

# Marco Bellocchio's *Buongiorno, notte* and the Language of the Brigate Rosse

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## Synopsis

This essay investigates Marco Bellocchio's *Buongiorno, notte* (2003), a movie which exploits language and soundtrack to fictionalize and revisit the historical 1978 kidnapping and murder of the Christian Democrat President Aldo Moro by the 1970s Italian left terrorist group Brigate Rosse. As I demonstrate, Bellocchio relies greatly on the language and soundtrack of *Buongiorno, notte* to convey his negative response to the BR's kidnapping and murder of Moro, as well as to come to terms with his own political and cinematic past.

## Biography

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## Essay

Recent studies of terrorism have shed light on the role that words and rhetoric play in creating and perpetrating such a radically violent response and on the linguistic constructions of terrorism by some governments.<sup>i</sup> This essay investigates Marco Bellocchio's *Buongiorno, notte* (2003), a movie which exploits language and soundtrack to fictionalize and revisit the historical 1978 kidnapping and murder of the Christian Democrat President Aldo Moro (hereafter DC President) by the 1970s Italian left terrorist group Brigate Rosse (hereafter BR).<sup>ii</sup> Since his earliest films, Bellocchio has shown a deep interest in film sound.<sup>iii</sup> Movies such as *I pugni in tasca*, *Nel nome del padre*, *Il diavolo in corpo*, *Il principe di Homburg*, and *L'ora di religione* employ music, for instance, in significantly symbolic ways. In *Buongiorno, notte*, Bellocchio continues to explore the various artistic means available in film, using not only musical themes but also verbal sounds to convey his critical view of the BR.<sup>iv</sup>

In this essay, I discuss Bellocchio's use of language and sound in *Buongiorno, notte* in three sections. I begin by examining in detail the figurative value of the soundtrack and mise-en-scene of the movie's opening sequence, in which two terrorists are taken on a tour by a realtor of the apartment where Moro will be kept

captive. I then investigate the director's symbolic use of the terrorists' voice and words, as displayed in pivotal scenes, such as when the BR group members speak like robotic automatons after listening to a TV interview with a politician. Next, I consider Bellocchio's representation of the BR's relation to various media and written sources: television and newspapers, political treatises on the left, and letters written by Moro and by partisans condemned to death by Fascists. As I demonstrate, Bellocchio relies greatly on the language and soundtrack of *Buongiorno, notte* to convey his negative response to the BR's kidnapping and murder of Moro, as well as to come to terms with his own political and cinematic past.

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*Buongiorno, notte* begins with a panoramic shooting of the vacant, dark apartment where Moro will be kept captive for almost two months by a group of four BR members, Chiara, Ernesto, Mariano, and Primo. While the residence is being described from the outside by the voice of a realtor, the wandering camera shows the internal boundaries of the apartment, eventually stopping in front of the entry door. Once opened by the realtor, the door reveals two additional characters, the BR members Chiara and Ernesto, who silently follow the talkative man with rather inexpressive faces. As he speaks, the realtor unknowingly provides information about this apartment which indicates its suitability to serve as Moro's prison: its safety (there is a secured entry door), its practicality (a second entrance from the garage allows one to unload groceries directly into the kitchen), and its seclusion (the bushes in the yard help hide the building from the prying eyes of passers-by in the street).

If we analyze the use of the soundtrack in this opening sequence, we detect two distinct elements which reveal the onset of Bellocchio's disapproving take on the BR in the movie and his linguistic and acoustic manipulation of spectators. First, by presenting a panoramic shooting of a vacant and dark apartment, while a disembodied voice is coming from the outside, the director is not simply reiterating his thematic fondness for the house as a setting,<sup>v</sup> but he is also providing from the beginning a claustrophobic, disorienting perspective, preventing viewers from fully understanding the present situation and leading them, perhaps, to an eventual identification with Moro, who, imprisoned in this location, will also later hear voices without being able to connect them to a particular body.<sup>vi</sup> (The BR seem consequently to be presented from the film's opening as the enemy, the ones with whom not to associate.) Secondly, by starting the movie with a disembodied voice, the director is also drawing the spectators' attention to the two distinctive elements which make up a talking image, body and spoken words. Bellocchio then employs these components later in the film to comment on the behavior and actions of the BR, whose language, as will be shown in detail in the article's next section, is not connected to their body, and appears to be more a mechanic echoing of a bookish idiom learned from reading political treatises on the left, rather than an authentic reflection on reality coming from their own minds.

