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Before and After the Revolution: The Power(lessness) of the Image in *I pugni in tasca, Buongiorno, notte, Prima della rivoluzione* and *The Dreamers*

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The opening shots of Bernard Bertolucci's 1964 film *Prima della rivoluzione* introduce the viewer to "Fabrizio," the bourgeois protagonist who embodies an age "before the revolution." The title comes from a famous phrase attributed to the influential French diplomat and politician Talleyrand, a contemporary of Stendhal, that is also presented in a longer version at the beginning of the film: "Chi non ha vissuto negli anni prima della Rivoluzione non può capire che cosa sia la dolcezza di vivere." Both Talleyrand and Stendhal (on whose *Charterhouse of Parma* the film is loosely based—all the characters' names are the same) lived through the transitional period from the *ancien régime*, through the age of revolution and the Napoleonic era, and into the period of the return of the monarchy. But while Talleyrand ambitiously and opportunistically rode the tide of historical events and had leading roles in both the Revolution and the Restoration, the idealistic Stendhal refused to live in a France that was intent on returning to life before the Revolution. As Bertolucci's protagonist describes his fellow inhabitants of Parma, he places his state of social adolescence in direct contrast not only to revolution, but to "history." "Ecco, mi muovo fra figure fuori dalla storia, remote. [...] Mi viene in mente se sono mai nati, se il presente risuona dentro di loro come in me risuona e non può consumarsi." Fabrizio's environment is outside of history, "removed" from it and he later comments that he suffers a "nostalgia for the present." Bertolucci himself explains his approach to Fabrizio's temporal dilemma: "I wanted to tell a story in the present perfect tense, so that I could look at the present pretending to be already talking about the past" (in Kolker 36). This is essentially a 19th century novelistic, romantic and ironic approach to

realism—in fact Bertolucci's work echoes *The Charterhouse of Parma*, a novel ironically filled with nostalgia for the old regime.

However, Bertolucci's film constitutes a revolutionary break away from both realism and neorealism and any possible subservience to "the real" and to history—past, present, or future. The film's present is 1962, just a few years before the historically significant year of '68. "Sessantotto" is typically viewed as the era of global "revolution" in social, political, economic, cultural and sexual terms. Scholarly studies usually focus on the impact of the revolution—its aftermath. Looking back on '68 forty years later, I intend to examine four films that provide a "snap-shot" of an age of adolescence lived both before and after the revolution: Bertolucci's *Prima della rivoluzione* and *The Dreamers* and Marco Bellocchio's *I pugni in tasca* and *Buongiorno, notte*. These films are also works by Bertolucci and Bellocchio that come literally before and after 1968. As these films are the "snap-shot of an age," I also consider their affiliation with photographs—as visions, or images, of history.

Roland Barthes writes about looking at images, in particular those of photographs, through the lens of "History" in his invaluable meditation on photography *Camera lucida* (1980). "Thus the life of someone whose existence has somewhat preceded our own encloses in its particularity the very tension of History, its division. History is hysterical: it is constituted only if we consider it, only if we look at it—and in order to look at it, we must be excluded from it" (65). It is this notion of exclusion that captures the pathos of non-belonging in the films of Bertolucci and Bellocchio. "Removed from the revolution," these films give us a unique perspective on the spectacle of "History," the hysterical history of 1968. I am interested in the films' shared themes of social adolescence (in which adulthood and maturity remain, like history itself, a perennial mirage), the distance between the older and younger generation, the sexually regressive phenomenon of incest and the conflict between personal memory and official History.

Prima della rivoluzione was released in 1964, just one year before Bellocchio's debut film. It depicts a bourgeois protagonist who struggles to rebel against the norms inflicted upon him due to his class and yet who ultimately assimilates back into bourgeois society, a conclusion summed up by his statement, "speravo di vivere gli anni della rivoluzione e invece vivevo prima della rivoluzione." Fabrizio's youth coincides with "l'adolescenza" of an entire age, to use Antonio Costa's description of pre-'68 works.¹ Bertolucci returns to the idea of "gli anni

della rivoluzione” almost 40 years later with *The Dreamers*. I will in the conclusion of this article look at the curious position of *The Dreamers* as a film made after 1968 that does not deal with post-revolution effects but instead focuses once again on protagonists who cope with an age of social adolescence. They are also geographically removed from Italy, despite the director’s origins. Maximilian Le Cain notes, the director “has made no claim to making a film about the Events [...]—in fact, it is the distance between this reality and the protagonists’ mode of existence that is emphasised” (no pg.). Bertolucci’s intention was to film not ’68 but a “dream” of ’68 from the perspective of the early 21st Century. Rather than behave as a part of a collective, group identity in search of social progress, the characters in these films remain individualized. This is in direct contradiction to a Marxist and revolutionary vision of history itself. In such a vision, the individual can only assume a truly historical and revolutionary identity as part of a group or revolutionary party. The protagonists of *The Dreamers* also exist in a state *prima della rivoluzione*—or more aptly put, distant from reality and thus “removed from the revolution.” This sense of separation from historical events brings to mind Barthes’s description of the photographic medium as one in which our “exclusion” from History is what allows us to truly “look at it.”

Bellocchio, on the other hand, takes a radically different approach in his post-’68 work *Buongiorno, notte* (2003). The film addresses one of the most important ramifications of Sessantotto: terrorism. Set a decade after the events of ’68, Bellocchio’s film recreates the kidnapping and eventual murder of Aldo Moro, former prime minister and leader of the Christian Democratic party, by the Red Brigades. Bellocchio chooses to recreate the historical events through the point of view of Chiara, the only female member of the group. Unlike the other films by Bellocchio and Bertolucci, *Buongiorno notte* does not portray its protagonists as naive adolescents removed from the revolution, but as products and agents of the revolution who are actively living out their ideological beliefs. Both of Bellocchio’s works also diverge from Bertolucci’s in the sense that they address individual and collective violence. *Buongiorno, notte* does involve individual identity, yet despite the focused point of view of Chiara, her characterization falls more in line with the traditional Marxist thought that her identity is initially developed as part of a revolutionary party. As the story unfolds, however, Chiara becomes more and more individualized and separate, allowing Bellocchio to look at and critique the most extreme forms of collective social uprising. Bellocchio’s

style of filmmaking thus radically diverges from Bertolucci's both before and after the revolution in that it refuses to romanticize or glamorize the radical changes in Italy during the 1960s and 1970s.

Bellocchio also employs the power of the image in order to look at History. Unlike Bertolucci's indulgent use of cinephilia, Bellocchio addresses the dominant presence of television—as both recreation and as a medium for reporting the “present” as it happens. Bellocchio's use of still photography is also related to a depiction of the present rather than the past (as in his previous work *I pugni in tasca*). The photograph of Aldo Moro while in captivity is reproduced and distributed as testimony to the present state of crisis. It is described in detail by the television news reports and its effect on the public's reaction affirms the medium's power to connect society to official History as it unfolds. Bellocchio, unlike Bertolucci, does not delve into metacinema as an artistic commentary but rather uses documentary historical footage to connect the aftermath of '68 to the trauma of WWII as well as the radical communist political ideals that inspire the protagonists.

My critical analysis of all four films will therefore demonstrate how both still and moving images *within* the visual context of the films are used by both directors to visually and symbolically examine the ideological climate surrounding '68 as well as the specific legacy of the movements.

My first approach to forming connections between these films is to focus on thematic similarities. The films depict young people in states of social, ideological, political, and sexual awakening. Three of the works address incest. The incestuous relationships are construed as both regressive and transgressive. Incest represents the protagonists' inability to grow up and breaks the norms of traditional family bonds. The patriarchal, traditional, nuclear family unit is disrupted by incest; the protagonists in these films thus reject the laws of the paternal order, seeking to break away from the generation of their parents. On a historical level, this break with the “father figure” is this generation's movement away from fascism and the cult of “Il Duce,” the political father figure of their parents' generation. The final thematic consideration is temporality. All films address the question of time, or rather, the suspension of time. The stories are “excluded” from the present in one way or another, to again cite Barthes. Bellocchio's setting places the protagonists of *I pugni in tasca* within the claustrophobic interior of a dilapidated villa seemingly untouched by contemporaneity, *Prima della*

rivoluzione examines the idea of “nostalgia for the present,” *Buongiorno, notte* unfolds almost exclusively within the walls of the “prison” apartment in which the primary connection to the outside world is through the television, and in *The Dreamers* (likewise primarily set in a claustrophobic interior) the protagonists choose to exist in the temporally static world of cinephilia.

