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**Screening Revolution: Cinema as an Alternative Public Space during the Years of
Lead (1969-1994)**

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By Patrick Hayes

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion

Of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies

Croft Institute for International Studies

Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

The University of Mississippi

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Approved

Advisor: Dr. Joshua First

Reader: Dr. William Schenck

Reader: Dr. Valerio Cappozzo

Abstract

1969 to 1988 was a period of social and political unrest in Italy known as the Years of Lead. Within this political foment, leftist directors produced films which dealt with topics that were of concern to the Left such as the condition of factory workers and police corruption. This thesis explores the role of cinema within the public sphere, whether it acted as an alternative space, and whether its role changed over time. Influenced by neo-Habermasian theory, I hypothesize that cinema served as an alternative public space in which directors critiqued the environment which drove students and workers to the streets and as a political device to promulgate leftist ideas often through weaving them into poignant narratives. I explore this hypothesis and cinema's changing role over a period of twenty-five years from 1969 until 1994 through looking at particular films and directors from that period.

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Introduction

Since the Neorealist movement emerged after World War II, Italian cinema has held a tradition of social and political criticism. In the political and social foment of the Years of Lead, a period of political radicalization and terrorism from late 1969 to 1988, this analysis of society through film continued in the hands of politically-minded directors, such as Petri, Pasolini, Moretti, Damiani, Squitieri, and many others, who felt compelled to respond to the government's corruption and the voice of students and workers whose protests and terrorist acts shook the relative peace experienced after the "boom economico." Their films touched on a range of topics important to these disenfranchised groups such as the working conditions of factories, as seen in *La Classe Operaia Via in Paradiso* (1971) by Squitieri, the often below-board dealings of the police, as in *Indagine su un Cittadino sopra Ogni Sospetto* (1970) by Petri and as in *Confessione di un commissario di polizia al procuratore della repubblica* (1971) by Damiani, the alienation of the youth, as in *Gli Invisibili* (1988) by Squitieri, the impact of the rapid economic changes in *Il Boom* (1963) by De Sica, later on the search for identity in the communist party, as in *La Cosa* (1990) and *Palombella Rossa* (1989) by Moretti, and the cultural differences between the north and south of Italy, as in *Comizi d'amore* (1964) by Pasolini. It should be noted that while the cinema did voice and publicize the concerns of these radicalized groups it was not the only medium to do so. In addition, there were pirate radio stations, a smattering of communist publications, and, quite obviously, the streets, classrooms, and assembly lines where individuals fought, sometimes quite literally, to express themselves and their vehement disapproval of the status quo. To give you an idea of that status quo, a brief overview is in order.

1969 was a watershed moment in political activism: students and workers from around the world united in protest. In most countries, this political upheaval would end that same year or the year after, but, in Italy, this political unrest which quickly evolved into a conflict between the far Left and neo-fascists lasted until 1988. This continued activity was strengthened by four key factors. There was little public trust in the government because the Christian Democratic Party (DC) was corrupt, using mass clientelism to ensure votes and remain in power for roughly forty years. By maintaining control through what was effectively bribery, the DC kept the Communist Party (PCI) which at one point in the mid-70s constituted approximately 35% of the voting population from fully achieving its goals on a national level. This lack of control over national politics presumably caused some frustration for already disgruntled voters. The third was that there was and arguably is a high level of social and economic inequality between social classes and more visibly between the industrial North and pastoral South. Finally, the industrial and especially the educational infrastructure were grossly outdated and unable to accommodate the demands of a growing population who had higher educational demands. These motivations compelled radical groups to respond in increasingly violent ways. During these years, roughly 14,000 acts of terrorism were perpetrated, 428 people killed, and around 2000 people were injured in some way according to the Italian government. These figures only show the violent fraction of what was a widespread popular movement that rejected the powers that be and their institutions.

This project will aim to explore the exact role that film had in the expression of this political unrest and how that role changed over time. I hypothesize that cinema served as an alternative public space in which directors critiqued the environment which drove students and workers to the streets and as a political device to promulgate leftist ideas often through weaving them into poignant narratives. I hope that this research will broaden the scholarly understanding of the modes in which the Italian populace responded to and protested against the government and its rampant corruption at that time and of the importance of cinema as a political tool for student and worker groups during the 70s and 80s.

Literature Review:

From a perusal of the existing literature, I have found that many of the books and scholarly articles on Italian cinema discuss in detail the Neorealist movement as it is commonly understood as the most influential Italian cinematic movement for world cinema and that the rest generally either provide an overview of Italy's cinematic history or focus on individual directors and their impact. Books and essays on the Years of Lead investigate the political aspects such as terrorism or the factors which gave rise to the unrest but often exclude the role that artistic mediums had in the public expression of these radical anti-government positions.

The three exceptions to this would be "*More Work! Less Pay!*": *Rebellion and Repression in Italy, 1972–77* by Phil Edwards, *Terrorism, Italian Style: Representations of Political Violence in Contemporary Italian Cinema* by Ruth Glynn, Giancarlo

Lombardi and Alan O’Leary, and *Imagining Terrorism: The Rhetoric and Representation of Political Violence in Italy, 1969–2009* edited by Pierpaolo Antonello and Alan O’Leary. My research is different than Edwards’ because it extends to 1994 and thus allows a farther ranging analysis and a comparison between cinema pre and post-Moro. Additionally, his work relies on the writings of Sidney Tarrow while mine will rely in part on Calhoun and on cinema theorists, such as Gaut and Oudart. Because my reading of the films will be through a different theoretical lens, the resulting interpretation will differ from his. In relation to the second text, the focus will be on the changing role of and presentation within cinema during the Years of Lead instead of using cinema and television to “... cast light on historical and ideological conditions, and on the topicality and legacies of terrorism.”¹ I will be studying the cinema and its privileged position as social commenter, rather than applying it to societal elements. Unlike the final text which is simply a collection of scholarly essays written about individual artistic figures from several different media, my thesis will provide a more comprehensive narrative to the role of cinema during the Years of Lead. While articles may have been written at the time discussing certain films, the work of creating an in-depth analysis of the role of cinema during the period as a whole has seemingly not yet been undertaken. My research will hopefully fill this gap.

¹ Ruth Glynn, Giancarlo Lombardi, and Alan O’Leary, *Terrorism, Italian Style: Representations of Political Violence in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (London: Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, 2012).

Methodology:

I will be relying on the framework constructed by Scott Mackenzie in his book *Screening Quebecois* in which he builds off a Habermasian framework to analyze the position that cinema had in the formation of nationalism in Quebec. I will be loosely following his framework to understand the role of cinema as an alternative space in expressing the will of and uniting left-leaning groups. To give a better understanding of how I will be using Calhoun's framework, it is first necessary to explain his use of the term public sphere and public space. For Habermas and by extension Calhoun, the public sphere is understood as the collective body of private individuals gathered in a capitalist society. Through rational will-formation, this public form a civil society, a sphere in the political realm which is involved in "commodity exchange and social labor."² A public space is explained to be an expression by this civil society which escapes the public sphere. In more layman terms, the public sphere can be understood as the whole of civil society, while a public space is a realm of discourse which is separate from the public sphere and thus can escape its sway of influence. The term that I am using and claim cinema to be is an "alternative public space," which can then be understood as a realm of discussion of a minority group within the civil society that disagrees with or is repressed by the bourgeoisie.³ I will also be using some of the arguments made by Calhoun via Anderson in Anderson's work *Imagined Communities* and applying it to the suture theory of Oudart to make the case that films allowed individuals to imagine themselves as a part of this

² Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. T. Burger & F. Lawrence, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991: 27.