The terrorists' lack of spontaneity is an issue first raised in the last section of the film's opening sequence, which shows Chiara, Ernesto, and the realtor standing in front of a poster with the words *Hollywood Diner* written backwards from the viewer's perspective. This poster, featuring the pop culture icons of 1950s American cinema

Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, Elvis Presley, and Marlon Brando, was possibly inspired by the painting of Gottfried Helnwein called, significantly, *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* (which included Humphrey Bogart rather than Marlon Brando).<sup>vii</sup> The emphatic use made of this poster, which is one of the few pieces of furniture left in the apartment and which stands as background in the final shots of the opening sequence, exemplifies how Bellocchio blends the metapolitical and the metacinematic to communicate his critical message in *Buongiorno, notte*.

First of all, the director appears to adopt the *Hollywood Diner* poster as a symbol to devalue the terrorists—as represented here by Chiara and Ernesto—and consequently to avoid the potential fault of cinematically glamorizing the BR in his film. By perhaps alluding, through the poster, to the tragic fates and ephemeral broken dreams of celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, and Elvis Presley, the director not only hints at the eventual failure of the BR, who after Moro's murder became less and less visible in Italian society, but he seems to associate the terrorists with a kind of “vanity” analogous to the one displayed by such Hollywood personalities. The sort of “vanity” which I have in mind is that discussed by René Girard in *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* in his study of Proust's *The Past Recaptured*, where vanity, which is linked to the spirit of imitation, “makes us live a life turned away from ourselves” (59). The *Hollywood Diner* poster, therefore, might suggest that the terrorists are living a life of imitation which has erased any spontaneity in them.

The poster seems to serve additional purposes in *Buongiorno, notte*. By juxtaposing Chiara and Ernesto with such Hollywood celebrities, Bellocchio is introducing the concept of “spectacle” as a valuable hermeneutic tool for understanding the BR.<sup>viii</sup> We know that the behavior and language of some BR members (like Valerio Morucci for instance),<sup>ix</sup> were influenced by the western and film noir, and, as such, their conduct did not escape the contemporary model of society dominated by spectacle as described and critiqued by Guy Debord's *La société du spectacle* in 1967. According to Debord's first statement of that work, “In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.” In this light, the *Hollywood Diner* poster might emblematically criticize the BR's conformity to the dominant model of society (the one symbolized by capitalist Hollywood), and possibly suggest that Bellocchio is reproaching the BR for failing, as promised, to shape a new language for their contemporaries.<sup>x</sup>

The visual contrast between the sparkling stars of Hollywood and the gloomy and realistic protagonists Chiara and Ernesto has a notable precursor in a scene of Vittorio De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* (1948), where the main character Antonio Ricci, as part of his new job as a billposter, is attaching a poster of Hollywood actress Rita Hayworth. While De Sica's neorealist film places Antonio, who plays a “father,” next to a Hollywood poster—an image that critics have seen as drawing attention to the cinematic experience and as contrasting the world of Hollywood with the actual living conditions of 1950s' Italians<sup>xi</sup>—Bellocchio's film instead places Chiara and Ernesto, the grown-up “children” of that generation, in front of a comparable poster. This cinematic allusion might ironically suggest that “the children,” now adults, have betrayed that faith which had been earlier placed on them, that faith so well represented in neorealist films like *Ladri di biciclette* and Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (1945).<sup>xii</sup> The

*Hollywood Diner* poster therefore functions not only as a political statement against the terrorists' involvement with the *status quo*, but also as a cinematic contrast associating Bellocchio's work with that of earlier neorealist cineastes, going against the spectacular conventions of commercial cinema as they did, but at the same time going beyond the documentary and the neorealist practice of making a film seem real.<sup>xiii</sup> Instead, the director of *Buongiorno, notte* seems to attempt to accomplish what those represented by the protagonists of his movie did not do, to provide a new creative language, which is used to retell the 1978 Moro event differently, as a "compensation fantasy," pairing it with history in order to create a means to cope with such a traumatic experience.<sup>xiv</sup>

Bellocchio's creative cinematic version of events develops itself fully in the last sequences of *Buongiorno, notte*, in a dual finale. On the one hand, the film's preliminary ending enacts the killing of Aldo Moro, a closing supported by archival footage of the DC President's actual state funeral; and on the other hand, the very last sequence creates a kind of happy ending by following the creatively bizarre script written by the character Enzo Passoscuro (a sort of *alter ego* for Bellocchio),<sup>xv</sup> a budding writer and work colleague of Chiara who had fortuitously imagined the kidnapping of Moro in which the latter is eventually allowed to escape by a female terrorist. This fiction provides the ending which truly closes Bellocchio's movie, where the DC President is seen walking free early in the morning on the streets of Rome—a finale which sends a positive message to the audience, imagining and presenting as reality the possibility that one of the terrorists might have had enough humanity to prevent Moro's murder. Thus, through the character Chiara Bellocchio presents the model of a redeemed terrorist, a positive figure which allows the director to escape the danger of glamorizing the actual radicals who murdered Moro, and which provides him at the same time a way to respond to the traumatic event of Moro's kidnapping and murder while coming to terms with his own political and cinematic past, as will be explored in the article's final section.