Bellocchio and Bertolucci, however, use a similar style that is revolutionary in aesthetic terms. What will emerge from the following study of the films is not only the thematic affinity but also Bellocchio’s and Bertolucci’s particular attention to both still and moving images within the visual context of the frame. The films use the consumption of images, the presence of personal photographs, the publication of photographs, the creation of images through mirrors, and moving images in the context of the story to depict the themes of social adolescence, incest, rejection of the paternal order, suspended temporality, and personal memory. Barthes’s description of the distance that exists between the present-day viewing of a photograph and the time in which it was taken is the key to understanding the surprising number of family photographs that dominate *I pugni in tasca*, *Prima della rivoluzione* and, later, *The Dreamers*. The only family photograph in *Buongiorno, notte* is a snapshot of a young girl in the wallet of Aldo Moro—perhaps his granddaughter. The absence of other photographs makes the one of Moro that is distributed by the Red Brigades even more powerful and indicates the medium’s power in the public rather than the private sphere.

In his description of family photos, Barthes writes: “With regard to many of these photographs, it was History which separated me from them. Is History not simply that time when we were not born?” (64). The visual references to photography within the films point to photography’s ability to create a visual space in which time has momentarily stopped. Along with time, historical reality remains at a distance. Barthes describes it by writing, “what I see has been here, in this place which extends between infinity and the subject (operator or spectator); it has been here, and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred” (77). In Barthes, photographs ironically become not the documents of history, but the palpable visual evidence of the impossibility of the historian’s desire to represent events in their actuality. Like Barthes, Susan Sontag analyzes photography’s role as a modern medium in her work *On Photography*. Photography is

unique not only because of its ability to momentarily freeze time but also because of a photo's status as an object of possession. "Photographs are a way of imprisoning reality, understood as recalcitrant, inaccessible; of making it stand still. Or they enlarge a reality that is felt to be shrunk, hollowed out, perishable, remote. One can't possess reality, one can possess (and be possessed by) images—as, according to Proust, most ambitious of voluntary prisoners, one can't possess the present but one can possess the past" (Sontag 163). The characters of the first three films reside in a liminal, temporal space that separates them from "History"—before the revolution, not "born of it." In all three films, the walls of interior space appear dominated by photographs. Photography references the past while "hanging" in the present—they constitute a visual representation of nostalgia. The effect is one of "superimposition." Barthes explains, "...[In] Photography I can never deny that the thing has been there. There is a superimposition here: of reality and of the past" (Barthes 76).

The theme of the "image" in these films emerges through the cinematic depiction of framed photographs as well as the popular images of newspapers and magazines. The protagonists of these films empower themselves in the only way readily available to them—by taking possession of their world through images. *Prima della rivoluzione*, *I pugni in tasca*, and *The Dreamers* also present photographs as parts of collections. The claustrophobic interiors depicted in the three films are dominated by images, or "possessions," of the past. This is not by chance, according to Sontag's theory. "As the taking of photographs seems almost obligatory to those who travel about, the passionate collecting of them has special appeal for those confined—either by choice, incapacity, or coercion—to indoor space. Photograph collections can be used to make a substitute world, keyed to exalting or consoling or tantalizing images" (162). The protagonists in Bertolucci's and Bellocchio's works cope with their states of social adolescence through their attachment to images, images that indeed make up a "substitute world" that is removed from the ramifications of reality. Even in *Buongiorno, notte*, the protagonists live in a world that is completely removed (both literally within the apartment but also in their extreme political ideology) and only inhabitable because of their attachment to the television screen. I will therefore take Barthes's and Sontag's theories on photography one step further in my analysis not only of still images in the films but moving images as well.

PRIMA DELLA RIVOLUZIONE

Bernardo Bertolucci's film coincides with a period in which a new Italian cinema is formed—a cinematic revolution that occurs before the political and cultural one. Bertolucci describes the genesis of new Italian cinema in the interview that accompanies the Criterion Collections's re-release of Bellocchio's *I pugni in tasca*. The effects of neorealism pushed filmmakers such as Bertolucci in the opposite direction. As he puts it, the filmmakers were "squished" by neorealism, resulting in a style of filmmaking that was more exhibitionist than realistic. Bertolucci describes the subject of *Prima* as that of the ideological education of the protagonist Fabrizio who is eventually "reabsorbed" by his class rather than rebelling against it. The plot, remarkably similar to the plot of *I pugni in tasca*, follows the attempts of Fabrizio and his friend Agostino to escape from a claustrophobic family environment and at the same time to find and embrace a revolutionary alternative (Santovetti 159). The conclusion of the film reiterates, however, a political "impossibility" ("quella del 'borghese' Fabrizio di militare in un partito 'rivoluzionario'") and ultimately an "acceptance" ("quella di Fabrizio di vivere il progetto 'borghese' di vita che, per ragioni di classe, gli spetta") (Micciché 34).

Though Fabrizio is portrayed as a "conformist" and a protagonist who fails to "live" the revolution of the years to come, Bertolucci nonetheless follows Pier Paolo Pasolini's reasoning about the role of the intellectual in revolutionary struggle. "In his portrait of Fabrizio's failure to enact this textual program, Bertolucci was pursuing a line already proposed by Pasolini—that it is just as necessary and legitimate for the left-wing intellectual to express his own ideological and sentimental crisis as to contribute overtly to the class struggle" (Kline (1984) 24). But the protagonist's lack of contribution to the greater political struggle is, as we shall see, counteracted by Bertolucci's style. It is his style that is "revolutionary," what T. Jefferson Kline calls "a revolution in vision," rather than his characters (23).

Bertolucci begins his film with a close-up of his protagonist—emphasizing his characteristics as an individual rather than as a member of a collective group. The first shots of Fabrizio and the film's setting of Parma are accompanied by lines of Pasolini's poetry collection *La religione del mio tempo*. This reference is not only literary; Bertolucci got his start as a filmmaker working as an assistant on Pasolini's first film, *Accattone*. The entire introduction to *Prima* is in fact one long stylistic comment on cinema itself—evidence of the "revolutionary" style of

Bertolucci and of his break with neorealism, away from the neorealist aesthetics of Bazin.² Fabrizio enters a church and acts as a “spectator” to the vision of his future bride, Clelia—gazing upon her without her knowledge. The sequence, however, does not use traditional point-of-view editing. The viewer is uncertain of the spatial and temporal location of Fabrizio’s gaze, which emphasizes “the loss of emotional and perceptual equilibrium suffered by the character” (Kolker 43).

The character of Clelia serves as a framing device for the storyline—the inner context of the plot follows Fabrizio’s rejection of her as symbol of his bourgeois future and then his final return to her as an inevitable conclusion. Fabrizio’s encounter with his communist friend Agostino introduces the overtly ideological discussions that punctuate the film and constitute its inner core. Agostino questions whether or not the revolution will actually solve their problems, that is, their discontent as children of the bourgeoisie. The theme of revolution, however, is shortly placed in the background and is replaced by the foregrounding of Bertolucci’s metacinematic style. Fabrizio suggests to his friend that he go to the movies to see *Red River*. This is one of many examples in the film in which political dialogue is usurped by discussions of cinema. Not only is political discourse replaced with cinema, but the theme of rebellion against the older generation is also presented using metacinematic references. The character of Agostino, much more so than Fabrizio, exhibits the struggle of this particular generation against the paternal order previously established. Agostino feels the need to rebel against his parents in order to participate in the revolution. Fabrizio’s suggestion to his friend, however, is to escape through images—“Andiamo al cinema insieme.”