³ Note: When I argue that cinema is an alternative public space, I am not implying its exclusivity. Political discourses were had throughout Italy in the streets, in the classroom, and on the factory floor. What I am arguing is that cinema did act as an alternative public space whose importance was greater than that of others due to its cultural cachet as a tool for social critique.

alternative community and this imagined belonging further united worker and student groups. In reading the films, the theoretical framework will allow me to see how shared symbols, characters, and criticisms formed the central discourse of the alternative space, how that core argument changed over time, and, with the aid of first-hand accounts, how it affected the movement.

The film journal *Bianco e Nero* (which had a print run throughout the period under examination) and articles from major Italian newspapers collected by the internet archive *La Stampa* will provide a detailed description of the historical context in which I will be reading the films. The films under review were chosen based on time period and will be analyzed in relation to other films of the same period as defined below in the organizational outline. The articles will provide a better description of the influence and impact that the films had during the period, and they will give a first-hand account of the leftist movement and any uses of cinema for political purposes in that movement. Some secondary sources are on cinema theory and reading film. These will be used to inform any interpretation. Books and journal articles which fall outside of cinema theory will act as general knowledge about the history, politics, and social movements at the time that may have gone unmentioned in more cinema-focused journals and newspaper articles.

Organization:

I divide the thesis into three chapters. The first chapter will examine the use of cinema from 1969 to 1978 before the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, the former prime minister and secretary of the Christian Democrats. Two films will take the lion share of

pages: *La Classe Operaia va in Paradiso* (1971) by Petri and *Confessione di un commissario di polizia al procuratore della repubblica* (Confessions of a Police Captain) (1971) by Damiani. These two films present the growing anti-police sentiment after the beginning of more widespread protest and terrorism and the conditions of the working class and its relation to students in 1969. The third chapter will follow cinema's changing role from 1978 post-Moro to mid-1988. I am dividing the chapters along these lines because, as I will argue in the thesis, the movement became far more radicalized and thus alienated its base after Moro's killing. This would understandably affect the content of the films dealing with social and political issues and therefore the mode in which the directors presented these ideas. The main films of the section will be *Gli Invisibili* (The Invisible Ones) (1988) by Squitieri and *Colpire al Cuore* (Blow to the Heart) (1982) by Amelio because of their depictions of alienation. The final section will focus its attention on films made from 1989 to 1994 when the Communist and Christian Democratic parties dissolved and will investigate the tonal shift in cinema and the abandoning of the radicalized alternative space in the evolving political landscape of post-Cold War Italy. Quite a few pages will be devoted to the works of Moretti, with the most time being given to *Palombella Rossa* (Red Wood Pigeon) (1989) and *La Cosa* (The Thing) (1990).

Chapter I: Revolutionary Images

1969 marked the beginning of a tumultuous period in the Italian political sphere, now populated with the voices of students and workers protesting the conditions created by the Christian Democratic government. In this socio-political foment, leftist directors, such as Elio Petri and Damiano Damiani, attempted to both capture the situation in which these underprivileged groups found themselves during the Hot Autumn and after and present the system against which they fought through the medium of film. As exemplified in his films after 1969, Petri focuses on the internal corruption at the heart of the state, the industrial complex developed after the Second World War that kept it afloat, and the gradual political, social, and moral degradation of the Italian people since the economic boom of the 1950's. His last two films in particular hold an apocalyptic vision of the future of Italy, with caricatured politicians of the Christian Democratic Party being murdered while a corrupt priest watches helplessly.⁴⁵ Damiani's films from 1969 to 1978 focus more specifically on individuals in dire straits committing crimes and the police force and its internal corruption. His criticisms of the police often expand to that of the entire state as a whole and its involvement with the mafia, as seen in his trilogy on the mafia. The following chapter will focus on two of these directors' films, *La Classe Operaia va in Paradiso* (The Working Class Goes to Heaven) (1971) by Petri and *Confessione di un commissario di polizia al procuratore della repubblica* (Confessions of a Police Captain) (1971) by Damiani, how they relate to the student and worker

⁴ By using the term "apocalyptic," I am using it in the sense that Umberto Eco does in his book, *Apocalittici ed integrati*.

⁵ The latter dependent clause is a reference to Petri's film, *Todo Modo* (1976).

revolutions as a whole, and how we can understand these films within the context of the framework formulated by Scott Mackenzie that was outlined in the introduction.

Workers' Conditions in the Working Class Goes to Heaven

Alongside the student movement, there arose the workers' movement which focused its efforts on changing the employee-employer relationship and maintained a relationship with the Left and student groups. The working conditions during this time were quite grim, and the unions were being questioned for the ineffectiveness in bringing about better working conditions. After the economic boom of the early 1950s, production and automation in Italian factories soared to unprecedented levels. With these changes came higher expectations from the employer for the workers to produce in greater volume and with more efficiency. Higher rates of production often did not coincide with higher wages or a better standard of living for factory workers. This treatment of workers was seen as classical capitalist exploitation of the proletariat by leftist groups, and it is from that idea that calls for the working class to mobilize and strike arose.⁶ It was to be through the common struggle of students and workers that revolution could be achieved.⁷ *The Working Class Goes to Heaven* centers itself on the life of one worker, Lulu, and how he confronts the world around him. This film was noted at the time as being true to life in its depiction of the workers' desperation.⁸

⁶ Alberto Ronchey. "Come sta cambiando la 'classe operaia.'" *La Stampa*. April 30th, 1970

⁷ Felice Froio. "L'Università non si salverà' escludendo la classe operaia," *La Stampa*. November 25th, 1974

⁸ Leo Pestelli. "La classe operaia di Petri tra la fabbrica e il manicomio." *La Stampa*. September 18th, 1971

The film opens with an alarm clock ringing and sirens sounding outside. The film's protagonist, Lulu, has a brief discussion with his long-term girlfriend about their lives and how the body works. Lulu describes his body as a factory of excrement. This scene then transitions to Lulu going to work to find student protesters outside of the factory, calling for the solidarity of students and workers. Lulu ignores their protest and walks in with the rest of the workers. Lulu's work is mind-numbingly simple, such that he says that even an ape could do it. In the background, there is a large poster of a finger pointing downward which demands the workers to pay attention to what they are doing, and statues of workers are dotted around the factory. Lulu's work is quite taxing as he is dealing with metal. He works at a pace which mimics a machine and chants profanities at a monotonous rhythm in order to produce at the rate demanded by the higher-ups. He does this all for his son that he had with his ex-wife who he refuses to throw to the dogs as his father had done to him. After becoming increasingly agitated, Lulu loses his finger in an accident and is given some time off of work. He visits his father who lives in a sanitarium. The father explains to Lulu how he had gone mad on the line and that he would like to meet the engineer who designed the production line at the factory to ask him what they were making and to kill him. After being riled up, the father calms down and explains that the real problem is that they (the employers) have too much and that we (the workers) have too little. The jealousy drives one to madness. The father is a depiction of the historical treatment of workers and the inequality that they have experienced. Lulu is kind with him but thinks he is mentally infirm. This is meant to suggest that there is a separation between the way that the workers conceive their struggle as different because the average standard of living had risen since the economic boom.

