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Antonioni: Documents and Testimonials

By Tommaso Chiaretti

To Monica Vitti who,
with her role in Miller's play After the Fall
has added new, delicate balance to her widely acclaimed qualities
as a screen actress and is now considered
among the greatest Italian actresses of all times.
His commitment to researching new expressions
through cinematic language has made him
one of the best-known directors in the world.
Tonight we have the honor to have with us
Michelangelo Antonioni.

ANTONIONI:

After having been awarded the Golden Lion in Venice
and honored at several international film festivals,
Antonioni receives a new prize,
this time in front of a noisy carnival crowd in Montepulciano, Tuscany.
Antonioni's art has broken free from its confinement
to the intellectual circles and is now embraced by everybody.
Antonioni is a poised, reserved and demanding northern Italian.
Like his movies, he's quite unfathomable at first.
He doesn't believe that any director's statement about himself
or his work, will help in the understanding of the work itself;
the path traveled by a director to realize a movie is filled
with doubts, mistakes, faults,
and the strangest thing we might ask him to do, is to talk about it.
Let's, let's make it a dolly.
Let's keep it open 'till the sixth mark.
-Where the painting is. -Right,
before the painting there's a square. You get rid of that.
That's though.
You have to move toward the bookshelf, exactly.
We will follow Antonioni; we will watch him shying away;
we will try to observe the slightest sign he might give us,
even though it might simply be a vague conscience
of that intangible interior reality, that is his artistic creation.
We will talk to his friends and his collaborators.
We aren't trying to create a portrait of the artist;
rather, our survey is an approach,
a starting point.
Let's put all the myths of cinema aside;
under the stark light of the projectors,
the magic happens only within one's psyche.
In the realm of fantasy rules the ex-empress Soraya.
Now walk ahead and sit down.

Slowly, slowly... right. Just like this...

look at the phone as if it were a strange object.

Antonioni spent a quiet, bourgeois youth in Ferrara, studying, playing tennis, surrounded by friends, and girls, by the sea;

his was a provincial youth, tainted by a certain romanticism that will leave him with an inclination for certain themes, certain problems, certain sentimental or psychological conflicts.

We find his friends from Ferrara

have changed indeed from those photographs!

When did you meet Antonioni?

FRANCESCO AGUIARI artist from Ferrara I met Antonioni in 1932 or 33...

Back then, had he already founded that theater company...

Who? Antonioni? Yes,

it was Bologna University's Theatrical Society,

and we produced several one act plays by Pirandello.

Then, we staged *Interessi Creati* by Giacinto Benavente,

Antonioni directed this one.

He was so talented, he took over and I encouraged him

and told him to go ahead and direct it himself.

So I ended up acting.

From director of the company I became one of the actors

and Antonioni went ahead and directed several other pieces...

and among them a drama he wrote, now I don't remember the title...

I think it was *La Signora*... I'm not sure.

I also remember that for the Ariosto centennial celebration

we staged a vaudeville called: *Ludovico*.

It was really a lovely piece and popular,

so much so, that in Ferrara we had 27 performances all sold out!

Antonioni played in the vaudeville and he was well received,

still as an actor he was just passable and he knew it.

And it's after this experience that he decided to become a director.

He was a college student, then.

He was a university student then.

He was an excellent one, and clever,

and he was very likable, actually extremely so.

And always very private about his own business. Who knows,

it must have been his natural inclination,

and you can see it running in his work, always...

a vein of sadness, I'd say.

Ferrara is a small old silent city in the Po' plain...

seemingly inviting to pleasure and dissipation.