Fabrizio’s aunt, Gina, plays a pivotal role in the young man’s ideological dilemma. Fabrizio’s incestuous relationship with her is a form of revolt against his class and the bourgeois future that is preprogrammed in a marriage to Clelia. It is also a revolt against the paternal order of the nuclear family. Santovetti calls the relationship with Gina an explicit rejection of the figure of the biological father (160). Bertolucci uses the visual presence of photographs to characterize Gina; Kline calls her a “metacinematic figure” that represents the “absent presence of photography” (Kline (1987) 31). “As photography, she repeats the present tense of cinematic images ‘which resonates in us without any possibility of consummation.’” Kline is alluding to one of the early scenes in the film, following Gina’s arrival to the family enclave, in which she sits on her

bed and looks at family photographs. Her connection to photographs produces a superimposition of the present upon the past; the viewing of past images weakens Gina's temporal connection to "present" reality. Bertolucci goes a step further, however, by making the explicit connection between still and moving images. The family photos that Gina looks at on her bed are arranged in a linear fashion. Each photo is filmed in a series, without cuts, through the movement of the camera from right to left. This is "cinema" in its simplest form—the stringing together of a series of individual images. The camera's movement from right to left, however, produces the strange effect of moving backwards—a visual "regression" that coincides with Gina's regressive sexual involvement with her nephew. At the end of the scene, she turns the photos face-down, in a hopeless attempt at erasing the past and her personal ties to the family. "Photography," Sontag writes, "which has so many narcissistic uses is also a powerful instrument for depersonalizing our relation to the world; and the two uses are complementary. [...] It offers, in one easy, habit-forming activity, both participation and alienation in our own lives and those of others—allowing us to participate, while confirming alienation" (167). Gina's characterization through photography serves in fact to place her in a state of social alienation.

In some ways, however, Gina copes with alienation through the desire to return to a state of adolescence. She tells Fabrizio that she does not like adults. She also engages in a conversation with her "mirror image" while she waits for Fabrizio at Cesare's house. The little girl in the tower above who torments Gina with her incessant singing symbolizes perhaps a younger version of herself (Tonetti 37). Her relationship with a much younger man is also an attempt at recapturing youth. Gina's depiction in Bertolucci's film is remarkably similar to that of Bellocchio's female protagonist, Giulia in *I pugni in tasca*. Gina is frequently filmed indirectly through Bertolucci's placement of mirrors within her bedroom. Like Giulia, she exhibits a general obsession with "images." Before she betrays Fabrizio by sleeping with a stranger, she goes to a newsstand and buys an inordinate number of magazines—all filled with popular images. Sontag writes about the connection between photographs and consumer culture, an important factor in this particular film's historicity: "Through photographs, we also have a consumer's relation to events, both to events which are part of our experience and to those which are not—a distinction between types of experience that such habit-forming consumership blurs" (155–156). When Gina purchases an entire

newsstand's worth of magazines, she demonstrates a desire to escape from her present reality through the consumption of images. Gina must surround herself with an image-world as a coping mechanism. This is made explicit in the scene that follows. After her sexual encounter with the stranger, Gina runs into Fabrizio and the foregrounded, awkward love triangle is framed with the advertisement for a photography studio in the background.

The relationship between Gina and Fabrizio is also developed through Bertolucci's metacinematic style. Fabrizio shows his aunt his own version of a film. "Si chiama camera ottica, è un gioco di specchi." As Gina sits in the darkened "theater" at the top of a tower, she is able to experience the "camera" that renders the real-life presence of Fabrizio in the piazza into a color image through the play of mirrors. Bertolucci's presentation of the image of Fabrizio in color has the effect of making the "image" all the more real, in contrast to the black and white of the actual film. It is as if reality had broken through the cinematic image. Gina, however, remains in the black and white confines of the tower. Here as in several other scenes, Bertolucci's metafilmic style is used to present the thematic tropes of the film. Gina "narrates" the film of Fabrizio by declaring to his image that she loves him. When the real Fabrizio returns, he asks for her critical analysis of the "movie:" "Ti è piaciuto il film? [...] Come cinema verità, non andava mica male. A colori [...]." Gina then points out the peculiar nature of images and their temporality. "Vorrei che niente si muovesse più. Tutto fermo come in un quadro [...]. E noi dentro, fissi anche noi [...]. Niente più maggio, giugno, luglio, agosto, settembre." Gina does not want time to invade their lives, preferring for everything to remain the same, fixed as if in a photograph or a painting.

Bertolucci returns to the device of photographs in the following scene in which Gina and Fabrizio go to visit his friend Cesare. Cesare is an ideological father figure for Fabrizio—an elementary school teacher who plays the role of the left-wing intellectual in the film. Santovetti notes that Cesare represents just one of three father figures in the film against whom Fabrizio eventually rebels—along with Puck, Gina's friend, and his biological father. Throughout the course of the film, the relationship between Fabrizio and each one of this "trinity" is annulled or overturned (160). Because this scene addresses one of the primary themes—the rejection of the paternal order—the shots are visually punctuated by an attention to the family photographs

on the wall of Cesare's house. Both Fabrizio and Gina sit directly underneath two framed photos and their conversation moves back and forth along with the camera's movement back and forth between the photos. Unlike the earlier scene in Gina's bedroom, however, the camera's movement visually mimics the act of dialogue. The photos are first framed in sequence left to right—representing a forward motion, symbolic of the forward-thinking political outlook espoused by Cesare. The photos are then filmed from right to left—as they were before in Bertolucci's initial characterization of Gina. For Fabrizio, Cesare symbolizes movement forward, towards the revolution, while Gina represents “backwardness.” Bertolucci depicts through visual form the divergent ideologies of the characters and thus confirms that style can in a certain sense be “political.”

Near the conclusion of the film is Bertolucci's overt reference to the political reality of a pre-'68 society. The sequence in question, however, begins with a reference to the power of the popular image. The ideological conversation in the park between Cesare and Fabrizio coincides with that of some young women. They talk about the suicide of Marilyn Monroe. One of the women, incredulous, states, “Non ci credo, sarà pubblicità.” Another woman responds, “C'è la fotografia sul giornale.” This reference to photography as one's connection to current events confirms Sontag's definition of consumerism and attests to the dominance of the “image” over ideology. As Cesare and Fabrizio make their way through a park, the two characters discuss their ideological views. Cesare is convinced of his own beliefs, stating that the proletariat only wants to improve its economic conditions through a worker movement and his “own calm demeanour implies an understanding of the gap between the left-wing bourgeois intellectual's ideal and the immediate desires and needs of the working people” (Kolker 49). Fabrizio admits that strikes and protests in the piazza are not enough for him. “Io volevo un uomo nuovo, una umanità di figli che siano padri per i loro padri.” Fabrizio espouses an idealistic view of change, while Cesare has a more realistic view that also includes his own contradictory participation in the movement.

In a much cited phrase from the film, Fabrizio explains why the idea of revolution no longer means anything to him. “Io ho un'altra febbre, una febbre che mi fa sentire la nostalgia del presente: mentre vivo, sento già lontanissimi i momenti che sto vivendo. Così, non voglio modificarlo, il presente; lo prendo come viene, ma il mio futuro

di borghese è nel mio passato di borghese. Così per me l'ideologia è stata una vacanza, una villeggiatura. Credevo di vivere gli anni della rivoluzione, e invece vivevo gli anni prima della rivoluzione, perché è sempre prima della rivoluzione quando si è come me." Though many critics cite this as indicative of the theme of the entire film, it is rarely dissected fully and explained in relation to its importance as a pre-'68 work. The first important connection to be made is to issues of temporality, to existing in a temporal state that is somehow "out of sync" with reality. In Fabrizio's case, it is his own distance from the present historical moment. Though the term nostalgia is usually reserved for feelings that evoke the past, Bertolucci links it to the present—as if the present reality were an "impossibility" for Fabrizio. Reality is what Cesare alludes to—his character is more in touch with the actual political climate and the ideology of the coming revolution. Fabrizio, in effect, recognizes himself as "out of step" with the present (much like the entire family in *I pugni in tasca*). Fabrizio is literally trapped by his class, but he is fully conscious of the "tensions between committed communist revolutionary activity and the attractions of bourgeois comforts and neuroses" (Kolker 52). His bourgeois future is his bourgeois past, and as such he doesn't want to "modify it." His ramblings into ideological discussions are just a mental vacation for him; he will never be a participant in the actual revolution. Living "before the revolution" will leave Fabrizio unchanged, as evidenced by the conclusion of the film in which he marries Clelia and abandons his rebellious, incestuous relationship with his aunt.