The older generation enjoyed none of the benefits that the younger generation does. It is only at the end of the film that Lulu understands his father and his desire to tear down the walls of the sanatorium. Here, the sanatorium is representative of the system in which workers are taken and used as machines. When they are broken, they are thrown or stashed away to not be seen by the public.

After visiting his father, he returns to work to find that his employer who had treated him well for his high level of production does not care about his injury and is more disappointed about the seven percent drop in production. This callousness makes Lulu intentionally begin to work slow and sing songs to poke fun at the management. Lulu is promptly sent to the company's psychiatrist, where Lulu explains that he has become a beast, a machine, a tool, a screw, a nail to be used and thrown away. Later that day, a union meeting is held. The union is trying to compromise with the company, but the union's half-hearted approach is not enough for Lulu and many of his fellow workers who go on strike despite the union's wishes to the contrary. Upon leaving the factory, Lulu encounters the students that he had previously passed by and joins their cause. During the strike, Lulu has sexual intercourse with one of the workers from the factory in the factory where Lulu had once worked. The union to which he was looking forward was disappointing. While rioting outside with the students, Lulu is caught in the middle of violence when the riot police arrive to break up the strike and permit the non-striking workers to continue to do their drop. The owner of the company drives through the crowd and hits Lulu who is eventually thrown from the car. As the violence escalates, the owner's car is set aflame when a young worker throws a burning grease rag into the

driver's seat. After these events, Lulu becomes more entrenched in his position as a politically active proletariat. His girlfriend and her son, Arturo, leave Lulu, and he loses his job at the factory. In his desperation, Lulu isolates himself and collects all the things from his apartment to sell so that maybe he can travel as he had dreamed. He passes out in a drunken stupor after stabbing Arturo's Mickey Mouse toy. After this low point, his girlfriend returns, and the union gets Lulu a less taxing job at the factory. The final scene is Lulu standing on the assembly line talking with other workers about his father. Lulu discusses how his father had wanted to tear down the wall and wonders what his father imagined was behind the wall. The noise of the machines in the background drown out his voice, and, when another asks what he said, Lulu replies by saying that the other worker should forget what he said. The return to work shows the limited nature of the worker revolution. While the students can galvanize the workers to action, they do not have the means to support the workers in a tangible way. Without tangible support and the support of many of their fellow workers, the improvement of the worker's condition can only be made in piecemeal negotiations. A future without exploitation, heaven, lies behind the wall for the working class. It is only that the demands and realities of life and the lack of unity stand in the way of going to heaven. For Lulu, it is better to not even discuss this heaven because it cannot be realized. The film's title suggests that the working class does go to heaven, but there is the caveat that they have to be a class that has come together as a political party for them to reach heaven. This is an echo of the arguments being made in the public sphere at the time. Heaven is the ideal and, just as it is thought of in Christian theology, can be achieved on Earth.

Corruption and Violence in Confessions of a Police Captain

During the Years of Lead, there was an ongoing critique of the state and its corruption which extended from the head of government to police officers.⁹ This critique was in many ways shaped by the many scandals that arose that revealed police corruption and involvement with the mafia.¹⁰ *Confessions of a Police Captain* captures the anti-government sentiment by presenting a compelling and thrilling narrative of a police captain in his fight against the corrupt police who surround him and the city officials who are paid by the mafia to turn a blind eye to the mafia's activities. As the viewer, we envision ourselves as the protagonist and empathize with his efforts to clean the streets of crime. The response to the corruption is not separate from the state but rather comes from the state itself. Depicted in the scene of the young boy speaking out against the mafia and being brutally beaten while the police watch, protest does not do anything to prevent the mafia from completing its aims or from the state being corrupt. It is only through changes in the administration and cleansing the leadership and corrupt police from the top down for there to be a difference. The viewer connects to the police captain and recognizes his struggle because of the experiences that they have had in their own lives.

Conclusion

Both of the films in this chapter touch on critical issues discussed at the time in Italian society. As shown in the articles, the films' messages, especially *The Working Class*

⁹ G.g. "La tentata corruzione dei congressisti del pri." *La Stampa*. April 5th, 1971

¹⁰ Guido Guidi. "Saranno processati 11 carabinieri per violenze e lesioni ai 'fermati.'" *La Stampa*. January 20th, 1970

Goes to Heaven, run parallel to discourses being had in other media and on the Left. This running parallel to existing discourse within the public sphere is a central feature of Italian cinema. In the post-War period, cinema acted as a social critique, pointing at the poverty and dire situations in which individuals were living. This ran alongside articles and other media during that time that discussed the lack of resources after the War.¹¹

When mapping where cinema stands in relation to the public sphere, there is the idea that cinema is an alternative space unto itself which interacts with the public sphere but is nevertheless something distinctly separate. This understanding of cinema envisions it as a space that takes the conflicts depicted in it from the sociocultural milieu but it is not shaped by those social and cultural conditions. Within the Italian case, that understanding does not fit. This can be seen in how tightly bound Italian cinema is to the social conditions in which the directors envision themselves. When there is the perception of police brutality and corruption among government officials, a director such as Damiani responds with a trilogy that discusses police corruption and the Mafia in Sicily, and, when there are mass movements among student and worker groups, Petri creates a narrative that explores the life of a worker that is in the midst of these protests. The society in which the directors find themselves fundamentally shapes the direction and arguments of the films that they make. Cinema is not a sphere separated from the leftist public sphere but rather it is a component of it. This then raises the question of what role does it play within the leftist public sphere.

¹¹ "Quanta fame!," *La Stampa*, February 16th, 1945

Within the public sphere, cinema takes ideas that exist in the public sphere and reproduce them through the medium of film. In doing so, cinema reinforces positions held in the public sphere and casts aspersions on certain positions with which the director may disagree. As we see later, the director can hold differing beliefs than those upheld by proponents of the Left, but this, generally speaking, is aimed at correcting or drawing attention to problems in the movement rather than chastising it completely. Cinema is a complex medium in that it takes the arguments from the public sphere and transforms them. This is done on two levels. The first is the insertion of the mind of the auteur which shapes the arguments of which he is aware to create a coherent message presented through film. The second is a transformation brought about by the nature of cinema and the filmic medium.¹² Film and the narratives presented through it create the opportunity for an emotional connection which is more approachable and widespread than other media. By creating a character that encapsulates a certain identity, the aims of distant or fringe groups can be empathized. Not only can people imagine themselves in the position of the protagonist, but they can imagine themselves as viewers in a shared experience with others who are viewing a film.¹³ This shared experience further enforces a sense of community among those who empathize with the on-screen characters. Of course, the degree to which the films created or forged closer ties is difficult to determine, but, in considering elements at play within the leftist public sphere at the time, it is a relevant component. As a tool, cinema is used to spread discourses considered relevant by the

¹² Berys Gaut. *A Philosophy of the Cinematic Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010

¹³ Scott Mackenzie, *Screening Québec: Québécois Moving Images, National Identity, and the Public Sphere* Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2004

director and add to these discourses by presenting a new manner or perspective on thinking of issues within the public sphere.