Not far from here, on the banks of the river Po',

Visconti shot *Obsession* ; a few miles from here,

on the banks of this same river over a two-year period
Antonioni shot his first documentary *Gente del Po*,
about the fishermen and their boats,
with images foreshadowing the coming of neorealism.
"In starting to understand the world through the image" he wrote,
"I understood image itself, its strength, its mystery."
"Rome, the fourth day of the street sweepers' strike.
A meeting at the Circus Maximus of a thousand silent,
orderly, men in blue shirts, waiting for we don't know what.
An orgy of abstract images.
A figurative violence never seen before."
From this vision comes a documentary
that wins the Silver Medal at the Venice film festival.
Antonioni has completed his apprenticeship.
He has been a student at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia,
Carne's assistant and co-script writer with Visconti and De Santis;
he has written film reviews, directed shorts.
In 1950 he shot his first feature *Story of a Love Affair*.
MARCO FERRERI director I met Antonioni working for *Documento mensile*;
he was one of the writers for this film magazine.
We became good acquaintances
and he was already thinking of shooting *Story of a Love Affair*.
We discussed the film, and we looked together for a producer
but had no luck.
We had a mutual friend in Milan
and I asked him if he was still interested in producing the movie,
and over the phone he told us he was.
As soon as we started scouting for locations,
we started incurring expenses
and I found myself bound to sign
I.O.U.s for forty million lira.
They were these enormous, huge, pieces of white paper
and they were my first ones ever.
When I came back and met this guy I told him:
Listen I'm already knee-deep into this project,
I have given my word and signed forty million worth of I.O.U.s
and assumed after our phone conversation
we had an understanding.
But he said that wasn't the case,
that we must still talk things over
and that I was wrong to have signed the I.O.U.s.
Eventually we found this gentleman in Turin, Mr. Villani,
that joined me in the first part of the project.
Finally, we started production.

The cast and crew met Antonioni in Milan where the movie ended the way everybody knows. We were all very happy. Antonioni because he made his movie. Villani because he'd produced an important picture. I was happy because I'd helped a friend and because I had paid back my 40 million lira worth of I.O.U.s... In *Story of a Love Affair*, Antonioni transfers the principles of neorealism into a bourgeois environment, adding introspection to the dramatic witness role. "Already then" he wrote, "I needed to see the characters, even in their most simple gestures, after all had been said, after all the lines had been exhausted and when in everybody's soul nothing was left but the consequences of what had happened." In this movie, Lucia Bose's face reveals a grave, pure, somber beauty. The actress has now abandoned her screen career and we caught a glimpse of her in an international airport. FRANCESCO ROSI director *AD on The Vanquished* *The Vanquished* had a very rough time with the board of censorship; the Italian episode, the one I remember, had to be almost completely re-shot twice, it was rewritten several times and shot over twice, exactly because of those censorship problems I was talking about. However, my experience with Antonioni has been rather important because I had the opportunity to observe Antonioni, an artist of a coherence that is rare in film making. His work is always coherent and he is absolutely faithful to his ideas, even through all the obstacles that all of us directors have to face in this business. Antonioni shot these stills in London, Paris and Rome, during the long period of scouting for locations for *The Vanquished*. FRANCESCO MASELLI director *The choice of locations* becomes truly a sort of key for interpreting the movie. That is to say that scouting for locations was like starting to make contact with the subject matter. So much so that for *The Lady without Camellias*, the other movie I shot with him, we came to know and understand each other, and he trusted me completely to find his locations for him. Still, it turned out to be a bit of a sour experience, because I wasted a whole month looking for locations in Milan, and he didn't like a single one. Yes, they were all wonderful locations;

still he didn't like any, really. For him,
scouting for locations is an intimate experience...
The Lady without Camellias is a portrait of the movie business.
Antonioni moves irreverently between
satirical comedy and drama,
shedding light on the process that the protagonist goes through
while gaining consciousness of herself and her surroundings.
...one here, and one here...
no don't ask anything... take the meat...
he mustn't do anything...
he doesn't need to say anything to the animals...
he must keep them quiet!...
I... I...
You keep quiet... quiet...
On the left...
Rinaldo, I would place it on that thing over there...
It's much better if it is on that thingy like this,
perfect.
Don't put it straight... at an angle...
do not lean it against the wall... a little forward...
Toward me... toward me... now in front of me...
I like this... sticking out more... see...
Here you feel uneasy, Soraya, you're shy.
Do not relax and loose your concentration,
keep focused, really focused.
Did you take down the registration tag?
-Sure... -Mark it down!
Now you gotta tell me...
Only in the sequences with dialogue...
Right, only the dialogue...
'cause the rest is going to stay like in the original...
ERALDO DA ROMA editor Marinelli is going to to take care of the numbers
for the dialogue...
Sure...
-Can I tell them to go ahead then? -Of course!
...to record those noises?
That's the only solution.
Good!
So, this interview, are we going to do it yes or no?
No, no, I don't want to!
-Why not? -Because, no!
-Did you count them? -I think they're about 1 300.
-Some made by directors too? -This is by Mario Soldati.
CESARE ZAVATTINI author I'll show you this one later...