In exchange for a protagonist who does not himself undergo radical change in the ideological sense, Bertolucci rebels "artistically." This is fully evident in the manner in which this sequence is filmed. As the two characters sit across from each other on park benches, Bertolucci's camera moves adeptly between them. First, Cesare sits down on a bench on the right side of the frame. Fabrizio enters the frame from the right and the camera quickly repositions itself 180 degrees. Fabrizio is on the right and the back of Cesare's head is on the left—revealing Bertolucci's own presence behind the camera rather than opting for traditional point-of-view camera work. Another 180 degree reversal. Cesare says, "Ma credi di essere più dentro degli altri." But Cesare explains to him that Fabrizio is, in fact, more "outside." The camera does two more 180 rotations. This is not just stylistic bravura, however—it corresponds to the content of the scene, Fabrizio's ideological "flip-flopping." The repetition of 180 degree cuts is followed by a tracking shot that moves

from left to right and places Fabrizio at the center of the frame. It is then Fabrizio that physically moves back and forth between the park benches rather than the camera. The sequence makes clear that Bertolucci wants the presence of the camera to be felt by the viewer. Bertolucci's presence behind that camera serves a "revolutionary" aesthetic function that Fabrizio, as a character, cannot fulfill in his ideological ambivalence towards the political crescendo to Sessantotto.

I PUGNI IN TASCA

Bellocchio's debut film comes one year after *Prima della rivoluzione*. Its style is indeed very different from its predecessor—more "prosaic," to borrow Pasolini's distinction, in its attention to thematic content. As such, the work closely examines social adolescence, the rejection of the paternal order, incest and temporal disruptions. While the character of Fabrizio in Bertolucci's film resides in a state of *adolescenza* before the revolution, "out of sync" with real current events, the characters in Bellocchio's film appear to literally reside in the past. The very atmosphere of their house suggests the "old," or more specifically presents itself as out of step with the actual changes in Italy during the economic miracle that followed World War II (Costa 84). Costa cites Piergiorgio Bellocchio's observation that the very typology of the family is in effect "out of phase" in respect to reality—the atmosphere is "un po' vecchiotta" (59–60). The remote location of the family's villa, its dilapidated exterior and its claustrophobic and cluttered interior all contribute to a dimension "fuori del tempo" that is so crucial to the climate of the narrative (64).

In one of the early sequences, the protagonist (Alessandro) steps out onto the terrace of this remote and disintegrating home. His silhouette, illuminated by the early morning sun, is accompanied by his voice-over and several lines from Giacomo Leopardi's poem "Le ricordanze": "Né mi diceva il cor che l'età verde / sarei dannato a consumare in questo / natio borgo selvaggio, intra una gente / zotica, vil..." (178). This citation could not be more applicable to the narrative situation of "Ale," described as a "Leopardian hero" who is damned to spend his youth in the infernal surroundings of his dysfunctional family's villa (Costa 15). Ale's social damnation is partly due to his inherited disease of epilepsy and also due to the very fabric of his familial structure—blind mother, disabled brother, and narcissistic and incestuous sister. Ale's own sense of alienation and detachment from "normal" society, however, is also metaphorically connected to his adolescence—"l'età verde."

The film thus begins its analysis of those central themes that allow a critical comparison to both *Prima della rivoluzione* and *The Dreamers*. What distinguishes Bellocchio's film is its representation of violence. Ale's social alienation contributes both to his own demise and to a strange sort of philanthropy: in order to save the only "normal" (or "human") one of his family, the oldest brother Augusto, Ale resorts to a plan of violence that includes self-annihilation. Ale's violent acts are those of an "individual" killer, though they serve the purpose of a "greater good"—Augusto's escape into bourgeois banality and his assumption of a role remarkably similar to that of *Prima's* Fabrizio. Bellocchio's focus on individual rather than collective violence is what also contributes to the film's importance as a pre-'68 film. Costa claims that it gives us the sense of an age ("l'adolescenza") lived *prima della rivoluzione* (122). This particular use of the phrase "before the revolution" makes the connection to Bertolucci even stronger.

Though Ale is able to rationalize his pre-meditated violence, he resides in a liminal space, "sospeso tra la totale assenza di una prospettiva collettiva e l'insignificanza delle aspettative individuali" (99). Ale's violence towards his family thus hinges upon the gap between the individual and the collective. This state of "social" adolescence will be radically changed within just a few years, but it is important to see Bellocchio's protagonist as a symbol of the deep sense of social alienation that will profoundly alter society on a more collective (rather than individual) and violent level in the years to come. Yet how is Ale's individual violence indicative of a greater trend in Italian society of the time? In other words, why is Ale NOT just a deranged teenager but representative of a greater cultural climate in 1960s Italy? Furthermore, how does Bellocchio's 1965 film depict Italian society "before" the revolution of '68?

To address the pivotal function of violence in a discussion on society and events surrounding 1968, I will turn to the work of political theorist Hannah Arendt. She makes an important distinction between violent and non-violent action in her essay "Reflections on Violence" (1969). She classifies the former as bent on destruction of the old rather than on the establishment of the new. Since Bellocchio's film pre-dates the revolution, one must clarify the difference in the depicted forms of violence. To apply Arendt's definition to the presentation of violence in Bellocchio's film, Ale's violence does not lead to the creation of a new situation for himself; the only new structure resulting from Ale's

homicides is the ability for his older brother Augusto to marry his bourgeois girlfriend and escape from the confines of the claustrophobic family enclave. Ale's violence falls more along the lines of Arendt's definition of violent action—he wants to destroy not only the old family structure but also all physical remnants of that dysfunctional system. This is most evident in his violent breaking of family photographs and of the ritualistic burning of domestic objects in a bonfire that follows the death of the mother. Yet Ale's actions are not irrational in the sense that his plan of violence serves a greater purpose—the collective “good” for the family that unfortunately contains the annihilation of the “sick” for the advancement of the “normal.” Costa describes it as a project of “risanamento”—“di cancellazione radicale degli ultimi residui di una famiglia le cui tare e malattie, i cui ‘inestetismi’ sono il correlativo oggettivo di una incapacità di adeguarsi ai mutamenti in atto” (106–107). In this way, Ale's violence is highly rational—it eradicates that which is “noxious” in order to move forward.

The primary themes of Bellocchio's film—illness, incest, and violence—are all conveyed with the help of the visual cues of framed images. For example, the dysfunctional family's first dinner is introduced by the entrance of the characters into the claustrophobic interior of the dining room. The characters' transition into this interior space is presented using a background of hanging family photos. The communal space of the house is dominated by these images, which simultaneously transport the environment backwards in time, freezing it in a temporal no-man's-land, as well as allude to the eroding family structure. The family dinner is also punctuated by other visual references to photography. The relationship between Ale and his blind mother is constructed by framing both of the characters with photos behind them as Ale cuts her meat for her. In this case, Ale's role is reversed from that of son to that of father—highlighted also by the father's absence in the family structure. Augusto takes up the paternal role as the family's only source of income, but the lack of a traditional father figure contributes to the more general theme of rejection of paternal order.

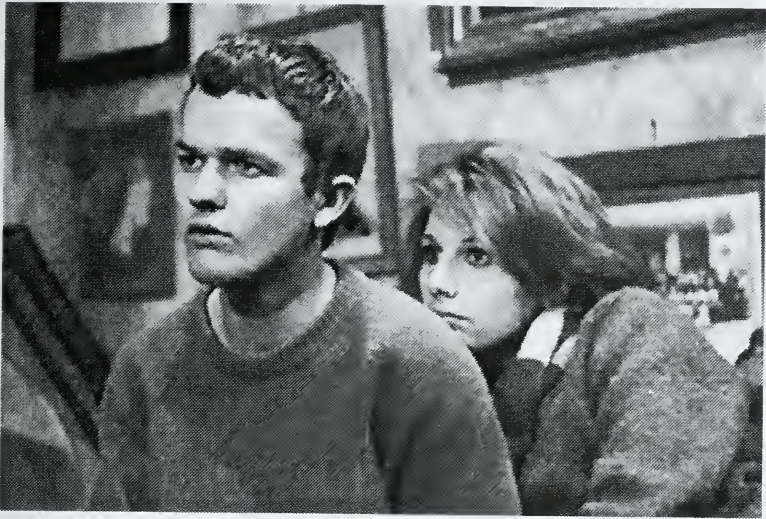
Giulia's immediate status as a narcissist is also established in this scene and her characterization comes to fruition once again through Bellocchio's use of photography. She is obsessed with popular images in magazines. As we see later on in the film, her bedroom walls are covered with both popular images and family photographs. In contrast, Ale's room is littered with postcards, evoking the “outside world” through

their visual presence. A photo of Marlon Brando hangs above Giulia's bed while a family photo album is within her arm's reach on the nightstand. The image of a famous actor is an important detail in Bellocchio's depiction of Giulia. In Sontag's words: "For stay-at-homes, prisoners, and the self-imprisoned, to live among the photographs of glamorous strangers is a sentimental response to isolation and an insolent challenge to it" (162). Giulia thus responds to her claustrophobic and oppressive environment by surrounding herself with an "image world."