Chapter II: After Moro

After the end of the Second World War and the rise of the Christian Democratic Party (DC) to power in 1946, Aldo Moro acted as an important figure as both a two-time prime minister as well as being the party secretary of the DC. In 1973, Eduardo Berlinguer, the General Secretary of the Communist Party (PCI), called for a compromise with the DC.¹⁴ In light of the Prague Spring, he believed that the PCI could only come to power within the democratic system by working with more moderate parties. Moro supported this “democratic alternative” and became one of its most outspoken supporters. This transition of the PCI was not met with the same level of enthusiasm throughout the leftist camp: the paramilitary wing of the PCI, the Red Brigade, who had been previously disowned by the PCI, opposed this dissolution of Marxist principles in favor of wider appeal through an increase in terrorism. These terrorist acts culminated in the kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro in 1978, which as will be argued below resulted in a polarized political space in which the leftist movement felt alienated from its more radical origins in the student and worker revolutions. As the leftist movement changed, the directors who captured the emotions and conditions of the movement changed the tone of their films to match the new internal relations between different parts of an increasingly more fragmented movement. Both of the films under review in this chapter, *Colpire al Cuore* (Blow to the Heart) (1982) and *Gli Invisibili* (The Invisible Ones) (1988) by Gianni Amelio and Pasquale Squitieri respectively, focus on the relationship between the younger generation who represent those who came to adulthood after 1969 and the older generation who took part in the Hot Autumn and their relation to leftist

¹⁴ Enrico Berlinguer, “Alleanze sociali e schieramenti politici,” *Rinascita* 30 (October 1973), 3-5.

terrorism. This chapter will analyze these two films within the context of Italy after Moro's death and connect the changes in filmic representation to the larger changes in the political sphere.

Betrayal, Isolation, and Abandonment in *Blow to the Heart* and *The Invisible Ones*

Both of these films touch on the changing position of Italian society in relation to the Left in terms of social and political changes. After Moro's death, the tolerance for the far Left began to dry up, and any connection between political parties and the militant part of the Left was severed.¹⁵ *Blow to the Heart* follows the story of a father and son as the son realizes who his father is and the connections that he has with terrorists, and *The Invisible Ones* depicts the lives of two brothers who are divided by their ideologies. Both of these films play on familial relations which suggests an intimacy between the two central characters in each film. The left and the militant left are not entirely separated from one another. There is a history and connection between the two. Despite the different directions that they have taken, they are nevertheless bound together. As it came first chronologically, *Blow to the Heart* will be the first one under review.

The story opens with the father, Dario, telling a story to the son, Emilio, about the conductor who when he leaves his orchestra to play freely finds that the orchestra plays the same song. This is meant to foreshadow the father and his continued commitment to the militant leftist cause. The father is reviewing his library when he remarks that, after years of study, his colleagues know nothing. They spend their days talking in abstraction

¹⁵ "Tutti contro il terrorismo." *La Stampa*. February 25th, 1978

and only at night speak of things that matter. After this discussion, the son goes to a coffee shop and eyes an attractive woman who shares his gaze. Her wife and infant child arrive, leaving Emilio slightly crestfallen. He goes to his grandmother's house to find the woman and her family there. As it turns out, they are friends of his father. While rummaging through the photo albums, Emilio finds pictures of Dario standing beside communists during the Second World War and watches Dario as he speaks in hushed tones to the husband in the garden. Emiglio drives around with the mother and talks about how the couple know Dario. Nothing much comes of the conversation as the woman is quite cagey, and it transitions to the father and son talking at the university about how students no longer read Leopardi. Emiglio rides home on the trolley, but his ride is interrupted because of a car bombing that happened nearby which results in the police sealing off the area. Emiglio investigates and discovers that the car bombing had been caused by the husband. Arriving at home, Emiglio sees the news on the television and finds that his father is nowhere to be found. Deducing that he might have been brought in for questioning, Emiglio goes to the local precinct and finds his father being dragged to an interrogation room. After they have an awkward ride home, Emiglio confronts the father and asks him directly if he is a terrorist. The father plays off of his question and refuses to answer. Emiglio sets out on his own and tracks the wife after seeing her in town. He follows her to an apartment block on the outskirts of town and then returns back home. Emiglio presents an article about a police crackdown and how the wife is being hunted. After showing this to his father, Emiglio traces his father to a student protest where Dario is meeting with the wife. Emiglio takes a picture of the two of them together and leaves it on his father's desk. Upon finding the picture, Dario hunts down his son and

asks him why he did not take the picture to the police and whether Emiglio was trying to intimidate him. Their discussion becomes heated, and Dario slaps his son, explaining that he is not a perfect father. Their argument spills out into the street and they discuss what is right and the father's past. Dario seeks forgiveness from his son and promises to be the father that he needs. To end their relationship, Dario goes to the wife's apartment and gives her tickets for her and her son to leave the city. While this farewell is happening, a team of armed police raid the house and imprison Dario and the wife on grounds of aiding terrorism. As we discover in the closing shots, Emiglio had betrayed his father and had told the police where the woman was living. This dual betrayal is quite interesting when thought of along the lines of the modern Left and the historical Left. The father, as the militant part of the far Left, betrays his son by not showing him what his true nature is and refusing to have an honest discussion. It is from the father that Emiglio has come to learn everything as the Left grew out of the communists and anti-fascists of the Second World War. By lingering on the previous modes of political action and violence, the far Left and the father reject the Left's and Emiglio's belief in the way that things are and how they could be through interacting peacefully within a democratic system. Emiglio's betrayal of his father represents the unwillingness of the Left to reincorporate the far Left and his abandoning of his father even after asking for forgiveness mimics the rejection of extremist politics in an increasingly centrist political environment. As the father noted at the end of the film, the world is becoming more complex, and he hopes to one day find truth. It is immediately after that he is arrested. The truth that he can afford and the discourses that he may have are restricted to the limitations of being within the democratic system, as within the public sphere. As we will see with *The Invisible Ones*,

this idea of separating the Left and the silencing of the more radical half is a recurring theme during this period.