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The film's opening sequence, where Chiara and Ernesto are apartment hunting, is followed by a scene with Chiara and another terrorist, Primo, who have relocated to the apartment and are watching the end of the year show with Enrico Montesano, broadcast on state television RAI. Bellocchio's editing, which leads the viewer from the *Hollywood Diner* poster to a television set framing a musical show of females performing the French dance *Can Can*, creates on the one side a continuum between the fictive glamour of Hollywood and of Italian TV, while on the other side it subtly mocks the terrorists' television taste, which appears to be opposed to their stern political ideology. The director subsequently moves the camera to shoot the faces of Chiara, who is now sleeping, and of Primo, who is reading a book while occasionally raising his eyes to watch TV. When midnight strikes, Chiara awakens from her nap and happily goes to the yard to enjoy the fireworks, while Primo, afraid she might be seen by their neighbors, picks her up and takes her hastily back into the apartment. (We later learn that Chiara had told her colleagues at work that she was going skiing.) The couple seems to enjoy a short moment of happiness when, once back into the apartment, they exchange an ambiguous kiss. It is not clear whether it is a friendly or intimate kiss, but the former is

more likely since there will be no more intimate exchanges between the two in the film. The director does not allow the terrorist protagonists to display real depth of feeling or intimacy between the sexes.

When we analyze the soundtrack of this second sequence of *Buongiorno, notte*, we realize that, much like the opening one where terrorists do not utter any word, this new series of shots offers an image of the BR members as relatively taciturn (and when they do talk in the apartment it is often in a low tone)<sup>xvi</sup>—an image which stands against the early political engagements of the historical BR with contemporary society (when they issued many documents and declarations), and which therefore further points to Bellocchio's self-conscious decision to portray the autumn days of the BR.<sup>xvii</sup> Indeed, the film generally represents the terrorists as passive, hinting in particular at their lack of communication by depicting them experiencing unidirectional interactions like reading books<sup>xviii</sup> and watching television.<sup>xix</sup> In *Buongiorno, notte*, television represents the main connection which terrorists have with external reality.<sup>xx</sup> (Although newspapers are also read by the BR members after Moro's kidnapping, their role is stressed less in the movie.) Through such television programs the audience of Bellocchio's film learns that it is January 1<sup>st</sup> of 1978, that days are passing by (night and dawn are signaled by the ending and opening broadcasting song of RAI), that Moro has been kidnapped by the BR, and that politicians do not want to accept the terrorists' demands. In this way, the director's predominant use of television (a medium which, as pointed out above, does not entail an active dialogue of the viewer with the material presented) comes to function as a major symbol of the relative isolation of the terrorists.

This critique of the BR as passive and non-communicative individuals is developed and further illustrated in *Buongiorno, notte* through figurative use of the terrorists' voice and vocabulary. As pointed out by Adriana Cavarero, the voice, which comes from a place that is outside of politics, is capable of revealing an individual's peculiarity and true identity (9). Playing with some such general idea, on several occasions Bellocchio portrays the terrorists of his film as robotic automatons, whose voice obsessively repeats a message memorized from the pages of some political essay,<sup>xxi</sup> revealing thus that they are themselves prisoners of their own ideology. For example, after listening to a TV interview with the DC Vice Secretary Giovanni Galloni, who calls the kidnapers assassins and criminals, Chiara, Ernesto, Mariano, and Primo react by fanatically repeating, "la classe operaia deve dirigere tutto, la classe operaia deve dirigere tutto" ("the working class must control everything, the working class must control everything"). In another instance, after Chiara becomes frightened by the many policemen seen at her work site, she climbs the stairs hastily, repeating compulsively, "mi dichiaro prigioniera politica, mi dichiaro prigioniera politica" ("I declare myself a political prisoner, I declare myself a political prisoner").

In addition to such symbolic use of the terrorists' voice, Bellocchio figuratively plays with the actual words of Moro's kidnapers. While Mariano is questioning the DC President, he adopts terms like "proletariato" ("proletariat") and "classe" ("class") which are clearly taken from the language of political treatises on the left. As Mariano tells Moro, "tu parli di 'gente,' noi parliamo di 'classi'" ("You speak of 'people,' we speak of 'classes'"). In this way Bellocchio underscores the divisive role of language in the fight between the BR and the *status quo*: any agreement between the two factions will be difficult to reach, since words have become a boundary or barrier

rather than a bridge. From this exchange one may conclude that the language of the terrorists is inflexibly bookish: it does not take into consideration the historical changes of contemporary Italy, and is thus incapable of communicating with the “gente” (“people”) whom Moro mentions in his interview with Mariano.<sup>xxii</sup>