Giulia's affinity for popular images is continually evoked through her reading of magazines. As she looks through one at the dinner table, she then immediately looks for her own reflection in the glass pane of a family photograph. The effect is one of layering the image of the present on the image of the past; this is exactly what Barthes calls the "noeme" of photography. Giulia's narcissism is represented through her use of the glass frame as a mirror and also through the presence of photography itself. Barthes points to the ability of photography to explore notions of identity. "For the photograph is the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity" (12).³ Though in this scene, Giulia is not looking at a photograph of herself (as "other"), she is looking at her reflection vis-à-vis a photograph of her family. This emphasizes a strong connection, an embedded-ness, in familial ties—a visual allusion to incest.

The incestuous relationship between Ale and Giulia is continually presented alongside visual representations of their family—in one of the scenes, the dialogue between the two siblings is accompanied by their visual association with two family photographs. Ale is placed in front of a photo of a very young boy—associating him with childhood and indicating his social immaturity, his state of adolescence. Giulia is then foregrounded with a picture of a young woman behind her, which emphasizes the familial bonds that she and Ale warp in their ambiguous relationship to one another. In his commentary to the 2005 re-release of the film, Bertolucci remarks that the actor who portrays Ale, Lou Castel, reminds him of a young Marlon Brando—a visual similarity that can be linked to the image of Brando that hangs above Giulia's bed, another reference to incest.

When picture frames are used as methods of reflection in *I pugni in tasca*, they simultaneously depict the family's past while reflecting their own "present" images within the house—confusing the dead with the living. When the mother dies, Ale smashes this form of representation



(a photo of their uncle) in an attempt to erase the past and to rid the interior space, as Antonio Costa notes, of those signs of absence and of a loss of functionality. The family photos that once hung on the wall have since been torn down in the children's attempt to escape the past and move towards the future. Their attempt is not fully completed, however, because the picture frames have left their imprint on the decaying wallpaper. It is as if the past can never be fully removed—the image evokes the notion of the “present absence.” The children must then, however, choose another set of images to replace those that no longer “function.” In planning the funeral for their mother, the children must choose from a catalog of images that will accompany the mourning cards. They must figure out what to do with a vast collection of the *Pro familia* magazines—collections of images that ironically allude to the dysfunctional state of the family.

I pugni in tasca is not an overtly political film—as Bertolucci points out and as Bellocchio confirms in the documentary “A Need for Change” that accompanies the re-release of the movie. Bellocchio repeatedly calls the film not one of revolution but of “ribellione”—“alla mia ribellione di provincia.” Peter Brunette notes that it is the “personal” that dominates this work. Bellocchio “has always insisted that any eventual revolution must be accomplished on two levels at once, the personal as well as the political...” (49). In the director's interview with Brunette, Bellocchio makes the connection clearer. “What interests

me is people in rebellion, against social constraints or whatever. I want to show characters in revolt against a situation that is suffocating them, and this possibility of change through rebellion is what interests me" (52). It is the struggle against the constraints of family and its inherent "illness" that forces the protagonist of the film to rebel through violent action. Ale's violence is one against the dysfunctional family structure that imprisons him as well as his "normal" older brother. Bertolucci is correct when he remarks that this film (unlike *Prima della rivoluzione*) is not against notions of class, but against the family itself—a rejection of the paternal order left over from Italian fascism.

The film is clearly about adolescence—both in the literal sense and in the more figurative and cultural sense. It is a film about "an age," like *Prima della rivoluzione*. The actor Lou Castel, referring to the protagonists of *I pugni in tasca*, sees them as representative of a generation "in transition," precisely that generation on the cusp of revolution. Film critic Tullio Kezich also makes reference to a broader "buzz in the air" (leading up to the movements of 1968) that surrounded the release of the film. He states in the documentary "A Need for Change" that Bellocchio's 1965 work marks a change in Italian cinema; just three years away from the more pivotal year of '68, the film records that "si sta movendo qualcosa—un annuncio di qualchecosa di importanza, che succederà, che sarà ben più importante."

THE DREAMERS

Bernardo Bertolucci returns to the "revolution" exactly thirty-five years later with the film *The Dreamers*. With *Prima della rivoluzione*, the director depicts the ideological climate before "Sessantotto." *The Dreamers*, on the other hand, depicts actual events from that year—though removed from the Italian cultural context through its setting in Paris. Critics such as Maximillian Le Cain, however, remark that despite the fact that Bertolucci made *The Dreamers* after the revolution, it rejects "any aspect of retrospection." "This is not '03 looking back on '68; this is '68, or the cultural constituents of '68, existing again in '03." Bertolucci is able to update the major themes that surround 1968 into a more modern "dream" of possibility—sexual freedom, a firm break from the previous generation, and most importantly a deep connection to the revolutionary possibility of cinema.

The Dreamers begins much like *Prima della rivoluzione*—a close-up of the protagonist, the American student Matthew (Michael Pitt), who

explains in a voice-over that he had come to Paris to learn French. The following scene immediately places the protagonist not in a language classroom but in the darkened “cave” of a movie theater. Bertolucci does not waste any time indicating that *The Dreamers* will be “about film,” even though by the time of the film’s release the metafilmic theme has become almost banal. Matthew’s voice-over indicates that his “real education” was that of cinema. And though the film does take place in 1968, Matthew admits that he is not a member of a student movement group but that of an informal “freemasonry of cinephiles.” He describes their penchant for sitting in the front rows of the theatre, in order to be the first to receive the “newness” of the images. This description of the habits of the self-proclaimed cinephiles places these protagonists in a similar realm to the previous films: they demonstrate an obsession with “the image.”

The distance between the lives of the protagonists and the “reality” of the situation around them is alluded to when Matthew explains that the movie screen is what “screened them from the world.” And though Matthew also states that in the spring of 1968, “the world burst through the screen,” he is referring more specifically to the closure of the Cinémathèque Française. Bertolucci chooses to include actual documentary footage from the Cinémathèque protests with recreated footage. This depiction of the protest reveals how a major incident was sparked by a minor cause—it “proved that taking to the streets and confronting the authorities could succeed. The lesson did not go unheeded by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who on the Nanterre campus of the University of Paris was fermenting his own revolution” (Thompson no pg.). Even though, as Thompson indicates, the protests over the theater had farther-reaching implications, Bertolucci uses the event as a mere plot device.

Matthew meets his fellow protagonists, Isabelle and Theo (supposed Siamese twins), at the recreation of this protest—at the very place where “modern cinema was born.” Bertolucci then chooses to make a crucial distinction about this film, which again places it in the same aesthetic realm as the previous films. Matthew personalizes the historical events stating, “It was our very own cultural revolution.” In this choice of words, however, he alludes to the revolution of Mao more so than the events that actually transpire outside the walls of the Parisian apartment. Bertolucci, therefore, does not only specify that his film is about “culture” rather than politics but also indicates that the film will address the private rather than the public. And in fact, the storyline will continue

to become more and more the private story of the three protagonists while the rest of “history” marches on outside. The character of Theo is played by Louis Garrel, and by virtue of his being the grandson of well-known French actor Maurice Garrel, his presence in the film is metacinematic. As Le Cain writes, “Young Garrel can be seen as the perfect embodiment of Bertolucci’s approach to ’68: while referentially carrying the emblematic Garrel name, his youthful energy bespeaks the renewing potential of pre-revolution dreaming, not revolution’s devastated aftermath.” Like Bertolucci’s earlier 1964 film, therefore, *The Dreamers* is about “pre-revolution,” potential and possibility.

After Matthew meets Isabelle and Theo, the relationship between the three of them becomes disturbingly closer through their mutual obsession with images. The protagonists demonstrate this through an invented game entitled “Forfeit,” during which one of them acts out a scene from a film and the others must identify it or “pay up,” usually through sexual acts. The actors’ reenactment of the scenes is also accompanied by clips from the films themselves—a double metafilmic commentary. This occurs several times throughout *The Dreamers*, though one scene in particular demonstrates what I believe to be a *triple* metacinematic moment. The twins decide that Matthew’s initiation into their clan will involve a recreation of a famous scene in Godard’s 1964 film *Bande à part*—a race through the Louvre museum. Bertolucci’s filming is again intercut with footage from the actual film. Beyond that, however, the race involves running past a series of paintings—individual images that appear to be strung together in a series, like a moving picture itself.