The Invisible Ones opens with the main character, Sirio, being arrested and imprisoned on charges of weapons trafficking and aiding terrorism. It then flashes back to Sirio and his brother Apache as they meet at a bar to discuss the direction of their band of renegades. Apache tries to comfort his brother and believes that nothing bad will come from their limited involvement. Their discussion does not last long before the police raid the bar and arrest the pair. The police raid the brothers' home, looking for weapons. It returns to the present time when Sirio watches and bangs his cup on the door as a man protests the jail guards by stabbing himself repeatedly and slashing his abdomen. The evening after, a guard speaks ill of the man who stabbed himself and of political prisoners in general. Sirio is not terribly involved with the movement at this point, so he disregards the criticism hurled at him. After serving his time, he visits the pirate radio station and finds all of his friends. They announce on air that they will be celebrating his return, but this party is cancelled by the police who were listening into the radio. Sirio is taken in for questioning, and, although he does not support the use of weapons, he refuses to give the names of compagni (companions) who use them for leftist terrorism. A fellow inmate gives him a book to read about communism which is in French, and it is revealed that Sirio cannot read French or English. His support of the Left is not founded on the idea of the international communist movement but is rather grounded on a distinctly Italian conception of communism. A politician who is imprisoned for political crimes is brutally stabbed to death in the yard by a group of young people. The blame for his death is

placed on Sirio, and he is moved to a prison that is solely for violent Leftist activists. In this prison, he finds Apache and reflects on the moment when weapons entered into the pirate radio station and changed the nature of their group. Life within the prison is quite relaxed. There is even an artist who is allowed to draw on the walls of his cell.

This peace does not last, however, as tensions rise when an imprisoned academic publically retracts his prior statements that were in support of the Left and terrorism. He becomes a whipping boy and is threatened repeatedly. The main gang in the yard led by Falco try to kill him later on in the film. While Apache gravitates toward the more extreme members of the prison, Sirio spends his time with the “Professor” who holds an ambivalent position on terrorism and is called a traitor by the others. An example of Apache’s shift to a more radical position is seen in his anger toward a fellow inmate who is amiable with a guard who is from the same region. For Apache, a guard is just that and nothing more. As time progresses, the prisoners become more restless after a terror attack occurs, and they eventually overthrow the prison in a mass riot involving homemade pipe bombs. The prisoners celebrate that they have won when all of their demands are agreed to by the police, but Sirio questions what they have actually won. An attack helicopter lands on the roof, and a group of soldiers retake the prison. The prisoners are forced to walk along a corridor where officers beat them with batons on both sides. They do not discriminate in their beating. Those who did not raise a hand against the guards such as Sirio and the Professor are horribly beaten. Apache barely survives with the aid of the Professor. The prisoners are separated and sent off to different parts of the country. Sirio is visited by his girlfriend and suggests that there is no longer a reason for her to visit. One of Sirio’s friends from the old group from the pirate radio station is imprisoned in

the same cell with him, and they talk about how the group had disintegrated and fallen into drug use. Months later, Sirio is watching television when he sees his ex-girlfriend in a television commercial for soap and that Apache had died in an attempted escape from prison. This causes Sirio to become inconsolable in his grief. He cleans off the fresh white paint from the wall to reveal his brother's face. In his honor, he lights a torch that is visible in the window of his cell which can only be viewed by the drivers on the highway who would never slow down enough to see it.

This film encapsulates the position in which the far left found itself immediately before 1989. As seen before, the cinematic medium is mirroring political discourse had within the public sphere. They and their violent actions arose from the willingness and relentlessness of the police to pursue violence. This can be seen in the gradual change of Sirio from being a neutral character to being a desperate one. In the police beatings, he is lumped in with the more radical by agents of the state, and his isolation is two-fold. By being imprisoned in solitary, he is physically separated by others against his will, which can be interpreted like Emiglio's betrayal of his father as the shift of political parties toward the center abandoning the far Left. And, his second isolation is self-imposed when he tells his girlfriend that he no longer wants to see her. This can be read as the refusal of the far Left to sacrifice its position in order to be in government. The girlfriend is presented throughout the film as being opposed to any violence at the outset and more questioning of Sirio as he grows to be more radical in his belief. By showing the girlfriend character on television, Squitieri is presenting her as the "acceptable left" that has firmly distanced itself from its radical. She has separated herself from history. It is through revealing the *Invisible Ones*, the figures and faces painted over, that Sirio is

motivated to light the torch and maintain the flame even if no one is watching. This is an allegory for how the Left without its history cannot keep its strength as a counterbalance to the Right. This suggestion is tempered by the death of Apache. For Squitieri, the future of the Left is neither returning to its violent or radical past which would be its death nor losing its fundamental qualities by joining the Christian Democratic majority, rather it is centering itself on its history and leftist policies that do not call for the end of democracy through revolution.

Conclusion

During this period, we see that the role of cinema remains mostly the same. This period is highly political and equally polarized, and the tone and subject of cinema mimics the changes that occurred after Moro's death. The focus of the films shifts from one of outward criticism to inward retrospection on where the movement is directed and what the right course of action would be in a political environment in which an alternative to a democracy dominated by centrist parties was becoming an increasingly implausible alternative. This debate marks a growth in maturity in the student and worker movements, and cinema reflects this growth. In *Blow to the Heart* and *The Invisible Ones*, the characters represent different generations within the leftist movement. Emilio is betrayed by his father who he considers to be his guide and confidante. The son cannot understand why his father continues to support terrorism and justifies it through theory. The world that Emilio understood is shattered and the two are separated by the police. This is a representation of the split that occurred after the death of Moro. The more moderate Left could not coexist with the extremists because to interact with them would

be to detract from the legitimacy of the Left as a part of the Republic. This idea is repeated in some ways by *The Invisible Ones* in that the rebellious prisoners who had supported militant action fail to achieve anything in their pursuits and that Apache eventually meets his death at the hands of the guards. Unlike the first film, however, taking a less radical position does not signify separation or salvation as seen when “Professore” is badly beaten despite not taking part in the riot. This difference in representation can be explained by the six-year difference between the two films. In 1982, there was hope in the Craxi administration that there could be a general agreement of coexistence between the existing parties and to move past the violence and antagonism. By 1988, it had become clear that the political consensus had resulted in the Socialist Party (PSI) becoming a far more centrist party that had to abandon its more leftist positions. This consensus around the center placed pressure on those who continued to cling to more leftist policies and resulted in them being clumped together with the PCI and more radical leftist groups. This negative viewing of those left of the consensus is further underlined with the scene in *The Invisible Ones* in which the young woman who questions both the Companions and the significantly less radical pirate radio station and their purpose for continuing. This change over six years and cinema’s parallel movement highlights what was discussed in the first chapter. Cinema is a product of how the directors conceive the political foment at a given time and reproduce that perception through the filmic medium. As the sociopolitical landscape evolves, its representation through the filmic medium similarly changes.