To sum up, Bellocchio’s cinematic use of language and sound complements his employment of visual cues to suggest that the BR in the 1970s were not the active and innovative revolutionaries they believed themselves to be, but were simply “soldati” (“soldiers”), a characterization which Chiara utilizes in a conversation with Ernesto when the latter tells her he is tired of being a terrorist; they are soldiers who must blindly follow orders coming from above and strictly adhere to inflexible political theories. This motif is further developed by the director’s use of actual television programming, just before Moro is taken captive into the apartment: while Chiara is zapping through various channels she switches several times through one displaying a fight between *pupi* (armed marionettes from Sicilian folklore), figures which clearly allude to the secondary roles played by the four terrorists who kidnapped Moro. These BR members are just puppets manipulated by others. Later on, to appease Chiara’s dismay at the decision to kill Moro made by their superiors, Mariano asserts, “Per la vittoria del proletariato è lecito uccidere anche la propria madre. Quello che oggi sembra inconcepibile, assurdo, disumano è in realtà un atto eroico di annullamento supremo della realtà soggettiva, il massimo dell’umanità.”<sup>xxiii</sup> The radical and even nihilistic nature of such discourse speaks for itself. Mariano’s speech eloquently testifies to and further delineates Bellocchio’s criticism of 1970s BR, whose rhetorical use of language appears to have erased their true self, turning them into automatons and obscuring their own humanity.

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The abstract and bookish language employed to critically portray the terrorists of *Buongiorno, notte* is opposed to Moro’s correspondence with his family and to the private and intimate words of the letters written by others condemned to death which are read by Chiara from *Le lettere di condannati a morte della resistenza europea* (*Letters of Those Sentenced to Death from the European Resistance*).<sup>xxiv</sup> A key moment in the film occurs when Chiara connects her thoughts and visions about the martyrs of Fascism directly to the fate of Moro. After the DC President’s execution has been decided, when Roberto Herlitzka, the actor playing Moro in the film, speaks out in a voice-over his note to his wife Eleonora as Chiara reads it to herself, another audio track imposes on his voice that of another man, who is speaking out his last correspondence to a loved one before his execution by the Fascists. Moro’s letter states, “Amore mio, sentimi sempre con te e tienimi stretto. Bacia e carezza Fida, Dani, Luca, e tanto, tanto Luca.”<sup>xxv</sup> The partisan’s correspondence starts similarly: “Amore mio, domattina all’alba un plotone d’esecuzione della Guardia Repubblicana Fascista metterà fine ai miei giorni. Ciò che voglio dirti in punto di morte è che tu sei stata il mio primo, solo, ed unico amore, e che se fossi vissuto ti avrei chiesto in sposa e ti avrei fatta felice.”<sup>xxvi</sup> Here intimate and private words like “amore mio” (“my love”), “bacia” (“kiss”), “sposa” (bride”) stand against the abstract and rhetorical reasoning earlier displayed by Mariano in his questioning of Moro, when the terrorist had shown his lack

of interest in Moro as a private individual: the BR members were there to try him only as the representative of the Christian Democrats.<sup>xxvii</sup> Bellocchio's superimposition of the two voices of Moro and a young partisan, together with a series of alternating shots including Chiara reading Moro's letter; martyrs executed by Fascists,<sup>xxviii</sup> Mariano and his companions; and finally, Chiara again, now in tears, testify to an important moment in her "redemption." This scene of Chiara weeping will eventually lead her to act in the alternate ending of Bellocchio's film as Moro's liberator.<sup>xxix</sup>

Among the various reasons why Chiara becomes in the film the enactor of a humanistic vision, are the facts that she herself is the daughter of a partisan raised with a profound respect for the victims of the Resistance and that, being a female, she is by nature a potential mother, nearer to birth and creation than to death and annihilation. This last idea is developed throughout the film, starting from the point when Chiara's neighbor leaves an infant with her to babysit for a short time, just before Moro is brought to the apartment. While the coming of the infant prefigures Moro's arrival and speaks on one side of his innocence, on the other side the baby is there to underscore Chiara's repressed motherly instincts. The young female terrorist accepts the infant with reluctance and then symbolically abandons him in an awkward position on the sofa after Moro's arrival to the apartment, which suggests that Chiara has abandoned her female nature to become one of Moro's jailers. But the situation slowly changes. Chiara, who has more and more visions of the martyrs of Fascism, and who keeps on going to check on Moro as a mother might check on a child,<sup>xxx</sup> gradually regains touch with her humane and feminine instincts. And it is through this discovered motherhood and reconnection with her natural inner self that Chiara will finally be redeemed in the alternative ending of Bellocchio's film, the one which adheres to the fictional script written by Enzo.