Critics Zubatov and Eyny make a connection between the characters’ obsession with images and “regressive” behavior (a distinction that helps link this film to *Prima* and *I pugni in tasca*). “The very reenactment of cinematic moments becomes itself a kind of retreat into the dark womb of the Cinémathèque, a regression into the past, a masturbatory repetition, a refusal to grow up and come to terms with the world outside, to move forward into the uncertain future which, in May 1968, promised something dramatically different from everything that came before” (no pg.). The protagonist’s obsession with cinema also extends to other types of images—popular images (Marilyn Monroe’s face plastered on a painting in the guest room of the apartment or Anna Magnani on a postcard tacked to the back of Theo’s door), personal photos (the photo of Isabelle that Matthew finds in Theo’s dresser,

which he subsequently steals and hides in his underwear), and real-time images of themselves in the mirrors that hang on the walls of the apartment and in the bathroom. Zubatov and Eyny also agree that “in fact, *The Dreamers*, is (and not trivially) as much or more about cinema as an art and an obsession—more generally the attachment to images and the way they act as both a means of access to the world outside and a shield from it—as it is about ‘the revolution.’” In the first case, the cut-out face of Marilyn Monroe is plastered on top of another image, a painting of “Liberty Leading the People” that hangs above the bed in which Matthew sleeps. As Sontag puts it, “images are indeed able to usurp reality because first of all a photograph is not only an image (as a painting is an image), an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace, something directly stenciled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask” (154). The protagonists prefer the safety of these types of images—it is a trace of something real though not reality itself. “In the real world, something is happening and no one knows what is going to happen. In the image-world, it has happened, and it will forever happen that way” (Sontag 168). The three youths prefer the security of a world of images because it never changes. They fear the world on the other side of the screen because of its intense volatility.

When Matthew finds a picture of Theo and his girlfriend alongside a photo of Isabelle in a bathing suit, the found “image” only reaffirms Matthew’s suspicion that the twins are carrying on a strange, incestuous relationship. Matthew takes it and places it in his underwear, literally taking possession of Isabelle—a symbolic act that will come to fruition when Theo forces Matthew to “take” the virginity of his sister after losing a game of “Forfeit.” Sontag writes that photography in its simplest form allows us to take “surrogate possession of a cherished person or thing.” (155). Still images provoke the young protagonists to engage in exhibitionistic sexuality and also to exert power over one another. When Isabelle forces her own brother to masturbate to a poster on the back of his bedroom door, the image not only becomes the receptacle for Theo’s ejaculation but Matthew and Isabelle are viewers of the “spectacle.”

Though Bertolucci frequently displays an affinity for using mirrors to set up his shots (seen even in his first film *La commare secca* and more notably in *Prima della rivoluzione*), he makes more extensive use of their image-reproducing capabilities to depict the love triangle between the twins and Matthew. Just as the protagonists are obsessed with popular images and cinema, they become increasingly fixated on

their own images. Their mirrored reflections come to dominate any sort of dialogue that might be unfolding among them. In the very serious discussion of the Vietnam War that occurs between Theo and Matthew, the characters are placed naked in a bathtub set up with a triptych-like mirror. The twins are literal mirrors of each other—the male and female version of the same person and possessing “one brain.” Matthew’s reflection appears in the mirror as well, symbolic of the “mirroring” of himself in each of the other two. This particular scene is important not only for its focus on images but for the visual incongruity between their ideological discussion and their three naked bodies in the bathtub. The political discussion thus unfolds in the most personal of spaces. This is reiterated when the two young men discuss violence, a theme that is at the very center of the events of 1968. Matthew states, “I’m not violent; I’m against violence.” His pacifism is contrasted with the blood and violence that is occurring in the streets outside. But the shedding of blood is again personalized rather than politicized when Matthew discovers Isabelle’s menstrual blood appearing in the bath water. The three young people appear completely detached and ignorant, in fact, of the reality that is unfolding outside. When a glimpse or mention of reality comes into play, the event becomes immediately personalized—as when Theo opens the window following his voyeuristic act of watching Matthew and Isabelle having sex on the kitchen floor. Outside the window, people are racing through the streets while the three protagonists remain cloistered within the walls of the twins’ apartment. It is only when Matthew and Isabelle have “non-regressive sex” that Theo sees the revolutionaries outside (Zubatov no pg.). Non-regressive sexual acts are thus linked to reality rather than the dream-world inside the apartment.

The Dreamers, though not a film about 1968, can be placed along with *Prima della rivoluzione* and Bellocchio’s work as a film about a generation that is “before” or “removed from” the revolution. “In *The Dreamers* Utopia is temporally finite, expressed, ironically, not in post-revolutionary success but in celebrating the potential of time ‘before the revolution,’” (Le Cain no pg.). Like the previous films, it addresses two central themes that place it in the same category: social adolescence and the distancing of the generation from that of its parents. It is important, therefore, that the film includes a scene in which Theo argues with his father. Though the father in the film is depicted as a left-wing intellectual, and a poet at that (like Bertolucci’s own father), his ideology does not necessarily produce an affinity with his son. They disagree over the

dinner table about the father's "lack of action," his refusal to sign a petition against the Vietnam War. The father, however, makes an accurate observation of his own children's relationship to the student movements, sit-ins and "happenings" that they believe can provoke and "transform" society. He addresses his son, "Listen to me, Theo. Before you can change the world, you must realize you yourself are part of it. You cannot stand outside, looking in." This statement seems to contradict Barthes's observation that in order to examine the tension of History, "we must be excluded from it." The father's admonishment, however, could be applied to all three of the young people at the table, who exhibit for the remainder of the film their distance from rather than participation in the changing world. Once the parents have vacated the apartment, the twins can engage in their incestuous relationship without fear of discovery. Isabelle, when questioned by Matthew about what she would do if her parents ever found out, replies that she would commit suicide. Her admission shows that she paradoxically remains loosely tied to the norms of society rather than truly rebelling against them.

Matthew begins as an active participant in the sexual "deviance," but he begins to view their relationship in a negative light as the situation within the apartment begins to deteriorate to a state of chaos. This decline seems to mirror the events occurring outside and also forces Matthew to question the nature of the environment. As Zubatov and Eyny point out, as the trash builds on the streets outside, so does the trash in the apartment. The lack of food in the apartment mirrors the actual food shortages in Paris. Even the protagonist's game of "Forfeit" seems to echo the political power struggles. "What happens in the apartment, then, is a kind of miniature model of the chaos outside. Whereas the spark outside is provided by politics, culture and a whole host of other imponderables, the spark inside is provided by Matthew, whose arrival on the scene penetrates the even more hermetic and infertile microcosm previously erected by the twins on their own" (Zubatov and Eyny no pg.). Matthew labels the twins' relationship as "just a game" and accuses them by saying, "You're never going to grow." The twins' relationship demonstrates a "regression into a golden age"—back to their childhood, indicating that there is something inherently compelling about the past. Matthew takes on a pseudo-paternal role as he attempts to socialize them into adulthood by taking Isabelle out on a "real" date. They go to the movies, though—surrounding themselves again with the safety of images. On their way home, televisions in a shop window

show the worker/student protests and Isabelle refuses to watch. "We never watch television, we're purists." She essentially refuses to watch "real" images, preferring instead to remain in a state of ignorant adolescence. This is confirmed when Matthew is later allowed to enter her bedroom. Her girl-like mentality is proven by the presence of dolls and teddy bears. It is a hyper-feminine space that remains frozen in time. Numerous family photographs also contribute to the space's lack of temporality. Isabelle's sanctuary is soon disrupted as she hears her brother with another girl in the room next door. Even her temporary detachment from her brother causes her extreme discomfort and she pounds on the walls for him while her "date," Matthew, tries to subdue her. Their attempts at a normal, mature evening are unproductive.