Chapter III: After the Fall: Cinema's Transition to a Non-partisan Space

The fall of communism in Eastern Europe marked a turning point for the Italian Communist Party (PCI). The PCI sought to redefine itself within a West European social democratic framework because it no longer had the support of the Soviet Union and its satellites for a Marxist-Leninist alternative to liberal democracy. The media presented the PCI at its end without proper grounding, a reasonable position given the party's dissolution in 1992.¹⁶ Internally, the party felt the need to change in light of the social and democratic evolution occurring around them. At the last congress of the party in 1991 held in Rimini, the then secretary-general Achille Occhetto expressed this sentiment in his speech: "Dear comrades, many feel as though it is the hour to change... It will not simply be a question of changing plaques on each regional party's door, it will be a great work of conquest and proselytism."¹⁷ Within the party, a re-energized search for identity began which saw many divergent factions vying for primacy. The moderate faction evolved into the Democratic Party of the Left and later in 1998 the Democrats of the Left until they merged with the center-left Democratic Party. The radical faction of the PCI formed the Communist Refoundation Party, arose from the extreme leftist section of the party but would always remain below ten percent of the popular vote and has not held a seat in government since the 2008 election. This political shift of the majority of the party toward the center began in the early 1990s. With the PCI's dissolution in 1992 the tone of political discourse and political discourse through cinema changed. This shift is exemplified in the works of the director Nanni Moretti, specifically in this period *Red*

¹⁶ Edmondo Berselli, "The Crisis and Transformation of Italian Politics," *Daedalus* 130:3. (2001): 1-24

¹⁷ "La Fine Del PCI, 25 Anni Fa," *Il Post*, February 3, 2016, accessed November 23, 2019, <https://www.ilpost.it/2016/02/03/a=fine-del-pci-25-anni-fa/>

Wood Pigeon (Palombella Rossa) (1989), *The Thing* (La Cosa) (1990), and *Dear Diary* (Caro Diario) (1993). This chapter analyzes the themes, characters, and narratives of these three films and how they relate to the larger leftist movement as a whole during this transitional period. This relation to the leftist movement can be understood as mirroring. *Red Wood Pigeon* captures the PCI's sentiments during the fall of communism through providing a personal narrative of internal confusion and questioning. Through recording meetings of party members, *The Thing* presents a year of transition as the PCI dissolves to form new political parties. Finally, *Dear Diary* represents Moretti's and the general public's thinning connection to the PCI and its offshoots in favor of a non-partisan approach to understanding politics. With this frame of reference between the films and the PCI, let us turn now to the analysis of *Red Wood Pigeon*.

Exploring Red Wood Pigeon

At its core, *Red Wood Pigeon* is an exploration of the psyche of a water-polo-playing politician suffering from amnesia and his constant internal search for self-definition as seen in the frequently asked question "Ti ricordi, ti ricordi, ti ricordi?" (Do you remember? / Do you remember yourself?). Its fragmented style, frequent flashbacks, and Fellini-esk dream sequences leave the viewer with a sense of a disjointed, confused narrator, who discusses the future but is fixated on the past. The gradual revelation of the truth captures Moretti's sentiment on the party redefining itself and trying to weave together its divergent parts. The characters speak with a kind of frenetic energy, desperation to attempt to resolve the issues of the political divisions of the time. There is

an anger and passion expressed through mumbled speeches and screams. The emotion delivered through the story and the actors' portrayal mimics the confusion of the generation facing the modern, post-Cold War world and the PCI who had defined itself in relation to the USSR. Moretti's frequent flashbacks to his childhood and desire can be understood as an allegory for the PCI and the contingency of older members which longed for a return of the party to its extra-parliamentary glory and widespread popular support.

After losing his memory in a car accident, Michele discovers that he has been taken by his team of water polo players to an important match in Sicily. Once he has arrived at the hotel, Michele finds a scrap of writing in his pocket which is an article written by him and deduces that he is a communist. This discovery begins his ramblings about communism that often manifest themselves externally through repeated questions. The day of the game arrives, and Michele finds that he is inundated by people wanting to speak with him about what he had said on television that Tuesday. Of course, Michele has no memory of it, so he doubles his efforts to investigate his forgotten past. While internally searching, a reporter begins to follow Moretti and ask him questions about Tuesday's events. He becomes increasingly angry about her use of language and eventually slaps her. Alongside reflections and flashbacks, the game continues with his team losing quite badly, that is until *I'm on Fire* by Bruce Springsteen begins to play. Inspired by foreign music, Michele's team scores six points, nearly catching them up to the other team. After a penalty by the defense, Michele is given the opportunity to shoot a penalty throw. It is in the moments of preparing his shot that he remembers that on

television in a critical discussion of the future of the PCI he had sung *E Ti Vengo a Cercare* by Franco Battiato. He goes on to lose the match and, disheartened, runs around the pool screaming that the days of his youth, his mother, and the sweets that he had so enjoyed as a child would never return. After calming down, he goes back to the locker room where he talks about how he had always hated the game of water polo but that it was the pizza, the travel, and the autogrill which kept him playing. The film ends in a dreamlike moment in which Michele, yelling the phrases that we have heard throughout the film, crashes his car again by driving it off of a hill. Moving away from the crash, Michele looks up to see all the characters in the film coming down the hill toward him. Behind them, a sun that appears as though it came from a stage play is raised. Everyone turns toward it and reaches out their hands. For a moment, the child Michele (Michele in flashback) does the same but then begins to laugh.

If the game is to be understood as the interplay of his thoughts, the pool is Moretti's mind. As seen in the film, his memory becomes clearer the more that he plays, having the greatest of his revelations while in it. Around the pool, we see an external discourse of the future of the PCI, and it is only when Michele takes these ideas into the pool that he can make sense of them. The pool is also an escape, both literally when Michele uses it to avoid an older rowdy gentleman and figuratively to forget about the present and relive the past. In one scene, Michele is afraid to enter the pool because he is afraid of deep water, a fear reformed because of a memory from when he was a child. After the match is over, Michele becomes terribly upset because he is permanently separated from this past.

In the bar near the pool, *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) is played on a small television in the corner. Snippets of the film are seen throughout the film. These brief scenes represent the imagination and invite the viewer to draw parallels between the social and political upheaval in Italy at the time and that of Russia during their revolution. While occurring in a communist context, it is a story of love and the rapid changes within Russia. While Michele's discourse is affected by communism, his imagination is without connections to ideology. By suggesting that his thoughts and by extension the imaginary of members of the PCI are free of past ideological connections, Moretti is arguing that the PCI should not focus on the discourse of what it was or what it understands communism to be but be open to evolving within the democratic space, to be the same as the other parties but different.

The final piece of poignant imagery is the sun that appears at the very end of the film. It is not an impressive or particularly spectacular prop. It goes up rather slowly pulled by a rope. Despite this lackluster presentation, it draws the attention of every character on the hill, and they all point toward it. This imagery is rather clear. After having dealt with his past and discovering who he was, Michele is prepared to face the future, no matter how unimpressive it may seem. This future lack of impressiveness is hinted at when the young Michele laughs at the sun and tries to stifle his laughter. This skeptical view of the future of the PCI was affirmed when the party dissolved only two years later. The artificial sun represents how the future of the party is a construction that does not build off of a continuing call for revolution that had given strength to the PCI at

its founding. The party is no longer a result from the forces at play in the political foment of the Years of Lead but rather another party using a historical facade that appears artificial in the light of a changing sociopolitical landscape.