In the first section of this essay, I pointed out that the film's second ending helps Bellocchio avoid problems of glamorizing or even sympathizing with the historical BR, since that ending implicitly criticizes their murder of Moro and opposes to their misdeed the action of a fictional terrorist who decides to prevent his execution. I also asserted that this final ending enables the director to come to terms with his own political and cinematic past. Other scholars, including Giancarlo Lombardi, Alan O'Leary, and Luisa Ceretto, have underlined the connection of *Buongiorno, notte* with Bellocchio's early days as a communist and with earlier cinematic decisions of his to portray individuals who revolt against their family.<sup>xxxi</sup> In *Buongiorno, notte*, Bellocchio appears to rewrite, in a sense, his political and cinematic past so as to accept the figure of "the father" through the character of Moro. (In fact, the film is dedicated to Bellocchio's father.)<sup>xxxii</sup> During his captivity, the DC President undergoes a metamorphosis balancing that of Chiara and is shown by the director as gradually detaching himself from his old "politichese bizantino" ("obscure political language") to be born a new man who speaks the language of the heart and becomes concerned about his role as a husband, father, and grandfather—a point made by Lombardi in "La passione secondo Marco Bellocchio: Gli ultimi giorni di Aldo Moro" (401).<sup>xxxiii</sup> Thus in *Buongiorno, notte* Bellocchio employs words and verbal sounds to provide a critique which addresses not only the 1970s BR, but also the politician Aldo Moro.

Finally, I would like to add that the reconnection to humanity which we see displayed in the characters of Chiara and Moro is made to happen, significantly, through a manipulation of Christian symbolism. In the first half of the movie, we learn that the

ideological extremism which has led a person like Mariano to join the BR had also earlier led him to fervently embrace Christianity for a while. As Mariano tells Moro, “Mi ricordo che da bambino ero talmente infervorato dalla religione che speravo di morire per andare in Paradiso il più presto possibile.”<sup>xxxiv</sup> Later in the film, Moro makes the connection between an archaic form of Christianity and the ideology followed by *brigatisti*: “In fondo la Sua è una religione come la mia. Anzi, è molto più severa. Per esempio disprezza il corpo più di quanto non facciamo noi cattolici. Un tempo il cristianesimo era così. Ma ora non più. L’ultima crociata è del 1270. L’ultima strega è stata bruciata in Svizzera alla fine del Settecento.”<sup>xxxv</sup> Finally, this connection between terrorism and religion is further exploited when the director places a crucifix in the BR bedroom, and when he includes a shot of Ernesto, Mariano, and Primo participating in a kind of “last supper” the night before Moro is murdered.

Diametrically opposed to such symbolic uses of Christianity, where that belief is, because of certain rigid and extreme tendencies, posited next to terrorism, are instead the transcendental rewritings observed in the characters of Moro and Chiara, who appear to display a humanized mystery of Incarnation. In relation to Chiara, Moro becomes first symbolic son and then father, while Chiara is for him first figurative mother and then daughter. (Moro resembles a father figure for Chiara when, in one of her visions, he leaves his room and goes to check on her as she sleeps.) While presenting two characters who positively change over the course of the film and manage to reconnect their voice to their natural self, Bellocchio (whose age has now led him to experience life as a father) seems to recognize that we cannot simply kill the father or the mother, as he had done in his earlier movies, since, at least in the particular case of *Buongiorno, notte*, the father is also the son, a kind of Christological symbolism which reaches its apotheosis in the film’s finale when Moro is portrayed as a sort of resurrected Christ.

Why Bellocchio, who has shown in the past no sympathy for the Catholic religion (as in *L’ora di religione*, 2002), has here adopted Christian imagery is perhaps somewhat puzzling. His choice appears to be relevant both to the film’s potential reception and to its subject matter. To some extent, in trying to come to terms with the traumatic kidnapping and murder of Moro, Bellocchio has decided to employ a sacrificial model which is familiar to his viewers.<sup>xxxvi</sup> A similar operation was adopted, for instance, by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*, where mythology and the classical world appear not only in the first *Cantica*, *Inferno*, but even in the third one, *Paradiso*, in order to provide terms of comparison for rendering certain ideas comprehensible to his Medieval readers, while at the same time supplying the poet with an authority against which he might compete. Indeed, as pointed out in the previous paragraph, Bellocchio both employs and rewrites Christian symbolism, presenting his viewers, for example, with an apparently new signification of the “Incarnation,” alluding to the humanistic co-presence in the bodies of Moro and Chiara of both father and son, or mother and daughter.