The conclusion of the film, as in *Prima*, contains the most direct discussion of politics among the protagonists and finally forces them to come to terms with the events that are unfolding in the real world. The discussion, nonetheless, is inextricably tied to the main theme of *The Dreamers*—not revolution, but cinema. Though photos of Mao hang on the walls of Theo's room and Theo reads from Marx, it is Matthew who makes the association between the idea of a revolution and cinema: Mao is like the director of a blockbuster "movie." Matthew also sees that Theo is essentially another version of *Prima*'s Fabrizio—a left-wing intellectual who will never experience the revolution. Matthew says, "If you really believed what you were saying, you'd be out there." But Theo retorts that they can never be "out there"—"You're inside, like me." Like Fabrizio, the three adolescents in *The Dreamers* remain "removed" from the revolution—forever at a distance from history.

The final scenes, however, thrust the protagonists in the midst of the actual events. When the twins' parents return home unexpectedly and find the three young people naked and asleep inside a womb-like fort within the apartment, the shock leaves them practically speechless. Unsure what to do, they do not confront their children but instead "pay them off," leaving them a check. When Isabelle finds the check and realizes that her parents now know about her incestuous relationship with her brother, she attempts to kill them all by turning on the gas in the apartment without warning the sleeping boys. Her actions could have resulted in the ultimate regression—a downward spiral into sexual experimentation and incest that leads to the only possible remedy, death (as in Bellochio's *I pugni in tasca*). In fact, Isabelle's actions are similar to Ale's in *I pugni in tasca*. In order to purify the familial unit,

her only choice is suicide and homicide. As Zubatov and Eyny write, “Bertolucci, now himself an old man, gives us sexual perversion as a journey of innocent discovery undertaken by the young protagonists to bridge the gap created by their alienation from the simultaneous madness and drudgery of life outside. But by the end of the film, that same perversion becomes a retreat from life in its entirety, and Isabelle’s act is therefore a kind of ultimate retreat from the uncertainty of 1968, from the uncertainty of the future.”

What saves them, however, is “1968.” A rock flies through the window and Isabelle, covering up her actions, tells the boys that “the street came flying into the room.” The claustrophobic, isolated interior space finally clashes with the reality of the exterior. The three protagonists race down into the street to join the crowd. Matthew, however, wants to remain separate from the twins’ sudden realization that things are really happening. He does not want to blindly join the crowd and when Theo begins to make a Molotov cocktail, Matthew protests. “Violence is wrong.” Matthew rejects the crowd mentality and, when separated from the twins, goes off in the opposite direction with his dream of pacifism intact. The twins continue on, remaining “together forever”—just as Isabelle wants. The final shots of the film are slightly ambiguous, however, in their moral tone. They depict the clash between police and the protesters, though with such dramatic filmmaking that it appears that Bertolucci glamorizes the events, making them all the more cinematic with his use of slow-motion footage. The credits then roll, though backwards. Is Bertolucci indicating that nothing really “moves forward?” All that remains is the artifice of cinema? Does the director wish only to return to a state of being “before the revolution?”

BUONGIORNO, NOTTE

Bellocchio’s post-’68 work begins with the darkened interior of an apartment, accompanied by the voice over of a real estate agent. The cave-like atmosphere, punctuated only minimally by traces of light from outside, introduces the primary space of the film as insular and claustrophobic. It will take on more of this ambience when it later becomes the space of Moro’s captivity. The female protagonist of the film, Chiara, is then introduced along with her “fake” husband, Ernesto. As they survey the apartment, a shot reveals a lone poster hanging on one of the walls—the only object in the otherwise empty space. It is a typical, glamorous poster of Hollywood and it is the only reference to popular

cinema within Bellocchio's work—making it drastically different from Bertolucci's production of the same year. The medium of film will be replaced in *Buongiorno, notte* by the confrontation between the medium of television and that of documentary footage, which gives the work a sense of immediacy that constantly competes with images of the past. In fact, the following scene is introduced by a sudden cut to a television screen and a circus-like variety show. This is one of three types of images present in the film—those of popular forms of entertainment and consumerism, those of news reports and finally documentary footage of WWII and Soviet Russia. Their coexistence posits a crucial opposition between the imaginary, the real present, and the real past.

The first view of a television program is cross-cut with a shot of Chiara falling asleep on the couch with her "real" husband, Primo, who we soon learn is another one of the Red Brigades along with Ernesto and Mariano. The television show is actually a New Year's Eve program, and thus places the film right on the cusp of 1978. Chiara eventually wakes up and delights in the fireworks outside that commemorate the end of one year and the start of another. The temporal implications of this transition from old to new can also be seen as a metaphor for moving from a state of peaceful adolescence to that of a more violent adulthood. Chiara, along with her fellow, young activists will soon reject an older mode of protest (that which spawned 1968) and adopt a new one—that of terrorism.

As in *I pugni in tasca*, the female protagonist in *Buongiorno, notte* also questions her individual identity through the use of images. She is first seen wearing goggles over her eyes and sitting in front of a sun machine. The television is blaring in the background and she suddenly removes the goggles and gazes at her face in a mirror, touching it and thoroughly inspecting it. Though Chiara is not the narcissistic Giulia of Bellocchio's earlier film, she nonetheless looks at an image of herself and appears confused and distrustful of what she sees in the reflection. This scene not only firmly establishes for the viewer that Chiara will be the central character in the story, but also alludes to the questioning of her own appearance and her identity. This self-image is immediately contrasted with a cut to the television screen. The program has just ended: "Fine della trasmissione." Chiara's self-examination thus concludes with another "conclusion" of images. The next shot reveals that images are replaced with ideology; Chiara is seen reading *The Holy Family* by Marx and Engels. She appears to reject images and choose the written word instead.

The next scene begins with a shot of the television and Chiara closing the blinds of the apartment. She, of all the group, is the most careful to keep the space self-contained so as not to arouse the suspicion of her neighbors and to protect the insular world the Red Brigades will soon occupy. Soon, however, the world of the television and the real world coincide; the sound of helicopters outside alerts Chiara that something is happening and she immediately runs to the television set. As she frantically switches between a golf match and a surreal sort of puppet show (images of an imaginary world), a special news broadcast interrupts the programming—bringing the real world inside. When the newscaster announces the kidnapping of Aldo Moro and the deaths of some in his entourage, Chiara reacts with joy and then immediately tries to stifle her emotions. What is transpiring on the television screen is the result of her extreme ideological and political dream—the two worlds come together to fruition.

This extremely important scene is interrupted, however, by an unusual interlude. Chiara's neighbor drops off her infant child and asks Chiara to watch him for a few minutes. At first, she resists but then, having been thrust the baby, attempts to deal with the situation. On the one hand she is concerned with the plan of the Red Brigades who will soon bring Aldo Moro to the hideout. On the other she demonstrates that she is completely unsure as to how to care for the child. This contrast shows how Chiara may be politically mature and intellectually developed, but she is still a child herself and appears completely flustered by this sudden responsibility. In fact, Chiara leaves the child lying on the couch and Bellocchio's camera chooses to keep it in the foreground while Moro and his kidnappers finally enter the apartment in the background—completely out of focus. Bellocchio foregrounds an innocent child while relegating the terrorists to the background. This image is followed by television footage of those killed in the kidnapping plot. Ernesto sits and watches with interest the images of the group's own actions. The images on the television screen create a sense of distance between the members of the group and the realities of what they have done. Bellocchio is thus able to combine images of innocence, of political ideology and of the real consequences of terrorism.

Though Bellocchio uses images on the television more frequently than other types of images, the primary example of a still photo within the film is also its most accurate link to the actual historical events. During Moro's captivity, the Red Brigades took a photo of him with



the flag of the *Brigate rosse* in the background. They then reproduced this image and it was distributed along with a sort of manifesto.

The photo is likewise present in the film, almost exactly the same as the original. Its efficacy as one of the Red Brigades' tools for spreading their militant politics is affirmed when it is circulated not only in newspapers but also discussed on television news broadcasts. It is described verbally, however, as a journalist asks one of the authorities some questions. First the setting of the photo is described—the physical placement of Moro within the frame. The journalist inquires as to when the authorities received the photo. Then the actual photo is specified in its spatial dimensions. Next, Moro's face is described as "tranquil" and without wounds.