In addition to the imagery that plays an important role in understanding Moretti's political commentary, the characters that inhabit the mise-en-scene can further inform how Moretti understands the PCI's position. The main protagonist of the film, Michele, is the embodiment of the party. The car crash at the beginning of the film establishes the confusion that is explored in the rest of the film. In the context of the post-Cold War space, the crash can be seen as analogous to the comparatively swift democratic change occurring in Eastern Europe and how that evolution was understood in Western Europe.. His anger and confusion is representative of the feeling of the party members who did not know what the direction of the PCI would be, whether it would become a slightly farther left Socialist party or if it would be controlled by forces that desired to remain a hardline extra-parliamentary Communist Party that would stay true to its Marxist-Leninist background. As an important and frequently referenced part of the film, his televised speech that devolves into *E Ti Vengo a Cercare* describes the necessity of a change in the PCI's direction and select new political aims.¹⁸

Another key figure is an older gentleman who frightens Michele and disrupts his enjoyment of brief moments of peace. He represents the old guard which remained a

¹⁸ The lyrics to the song recount how the singer has to "change the base of his desires."

small contingent of the PCI. He angrily asks Michele what his words and theories mean; he is not content with the current state of the party and the more theoretically focused part of the party that has distanced itself from the workers who were the original supporters of the communists.¹⁹ He is a reminder of the past, and, at their first meeting, we see that Michele is pushed into a corner and forced to escape into the pool. Later in the film, after Michele develops his understanding of self and the past, he is able to face this old man and appears to understand him more of an annoyance than as an object to be feared. This segment of the party and its call for a return to a labor-focused party lacks strength because of the industrial shift to the service industry. Here, Moretti is saying that the PCI must consider its past but also evolve to meet the demands of new workers.

A pair of two former members of the Red Brigade (Brigate Rosse) appear early on in the film and ask Michele for the names of people that he opposes, promising to take care of them. They bring with them sweets that Michele enjoys and had enjoyed from his childhood. As Michele continues to ignore their demands because of his confused state, they become more emboldened in their actions and angrier at him. After the third or fourth dessert, they desert any pretense of kindness and begin to berate Michele, grabbing the microphone used by the water polo broadcasters to harangue about their issues. Once heard on the loudspeaker, they are removed from the premises and are not seen from again. The militant side of the PCI has had a rich history of activism and anti-governmental action since the Second World War. This history provides a tantalizing

¹⁹ Alberto Rapisardi, "Il pci riscopre gli operai," *La Stampa*, March 5, 1988

base to ground the new post-Cold War PCI. But, as seen in the film, their demands to be heard and accepted by the masses are harsh and frankly unmeetable. The revolutionary spirit that would have given them support no longer exists; people would much rather return to the game of water polo.

The final character that can shape our understanding of Moretti's vision of the PCI in the late 1980s is the Catholic, a small, emotional character who approaches Michele and explains that they are the same and that he is happy that Michele exists. When asked if he feels the same about the Catholic, Michele responds by yelling "Nooo!" and, when the Catholic tries to hug him, pushes him away with a great deal of force. This character continues to appear throughout the film demanding the same thing and is repeatedly rejected. The Catholic represents the major Christian Democratic Party and the other democratic parties. He is emphatic that they are the same, but Michele denies this by stating "Siamo gli stessi ma siamo diversi!" (We are the same, but we are different!). The interplay between the two represents the larger dialogue between the PCI and the democratic parties. There was still a large component of the PCI that understood the party as an entity separate from the democratic parties because it represented an anti-democratic revolutionary force, but the other political parties understood the PCI as simply another elected group of representatives. It should be said that, despite Michele's yelling, Moretti never shows how the party is truly different.

Party Politics in The Thing

While *Red Wood Pigeon* explores the political foment through narrative, the documentary, *The Thing*, investigates the actual conditions of the PCI by recording real meetings held in several cities from late 1989 through 1990. Each meeting presents new elements at play within the party and the conflicting desires of different generations of party members. The scenes reveal the sense of urgency and uncertainty of a party in chaos.²⁰ During this period, the party leaders were considering changing the name to disassociate itself with other countries' parties who were seen in the West as failing. Due to this, many of the discussions had by the party voters in these meetings revolve around the party's name. The party's divided response can be thought along the lines of the old guard and the newer student members.

The change of name to "Companions" (Compagni) was seen as an affront and a surprise to the older members. One gentleman even angrily stated in his speech that it was a "cazzo nella faccia," (dick in the face) not in the negative sense of the phrase but simply the sheer shock of the matter. Many did not understand the need to change the name from the PCI, and even more members asked why the name had to be changed. In the eyes of the old guard, it was an abandonment of the tradition and history of the PCI. They responded quite passionately and asked why any of this was happening. Why did the fall of the socialist republic require a change in name and public presentation? The change shows to the wider public an internal confusion. As noted by a Sicilian man, it

²⁰Guido Ceroneti, "Il Titanic comunista," *La Stampa*, March 1, 1990

was an embarrassment to have to explain to people on the street what was happening to the party. Often in their discourses, the older members mentioned the past of the party and how to become a party called “Compagni” would be a rejection of the workers and the party base that had originally formed the PCI. To attract a larger swath of people, the PCI would be sacrificing itself to gain the favor of the democratic and socialist voters who were turned off by the communist moniker. In the discussion in Genova, an old woman demanded that the change of name is pointless reposturing and that the party truly needed a change in the way that they did politics. If in the change of name the party was becoming more democratic, what would that mean for the future of the party? Without its historical grounding and connection with and commitment to the workers, the PCI, or whatever its new democratic name may be, would be in the opinion of the older members another democratic party in a sea of others. Left by the party leaders, the older base eventually separated itself to form the now obscure Communist Refoundation Party that aimed as the name suggests to refound itself on its original principles and support the working class.

While the older party members were angered by the lack of emotion in the political discourse, the younger voters recognized the loss of the revolutionary spirit that had existed in the PCI at its founding. One student notes that, unlike the other members at the meeting, he cannot call upon the past as a refuge or appeal to it and that he would not want to do so. Coming to adulthood in the Years of Lead, the young do not have the same connection with the history of the communists as anti-Nazi combatants and, due to the shift from industry to services, lack the emotional connection with the workers. In a

sense, the young have a much clearer view of the party's future and rather than asking why these changes are occurring inquire instead on why the party is still holding on to the idealized image of the past and the international communist struggle. For them, the past glories of the PCI are exactly that in the past. Without catalytic experience of the student and worker movements alongside the steady decline in seats within the parliament over the 1980s, the youth were not willing to hold out hope for a leftist group that had not held power since the foundation of the Republic despite garnering at times over thirty percent of the vote. The political environment led by the Christian Democrats was steeped in political corruption that could only be undone through an alliance of left-leaning parties. The PCI could not go its own way without facing criticism and eventually fading into obscurity. It had to turn to the center and change some of its platform to agree with the sizable Socialist party. With the youth and the party leadership's support, the PCI became the Democratic Party of the Left and would join in alliances through the rest of the decade by forming The Progressives and later The Olive Tree, the latter of which finally enjoyed a parliamentary majority.