On the other hand, Bellocchio’s figurative use of Christian language is strongly connected to the film’s subject, a fact that the director has made clear in his introduction to the script, where he claimed that his “invented” Moro still retained certain “faithful” characteristics, such as his actual religious attitude and his moderate Democratic rhetoric.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The DC president was a devout Catholic and the letters to his family written while he was a prisoner display a considerable use of religious symbols,

through which Moro portrays himself as a sort of persecuted Christ, a figure of truth.<sup>xxxviii</sup> And the truth advocated in Bellocchio's portrayal of Moro in *Buongiorno, notte* is no longer modeled through the historical conspiracy theory—the investigative mode of other films about the event which flattens everything to the illusion of the possibility of presenting a coherent interpretation of historical facts<sup>xxxix</sup>—but rather structured through an innovative depiction of the “resurrection” of Moro, a victim of political expediency whose death “uncovers the stabilizing sacrificial mechanisms of political power” (Antonello 32). Bellocchio's last scene of Moro's “resurrection,” together with the preceding historical footage of the official mass with no casket of the deceased—a sequence which recalls his expressed wish to have a private funeral—testify to the director's decision to follow Moro's steps and use his body to replicate a pivotal time in history, that of the Passion and Resurrection. According to Girard's *The Scapegoat*, this moment, when Christ made through his resurrection his condition of scapegoat and innocence known, made humanity aware of its violent tendencies, and broke the cycle of the scapegoat mechanism which the scholar sees triggered each time that society is at risk (166). Moro's last walk outside the apartment, therefore, serves as a symbol of rebellion against the scapegoat mechanism, denouncing the use that politics has been making of the DC President and carving for Moro himself a moment of pride. To sum up, we may thus say that Christianity seems to undergo in *Buongiorno, notte* a humanizing process which is similar to the one undergone by the figures of Chiara and Moro: it is voided of rigid ideology and accepted for its humanistic value, connecting people with themselves and their peers, and exposing negative and corrupted structures in society.

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- <sup>i</sup> See, for instance, Philip Seib and Dana Janbek's *Global Terrorism and New Media: The Post Al-Qaeda Generation*; Lee Jarvis' *Times of Terror: Discourse, Temporality, and the War on Terror* (2009); and Adam Hodge and Chad Nilep's *Discourse, War on Terrorism* (2009).
- <sup>ii</sup> The film partially draws from *Il prigioniero* by Anna Laura Braghetti and Paola Tavella (1998), a novel which tells the story of terrorist Braghetti who went from the extra-parliamentary left to the very center of the *Brigate rosse*, becoming closely involved in the kidnapping and murder of DC President Moro.
- <sup>iii</sup> On this topic, Roberto Calabretto has pointed out that "Sin da *I pugni in tasca*, infatti, il regista si serve dell'universo sonoro in maniera atipica ed interessante, attribuendo alla musica funzioni estremamente rilevanti nel contesto narrativo cinematografico" (29). ("As a matter of fact, since *Fists in the Pocket*, the film director uses the sound universe in an atypical and interesting fashion, attributing to the music functions which are extremely relevant to the narrative context of the film." All translations in this article are mine.) Furthermore, in a conversation with Luisa Ceretto, Bellocchio himself testified to his particular interest in music by affirming that, as a pre-adolescent, before having voice problems, he had a passion for lyric songs, which he learnt and sang at times at home to family friends (25).
- <sup>iv</sup> Riccardo Giagni, the music composer and consultant for *Buongiorno, notte*, has described Bellocchio's soundtrack mastery, explaining that the director excels both in portraying the sound of images and in visualizing sound in his films: "un grande 'acustico dell'immagine' che sapeva essere anche un fantastico 'visivo del suono'" (Calabretto 57).
- <sup>v</sup> In "Un'idea di cinema," Sandro Bernardi refers to "the house" as one of the constant themes of Bellocchio's cinema (10).

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<sup>vi</sup> Ruth Glynn has suggested a similar identification between Moro and Bellocchio's audience, when she points out that the director's dominant use of a low-level fixed frame and of close-up or extreme close-up filming disorient spectators and facilitate their identification with the prisoner (70).

<sup>vii</sup> This *Hollywood Diner* poster is still widely sold, and seems to date to around the early 1990s, so that it was plausibly inspired by Gottfried Helnwein's 1984 painting *Boulevard of Broken Dreams*. Its title, which refers primarily to Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles, is also the title of various other paintings, films, songs, and even a biography of James Dean. Helnwein's painting is itself a copy of a notable 1942 painting by Edward Hopper of the same diner but with anonymous customers, characterized by nostalgia and realism.

<sup>viii</sup> In "Killing the Father: Politics and Intellectuals, Utopia and Disillusion," Antonio Tricomi has pointed out that "What should ... be emphasized most about the BR's form of insurrection is its intrinsic complicity with the society of the spectacle" (21).

<sup>ix</sup> "Morucci's vocabulary of insurgency is strongly influenced by his watching of films" (Tricomi 21).

<sup>x</sup> In this regard, Bellocchio's view is compatible with scholarship on the BR by contemporary critics and ex-terrorists like Enrico Fenzi. See Antonello's and O'Leary's *Imagining Terrorism* (2).