The photo of a live Moro, having just been described in words, is followed by real television footage of the funeral for those killed in the kidnapping. The camera pans from left to right over the enormous crowd gathered to remember the dead, then cuts to the photos of the dead men. The photos are filmed slowly moving from right to left and are cross cut with shots of Chiara watching them on the television. She appears fixated on their faces, as if incredulous of the reality of the group's actions, and yet is also visibly angered when the priest refers to the *Brigate Rosse* as "assassins." The presence of photographs in this scene reinforces the medium's connection to the realm of the dead and to a past that is no longer reachable nor, in the case of the terrorist group, changeable. The documentary footage of the funeral is followed first by a cut to Ernesto watching a variety show on television—another reference to the imaginary world of popular culture. The show is interrupted by a statement by Giovanni Galloni, the vice secretary of the Christian Democrats. He also verbally describes the photo and the appearance of Moro, though this time qualifying that he appears melancholy. Galloni, however, again refers to the specific temporal nature of the photo, saying that it gives the public comfort to know he is alive and seemingly in good health. Its temporal implications are important, for the photo shows that Moro is alive—but only certainly alive at the time of the photo's exposure. By the time the public sees the picture or hears it described by others on television, he could be dead. Moro as a figure thus resides in a sort of liminal space between the past and present, between alive and dead. This strange existence is a testament to the medium of photography itself and is appropriate in Bellocchio's retelling of a period of historical limbo that is represented by Moro's 55 days of captivity. Moro is aware of his state of existential limbo and he himself alludes to the power of the photographic medium when he later argues with his captors about his impending death. He tries to persuade them that if they kill him and a photo of his body is shown to the public he will undoubtedly become a martyr rather than a political weapon for the Red Brigades. The power of photography will be able to permanently fix Moro's image in the public memory and turn death into a sort of heroic and historic act.

The third type of image besides the still photograph of Moro and the television images appears as Bellocchio begins to more fully develop the character of Chiara. Bellocchio splices documentary historical footage in black and white into a series of increasingly longer

dream-like sequences. The first comes directly after she sees the photo of Moro in the apartment. Chiara appears to be dreaming, but her dreams are in black and white and contain images of Lenin, flags and children. Images of Russia, Stalin, and elaborate political spectacles reappear after the description of the Moro photo by Galloni. When the viewer learns that Chiara's father was a partisan in the Resistance movement during WWII and that both her parents are dead, the connection between the images of her political ideals and those of her more personal history becomes confused. While Chiara reads a letter that Moro has written to his wife, Moro's voiceover is suddenly replaced with another voice that describes events of the Resistance. Chiara reacts with a jolt as the present is violently interrupted by the past—the voice of her father and black and white historical footage of fascism. The face of Chiara and the footage of Italy's fascist past are also intercut with the rest of the Red Brigades looking one by one into the peephole of Moro's captivity room. Bellocchio thus connects the two extremes of fascism and left-wing terrorism and places Chiara in the middle—caught between her own personal history and her involvement in the present unfolding of it. The documentary footage ends with three shots of young girls; these images allude to the innocence that is still left in Chiara and which will eventually make her change her course of action as an individual rather than the member of a group.

Since Moro's letter is the impetus for Chiara's personal memories, it also places him in the role of a father figure. As such, Moro also appears in Chiara's dreams when she sees him moving around the apartment freely while the rest of the group is sleeping. Chiara also explicitly makes the connection between Moro and her father when she tells her friend Enzo that Moro's letter that was published in the newspaper reminded her of her own father's letters. The blurring of lines between present reality and personal past continues during this discussion with Enzo. Enzo wrote a screenplay entitled "Buongiorno, notte" that Chiara had recently read. In it, Enzo imagines a scenario very similar to the one in which the Red Brigades now find themselves. Chiara criticizes his hobby of writing screenplays by saying that imagination never resolved any problems—"la realtà è un'altra cosa." Enzo responds, "L'immaginazione è reale." He then eerily alludes how his own imagination has become a reality: he has changed the ending completely and has included a young woman, like Chiara. At this point Chiara finds herself in a state of limbo herself as she hears Enzo describe a literary reality, a

fiction, which is uncomfortably close to her personal reality. Enzo narrates the story to her, describing how the fictional woman wants to save the prisoner because she does not believe in group's mentality anymore. "Non ci crede... Lei si infuria con se stessa per essere stata così cieca, così stupida... deve fare qualcosa." It is Enzo who is able to pinpoint Chiara's growing sense of individuality and her potential power to save Moro's life—perhaps even before Chiara is fully aware herself.

Unlike Ale in *Pugni in tasca*, Chiara is not able to embrace her individuality and actively carry out her individual desires—she can only dream of them. Once Chiara realizes that Moro will be killed and becomes aware of her own dissent from the group, it is too late. She can only dream that she is able to let Moro escape from the apartment and walk the streets a free man. This image is immediately contrasted with the reality of the situation as the viewer sees the rest of the group lead Moro out blindfolded. Bellocchio then inserts actual television footage of Moro's funeral in order to establish the truth of his death. The final shot of the film, however, alludes to Chiara's more peaceful version of the conclusion as the viewer sees Moro alive and walking away from his captors. Bellocchio thus uses Chiara's point of view to make his own political and ideological statement against an extreme form of political violence that unfortunately was one of the negative consequences of the movements of 1968.

CONCLUSION

As Le Cain defines it, the legacy of 1968 is as a "moment defined by Possibility—political, sexual, aesthetic (read: cinematic), even fashionable—that suspends itself from the consequences of history" (no pg.). This definition seems to indicate that '68's legacy hinges not on the historical but on the possibility and potential embedded in it as a symbol of "an age." If this is the legacy of "Sessantotto," then the early films of Bertolucci and Bellocchio are essential components of its creation. *Prima della rivoluzione* and *I pugni in tasca* portray a state of adolescence that is literally before the revolution, though tinged with a sense of what is to come. Because the protagonists of these films are excluded from the revolution, they provide a unique and essential distance from History that allows us, to again quote Barthes, to "look at it." Bertolucci's approach to *The Dreamers* is somewhat similar; although the events of the film coincide with the '68 uprising, the narrative is removed from the Italian context and the protagonists, by choosing to reside in the comfortable

womb of an image-driven dream world, remain at a distance from reality. *Buongiorno, notte*, though it is the only work to truly examine the legacy of Sessantotto, also exhibits a critical sense of distance both in its setting a full decade after the revolution and in its depiction of radical political violence. Yet despite their diverse approaches to the aura surrounding '68, all the films show through their use of photography, metafilmic techniques, and mass media the importance of "the image." Both of Bertolucci's films delve into metacinema as a means of reinforcing the power of the moving image. The director thus presents film and its revolutionary aesthetics as the most effective means for examining the great changes in Italian society during the 1960s. Bellocchio's two works not only diverge from Bertolucci's but also differ greatly from each other in their approach to the image. While *I pugni in tasca* primarily uses the presence of photography for its temporal implications (its ability to stop time and its constant reference to the past), *Buongiorno, notte* uses one photograph in particular and televised images to address the more immediate present. All of the films thus present the power of the image yet also its powerlessness in capturing reality; in particular, they show the impossibility of fully representing the historical era surrounding Sessantotto. As mentioned earlier, this is the irony to which Barthes alludes in his description of viewing photographic images: the specific moment "has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred" (77). Photographs, for Barthes, are not historical documents but the palpable evidence of the impossibility of the historian's (and our) desire to see events in their meaningful actuality. It is an ironic endeavor, according to Bertolucci and Bellocchio, whose (im)possibility and endless necessity may be expressed only through the language of cinema.

Notes

1. It is Costa's analysis of Bellocchio's *I pugni in tasca* and his description of its portrayal of an age of adolescence that has helped me to link the two works together.

2. T. Jefferson Kline compares Bertolucci and Godard's approach as a rejection of André Bazin's theory of cinema. "The autonomy of the work, its status as a rival totality to the real, is to Bazin literally unthinkable. Hence he downgrades any kind of form except that subservient to the form of the real. Bazin's emphasis on the art, the sequence, serves to keep the cinema in a kind

of infancy or adolescence always dependent on the real, that is, on another order than itself" (19–20). If, as Kline alludes, Bertolucci's aesthetic approach counters Bazin's emphasis on the real (by making, for example, the presence of his camera known to the spectator) and attempts to move past a "cinematic adolescence," then a more cogent connection can be made between the form of *Prima della rivoluzione* and its thematic examination of "social adolescence."

3. Kline also invokes Barthes by explaining that the photograph "forever repeats the moment of what Lacan called the 'mirror stage of development,' the moment at which the other is inscribed in the self as a constituent part of the ego" (31).

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