Non-Partisan Transitions in Dear Diary

While the comedic elements of the film harken back to some of Moretti's previous works, *Dear Diary* is a divorce from the politically-steeped narratives of his last two films. It recalls three entries within the fictional Moretti's journal, and, through that, Moretti satirizes Italian society and its changes after the Second World War. Here, politics and political struggle fully or comically presented in the prior two films are

replaced with humorous societal reflections. This film, in particular, recalls the comedic stylings of Woody Allen before *Manhattan* (1979). After this film, Moretti quite appropriately became known as Italy's Woody Allen. As the journal entries act as vignettes, the following section will briefly summarize and analyze the most relevant final chapter that discusses Italian politics after the economic success of the 1950s.²¹

The final part of the film is a comedic retelling of the struggles that Moretti had to go through to find a cure to a simple itch. The fictional Moretti is tossed between different doctors who all prescribe different remedies to his problem. None of the prescriptions actually work and his condition worsens. It is not until he visits an unorthodox Chinese clinic that he finds the root of his problem which is that he is suffering from Hodgkins's Lymphoma. After discovering his condition, he looks at the prescriptions given to him and finds that none of them were actually targeting the problem of his itch. Before his surgery, despite the doctor's previous ineffective suggestions, he follows what his doctor says and has a drink and croissant the morning of his surgery. Similar to the previous chapter, Moretti is looking at the solutions suggested by social and political reformers. Everyone of them presents a new way to solve the problems faced by Italian society, but none of them try to resolve or discover the true issues at play in Italian society. It is only through looking at the issues through a new paradigm that the issues can be resolved. Through a non-partisan lens, the chapter serves as an indictment of the political discourses of the post-war years and a tacit demand for a change. At the end of the film, his taking the doctors' advice at the end represents the continuing apathetic acceptance of the political discourse in Italian society. This reading

²¹ Note: Relevant to understanding the change in Moretti's political analysis

is bolstered by the fact that he stares deeply into the camera and smiles when he drinks. He looks out to the Italian audience and implies that they are doing the same, following the lead of politicians and reformers who have been proven to lack the ability to implement meaningful reforms.

While having tinges of the political, the film remains non-partisan. His call for reforms is not a rallying cry for any left-leaning party but rather a desire for change. It is at its core a neutral rebuke of the past. In public discourse, Moretti's call for reforms represents the larger demand of the people as can be seen with the removal of the Christian Democrats from parliament in 1994 and subsequent electoral and political reforms implemented through the rest of the decade. The film and its criticisms are not a complete abandonment of the political, but it takes a new non-partisan form as compared to cinema during the Years of Lead. No longer centered around a widespread movement such as the students' or workers', the film suggests the need for general reforms to improve and open the political realm without arguing in favor of a leftist or communist solution.

Conclusion

The PCI gradually shifted closer to the political center. The drive for revolution as one of the participants at one of the meetings in *The Thing* posits no longer exists. The radical, polarized political landscape had shifted. Within a democratic system and without

popular support, the only direction that the PCI could realistically take was toward a more popular social democratic position.²² What made the party truly different were its claims to a militant and anti-fascist past and its ties with the international communist movement. With the effective end of the international communist movement, the PCI was no longer “the same but different” but rather increasingly the same. By 1992, the faith in the PCI’s successor, the Democratic Party of the Left, was rather low, losing 51 seats in the lower house and 45 seats in the upper house.²³ Its numbers would rise as it moved to the center and in the wake of scandals in the Christian Democratic. But, after the scandals had blown over, we see that it formed a moderate coalition with a few small parties to form the Democrats of the Left. The distinctiveness of the PCI had been lost and, with it, the artistic interest in a politically-focused cinema. In the works of Petri in the 70s, he tried to capture the working conditions in which many laborers, the backbone of the communist party, found themselves. He arguably did so because of the energized movement of workers who were actively fighting for better treatment. In this new space, there was no longer a passionate left or any widely-supported galvanized leftist movements on which directors could base their films. Without radical movements or a truly different PCI, the political space returned to a relative (relative to Italy which means that it is still highly erratic and unpredictable) normalcy that was dominated by centrist

²²Gianni Pennacchi, “il pc sara’ il quarto partito,” *La Stampa*, May 6, 1991

²³ Dipartimento per Gli Affari Interni e Territoriali Accessed November 22, 2019, <https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=05/04/1992&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

Maurizio Tropeano, “Addio Partito Comunista. Lasciano in 2494,” *La Stampa*, December 14, 1990

populist parties that promised transparency.²⁴ Cinema, in turn, matched this transition and returned to its pre-1969 role as a non-partisan social critic.

²⁴ Dipartimento per Gli Affari Interni e Territoriali Accessed November 22, 2019.
<https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=13/05/2001&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

Conclusion

Determining the exact impact of a certain cultural product or event is difficult to calculate and even more difficult to quantify when one considers the existence of other forms of media that were present at the time such as pirate radio. What can be said of these films and cinema in general is this: coming from an elevated position as social critique in the after war period, cinema maintained a critical role within the public sphere. It did not function as an entity separate from the discourses going on in the Left but, rather, was shaped by them and the changes that the Left underwent. As seen in Moretti's films, *The Working Class Goes to Heaven*, and *Blow to the Heart*, the directors are not doing something novel in their messages but rather are doing so in the mode in which they are representing the sentiments and arguments made on the Left. By representing the same ideas in a different manner, cinema served to reinforce sentiments and arguments of those already on the left and by being an accessible medium had the potential to promulgate these ideas to a broader audience, though the degree to which this potential was utilized is hard to determine. Cinema was an engine fueled by the voices that populated the leftist public sphere which reproduced their voices through the medium of film. This reinforced certain positions on the Left by creating an accessible, refined narrative through which the Left could be understood. That is what gives these films importance, given the history of cinema as a political critic. They capture and synthesize moments within the Italian Left. These films prove useful when trying to analyze the period of the Years of Lead as a whole because they present images of the state of the public sphere within a given moment. Our understanding of the period can be drawn from articles and political speeches, but what they lacked was the wider access and appeal to audiences that cinema

held. Through those qualities, cinema penetrated deeper into the public sphere. In thinking about how the average citizen thought of the political situation at the time, we have to consider the presence of these films and their reflection of the leftist positions that existed during the Years of Lead in order to have a better understanding of Italy and discourses in Italian politics from 1969 to 1988. The role of cinema stays constant and deeply woven into the cultural and political changes that occur during the Years of Lead. When the student and worker movements were at their peak and police corruption was being revealed and discussed in the public sphere, Petri and Damiani respond with narratives that explore these topics. As the public space becomes more violent and polarized, Amelio and Squitieri recreate this feeling through their films, and, as the PCI changes and dissolves, Moretti chronicles its transition. By taking cinema into consideration into an analysis of Italian society, a more in-depth mapping of the leftist and their political imaginary can be reached.

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