<sup>xi</sup> Peter Bondanella argued that the poster scene in *Ladri di biciclette* is a reminder that we are watching a film (86). Millicent Marcus has affirmed that it suggests "the marked contrast between commercial cinematic fantasies and the real survival problems besetting the Italian public" (57).

<sup>xii</sup> In *Ladri di biciclette*, Antonio's child Bruno shows himself on many occasions to be more mature than his father. In *Roma città aperta*, the film's finale, with a panning shot on children looking at the city of Rome after the priest has been shot, offers a ray of hope: it will depend on the children to change the future of the country.

<sup>xiii</sup> Marcus has emphasized De Sica's elaborate technical work to give the impression of poverty in his film, *Ladri di biciclette*, which is "a prime example of the self-concealing art that neorealists were required to practice in the pursuit of Rossellinian austerity" (57).

<sup>xiv</sup> After investigating *Buongiorno, notte* through the prism of trauma theory, Glynn suggests that "the fantastical elements of Bellocchio's film may be read as an exercise in psychological empowerment and victimized revisiting of the trauma of the *anni di piombo* in an attempt to win a victory over the perpetrators" (71).

<sup>xv</sup> In a later interview, Bellocchio has recognized the character Enzo Passoscuro as a sort of film double of himself (*Duel* 10).

<sup>xvi</sup> As pointed out by Patrizia Caproni, "Le voci delle persone, dei brigatisti all'interno dell'appartamento, sono sempre di un tono più basso rispetto ai suoni delle cose: della sveglia, della porta che si apre e che si chiude, del campanello, delle scarpe che rieccheggiano sul pavimento, della televisione che si fa duplicato di imagine." ("The characters' voices, the ones of the terrorists within the apartment, are always emitted at a lower volume in comparison to the sound of things: the alarm clock, the opening and closing door, the doorbell, the shoes echoing off the floor, the television which duplicates images") (50-51).

<sup>xvii</sup> "The terrorism of the left was extremely loquacious, involving the production of a vast quantity of documents and declarations, but it gradually gave itself over to a sort of communicative autism" (Antonello and O'Leary 2).

<sup>xviii</sup> The relation between the BR and books is underlined in *Buongiorno, notte*. We are often shown Chiara and Primo reading texts, Chiara herself works in a library, and the actual prison of Moro is build out of a bookshelf—symbolizing not only that what divides the BR and Moro is words, but also that what is associated with books is not necessarily all good.

<sup>xix</sup> This interpretation is also visually supported by the *Can Can* dance displayed on TV which opens the film's second sequence. Calabretto has recognized a pattern in Bellocchio's films where dancing highlights the boredom, solitude, and incommunicability of his protagonists; their mood is in direct contrast with the jovial one of music (40). Debord has described the isolation of his contemporaries as spectacle viewers in *La société du spectacle*: "What binds the spectators together is no more than an irreversible relation at the very center which maintains their isolation. The spectacle reunites the separate, but *reunites* it as separate" (statement 29).

<sup>xx</sup> Bellocchio's use of television as a soundtrack background to many scenes of the film also realistically reproduces the constant attention that the media of the time devoted to the Moro kidnapping with non-stop programs and special editions.

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<sup>xxi</sup> For instance, we know that Chiara has been reading *The Holy Family* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels because we see a copy of it on the floor next to her bed. For the BR, Marx, together with Mao Zedong and Herbert Marcuse became unfailing ideological points of reference.

<sup>xxii</sup> Here, Bellocchio's view again coincides with contemporary scholars who have suggested that the "increasing isolation and self-referentiality of leftist terrorism can be measured by the increasing separation of its jargon from everyday language" (Antonello and O'Leary 2).

<sup>xxiii</sup> ("For the victory of the proletariat, it is right to kill even one's own mother. What today seems unthinkable, absurd, inhumane, is in reality a heroic act of the final annihilation of subjective reality, the maximum of humanity.")

<sup>xxiv</sup> Lisa Gerusa has pointed out the importance of the Italian Resistance for the BR (136).

<sup>xxv</sup> ("My dear love, have me always with you, and hold me tight. Kiss and caress for me Fida, Dani, Luca, and Luca very much.")

<sup>xxvi</sup> ("My dear love, tomorrow morning at dawn, an army of the Republican Fascist Guard will put an end to my days. What I want to tell you at this moment of death is that you have been my first, only, and unique love, and that if I had lived I would have married you and I would have made you happy.")

<sup>xxvii</sup> "Noi non vogliamo processare te come persona, il privato cittadino, il padre di famiglia, ma ciò che rappresenti, il simbolo, la funzione, il partito che tu incarni. Così come io rappresento tutto il proletariato." ("We do not want to put you through trial as a person, as a private citizen, as the father of a family, but for what you represent, for the symbol, the function, the party that you incarnate. Just as I represent all the proletariat.")

