldderby.com/article/2015/luca-bigazzi-interview-youth-cinematography-michael-caine-420681357/>

frames are not recorder simultaneously but sequentially and this can cause ghosting when the camera or a subject moves too quickly. However, as Bigazzi himself said:

“Honestly, I have never felt that sort of problem. Indeed, the film is fairly static, but there are still some movements, and the few scenes that involve them didn’t cause us any particular problems in postproduction.⁴⁰”

The movements his talking about form an important part of *Youth*, as they did before in his and Sorrentino’s previous films. In both a book⁴¹ and in a podcast interview he spoke about the necessity of the camera to move constantly to follow the actors, create new frames and change the angle of the light either before and during the same take⁴².

“One of the most beautiful things about Paolo and me is that we really change our minds continuously, because we don’t want to have fixed ideas about the look of the movie, or the way we’re going to shoot. We are influenced by the reality.⁴³”

The flexibility he requires from his department during the shooting is vastly shared by Sorrentino, which takes advantage of it to focus on the actors’ performance and complete more shots per day. In the last years the digital technology came to help them and Bigazzi learnt how to gain the most out of it.

⁴⁰ Reumont, François. *Cinematographer Luca Bigazzi discusses his work on Paolo Sorrentino’s film “Youth”. Luca Bigazzi falls for HDR*. AFC Cinema Association Française des directeurs de la photographie Cinématographique. 24 May 2015. <https://www.afcinema.com/Cinematographer-Luca-Bigazzi-discusses-his-work-on-Paolo-Sorrentino-s-film-Youth.html?lang=fr>

⁴¹ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012.

⁴² Laws, Zach. ‘Youth’ cinematographer Luca Bigazzi on accepting beauty of the Swiss Alps. 13 July 2016. <https://www.goldderby.com/article/2015/luca-bigazzi-interview-youth-cinematography-michael-caine-420681357/>

⁴³ Esposito, Andrea. *Intervista a Luca Bigazzi: Dagli esordi a “La grande bellezza”* 29 September 2016 <https://www.fanpage.it/intervista-a-luca-bigazzi-dagli-esordi-a-la-grande-bellezza-video/>

“The digital camera can support the same lenses and have the same color reproduction [of a film camera]. But the reading of the shadows is better. In the way I work, always close to under expose and with few lights, I often risk to get no details in the shadows. Whereas, thanks to digital technology, the blacks are rendered more precisely and accurately. The digital is what better adapts to my professional tendencies.⁴⁴”

This is one of the many reasons why Bigazzi is in favour of digital cinematography. Besides he also hopes that it will allow for small budget movies to be produced with the same quality of big budget ones. He says that is not necessary anymore to have huge lights and a numerous crew, because now it's possible to shoot a film with less and still ending up with a great result⁴⁵. With these ideas Bigazzi seems to express the same desires he had back in the time he started shooting, 1983, when the poverty of means and the lack of experience brought him to use instinctively only the light sources present in reality and the available technology, a black and white 16mm stock pushed from 200 to 400 ASA.

⁴⁴Reumont, François. *Cinematographer Luca Bigazzi discusses his work on Paolo Sorrentino's film "Youth". Luca Bigazzi falls for HDR*. AFC Cinema Association Française des directeurs de la photographie Cinématographique. 24 May 2015. <https://www.afcinema.com/Cinematographer-Luca-Bigazzi-discusses-his-work-on-Paolo-Sorrentino-s-film-Youth.html?lang=fr>

⁴⁵ Esposito, Andrea. *Intervista a Luca Bigazzi: Dagli esordi a "La grande bellezza"* 29 September 2016 <https://www.fanpage.it/intervista-a-luca-bigazzi-dagli-esordi-a-la-grande-bellezza-video/>

IV. Conclusion

A. Summary of Bigazzi's visual style, camera work and lighting: how the influences and themes of his early career guided his photographical development.

Throughout this thesis are outlined the tendencies and inspirations of Bigazzi's cinematography: his concern for visual realism and realistic light, his passionate belief in a political use of cinema and his respect for the story. All of these aspects come directly from the beginning of his career, when he was only a 'lucky amateur'⁴⁶ who had to improvise and adapt his photography in order to tell a story at its best. It is exactly from that moment that Bigazzi started to develop the idea, carried out and constantly improved throughout his cinematic experience, that visual realism and practical shooting should meet with technical advancement, therefore creating a cinematography where the technology serves and justifies the artistic choices of the director of photography.

“The technical issues became artistic problems, they became choices.”⁴⁷

Moreover, he often said about his way to light and shoot a scene that it has to adapt to the reality of the location and its light, to the work of the actors and also to the ideas of the director. Bigazzi calls his method mystical, that is flexible and able to accommodate to any situation he might encounter during a shooting, following what reality dictates to the film. He doesn't fight against a

⁴⁶ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 115 p.

⁴⁷ Silvestri, Roberto. *Loro e "lui" sotto la lente di Luca Bigazzi*. 28 April 2018
<https://www.alfabeta2.it/2018/04/29/loro-e-lui-sotto-la-lente-di-luca-bigazzi/>

location or a practical light source, he doesn't force the actors to hit the marks or to turn in a particular direction, he observes all of these things and then modify his photography to fit within the scene.

“Do you improvise on the set the shots and the lights or do you study them in advance, the night before?”

At first I often thought about the day before, or the month before, what I would do the next day, or the month after. Today I go on the set totally unprepared: once I understand the tone of the film, I refuse to think about what I will do the next day. I prefer that a minimum variation of each day influences the work of the day to come.

Films are constantly evolving, rebelling against our forecasts and our initial considerations, films have a development both in terms of photography and framing to which neither the director of photography nor the director can be prepared. This 'natural' evolution of the film must be followed, not opposed. If you think too rigidly about what you will do, you constrain the soul of the film, you risk to cause a head-on collision with its changing needs. Not to mention the contingencies that happen every day on the set and which must be taken into account [...] So my technical knowledge arrives and gets lost in a sensitive, mystical dimension (laughs). I trust my feelings, my moods, my impressions.⁴⁸”

Of course saying that Bigazzi comes on set completely unprepared is an exaggeration: he also admitted that at the beginning of his career he planned a lot and studied everything that could help him to do a good photography. In this final

⁴⁸ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 682-683p.

extract from his book-interview it can be identified exactly the core of Bigazzi's cinematographic belief:

“It is also true that at the beginning of my career I was preparing myself a lot, out of fear, before arriving on set ...

And until when did you keep doing it?

For the first ten films ... (laughs). Then at a certain point I began to trust that something would still come out. I started to rely on improvisation. And then, let's face it, if something goes wrong - unless there's a technical error like an out of focus shot or maybe an underexposure - no one will ever be able to tell you that the light is wrong: it may not be particularly in line with the rest of the film - that of the 'adequacy to the film' is my professional creed, as I said before - but if it is in focus and is correctly exposed, no light is 'wrong'. There is a kind of agnostic mysticism that guides me in life.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Spadafora, Alberto. *La luce necessaria. Conversazione con Luca Bigazzi*. 1st ed. Rome, Italy. Artdigiland Ltd, 2012. 1843-1848.

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