<sup>xxviii</sup> Here we find scenes from Dziga Vertov's film *Tri pesni o Lenine* (1934) and Rossellini's *Paisà* (1946).

<sup>xxix</sup> It is important to point out that Chiara's redemption in *Buongiorno, notte* does not imply that the director is trying to redeem the historical female terrorist Laura Braghetti on whose novel he has partly based his film. In "Through the Lens of Trauma: The Figure of the Female Terrorist in *Il prigioniero* and *Buongiorno, notte*," Glynn has well illustrated Bellocchio's decision to deny Braghetti the status of conscious subject with political and ideological maturity (73).

<sup>xxx</sup> In fact, Ernesto tells Chiara that she reminds him of his own mother when she keeps on going to see if Moro is still there, "Eri andata a guardarlo cinque minuti fa. Sembri mia madre con il rubinetto del gas." ("You just checked on him five minutes ago. You remind me of my mother with her gas tap.")

<sup>xxxi</sup> In an interview with Ceretto, Bellocchio affirmed that in the 1960s he adhered to the students' movement, and in 1968-1969 participated in the organization *Unione dei comunisti*, although he was never fully involved (27-28). Furthermore, in the same interview he stated that "In *Buongiorno, notte* a livello tematico, c'è un rifiuto nel personaggio della brigatista della dimensione fanaticamente religiosa del brigatismo, di una rivoluzione che non considera e non dà valore alle singole vite umane." ("In *Good Morning, Night*, there is at the thematic level a refusal in the female *brigatista* character of the fanatically religious dimension of *brigatismo*, of a revolution which does not consider and does not value individual human lives.") (31). O'Leary points out that Bellocchio in *Buongiorno, notte* has followed the tradition of left-wing filmmakers and questioned politically motivated violence (36).

<sup>xxxii</sup> Interestingly, Bellocchio seems to play further with his own political past in *Buongiorno, notte* by having his son Pier Giorgio Bellocchio play the *brigatista* Ernesto.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> "A mio parere, infatti, il Moro descritto da Bellocchio è una vittima sacrificale che muore e risorge non più uomo politico ma mero uomo." ("In fact, I think that Moro as described by Bellocchio is a sacrificial victim who dies and resurrects no longer as political man, but as mere man") (Lombardi 398).

<sup>xxxiv</sup> ("I remember that as a child I was so taken with fervor by religion that I hoped to die to go to Paradise as soon as possible.")

<sup>xxxv</sup> ("After all, yours is a religion like mine. Actually, it is much stricter. For example it despises the body much more than we Catholics do. In the past Christianity was like that. But now no more. The last crusade was in 1270. The last witch was burnt in Switzerland at the end of the eighteenth century.")

<sup>xxxvi</sup> The killing of Christ, according to Antonello, is for instance, "the archetypal anthropological and historical event which defines our understanding of human dramas" (31).

<sup>xxxvii</sup> In his Introduction to the script of *Buongiorno, notte*, after pointing out his decision to be somewhat unfaithful to historical sources and to Laura Braghetti's book, Bellocchio affirmed, "mi sono riconosciuto poi la libertà di lasciare al 'mio' prigioniero debolezze e preghiere, e segni di croce, e *Credo in Dio padre*, e raccomandazioni per l'aldilà ecc. ecc. Stando dalla parte di Moro 'inventato,' non ho voluto sottrargli, nella rappresentazione infedele, le parole, gli argomenti, la prudenza e l'acutezza logica, il tono

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discretamente retorico del democristiano moderato, del vero Moro...” (“I then gave myself the liberty to leave to ‘my’ prisoner weaknesses and prayers, and signs of the cross, and *I believe in God the Father*, and intercessions for the afterlife etc. etc. Being on the side of the ‘invented’ Moro, I could not take away from him, in my unfaithful representation, his words, his arguments, his wisdom and logical acuity, the rather rhetorical tone of a moderate member of the DC party, of the real Moro ...”) (8).

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Antonello has singled out as significant words, Moro’s use of “Calvario” (“Calvary”) and the sentence “Il mio sangue ricadrà su di loro” (“My blood will fall down upon them”) (40). Glynn has highlighted one of the moments in Bellocchio’s film where there is recourse to Christological iconography: “The intermittent framing of Moro’s head against the backdrop of the red BR flag with its lettering and asymmetric five-point star recall the inscription on the cross, the crown of thorns, and the blood shed by Christ” (71).

<sup>xxxix</sup> O’Leary has indicated conspiracy theory as one of the widespread hermeneutical modalities behind representations of 1970s terrorist events, which are presented and solved like mysteries (see “Moro, Brescia, Conspiracy: The Paranoid Style in Italian Cinema”).