And I have one, it's a classic director, allow me.
You'll recognize him immediately...
Right, it's Rene Claire, his self-portrait.
And here in a few days, probably here,
I'll have one by Michelangelo Antonioni,
'cause he's making his self-portrait for me
and I'm sure, you know that Antonioni is a painter too.
Like in all of his work he is a little introverted,
secretive, a loner,
dealing with great stylistic problems like in his films.
So he cannot sit down and paint it in one evening.
I asked him to do it two years ago and... time flies.
Are you sure he is painting it?
Sure. Do you want to try something?
Let's ask him. We'll give him a call.
Zavattini had founded a review solely
comprised of screenplays for shorts;
it only lasted one issue
and its theme was "love in the city."
One of the shorts was written by Antonioni
and it had been inspired by the real story of women
who had tried and failed to take their lives
and re-enacted it on the screen.
Attempted Suicide can be placed on a borderline
between documentary and fiction
and it utilizes art as a means of exploring humanity.
You might think, because of all of these television programs,
that Antonioni and I had arranged this call,
but this is not the case. I swear it.
No one's answering.
Still nothing. This goes to show you it wasn't a set up.
One of the things I hate most about television
is when they point the camera on somebody and he says:
Were you looking for me?
And you know he was there waiting for one hour.
Hello? Is Mr. Antonioni home?...
...Hi, Zavattini speaking.
I'm calling you 'cause I'm here with our friend Mingoizzi
who is shooting as I am talking to you,
he's coming closer with the camera for a close up,
so we've called you home and he had the good idea
of inserting this phone call in the narrative.
Yes, I know.
Right.

Right.

Sure,

it's no bother.

I showed him the sofa,

it's not the same one,

it's a new one and told him you sat there

and said you weren't going to do it that way.

"I do it my own way," he said.

You know it was about Lo schiaffo...

"It's a pleasure doing it

and I love working with you but I'll do it my way."

Understand? Right, ciao Michelangelo. Ciao.

Antonioni wrote Lo schiaffo one of his projects

that was never to be realized, and Girlfriends,

a story rich in nuances, played in the frivolous circle

of the mundane and artistic bourgeoisie of Turin.

This intimate combination of an unbalanced universe

and uncertain passions, opens the cycle of Antonioni's masterpieces.

I do not clearly recall the whole question; it's been ten years.

VALENTINA CORTESE actress What I remember is that the movie met with a series of

difficulties,

financial difficulties.

It was during one of the industry crises

and no distributor believed in Girlfriends,

they didn't realize that as a movie

it was in a league of its own.

Actually, producer Franco Cancellieri had the courage

to promote the project and begin production.

Unfortunately, a few weeks later,

when the money ran out,

it had to be stopped again.

It was resumed, I don't remember if one or two months later, or less,

when it received more sponsorship.

Could you pull it a little back? This thing here is annoying.

Do you think that the difficulties encountered during shooting

had a bearing on the quality of the actors' performance?

No, absolutely not.

I believe Girlfriends is one of Antonioni's finest films,

I'm not sure about the performances,

but I believe that we all tried to give our best.

And as a matter of fact your performance won the Silver Ribbon

and, if I am not mistaken, the Grolla d'Oro.

Yes, thank you. I don't know...

OTELLO FAVA make up artist Did you work on The Outcry?

Yes, The Outcry. That's ten years ago.

Since then I stopped wearing a tie.

Besides the Oscar,

I believe Antonioni deserves an award for his style.

Every time I would wear a tie on set, he would say:

"What are you doing!" and would storm out scandalized

because I was always wearing the wrong one.

-Did I say something stupid? -You spoke very well.

-I felt it was wrong.... -When?

During the last question "therefore there was no misunderstanding between me and the director." I would cut the "therefore."

Am I on? Right...

Fellini and Antonioni collaborated

on the screenplay of The White Sheik, Fellini's first feature.

Fellini talks about Antonioni from the set of Juliet of the Spirits.

FEDERICO FELLINI director I hope I won't be blinded by the deep esteem and friendship I have for him.

I mean, I hope they won't interfere from judging his work objectively.

The side of Antonioni I like best is his consistency,

his coherence that is to say;

he is an author that has always remained faithful

to his film typology,

having his way against the always restrictive impositions dictated by the production schedule,

but also imposing himself, I repeat,

with an integrity toward his principles

that I would define moving at times.

And finally imposing his way of making cinema

to an audience that for years had refused to listen and to accept it.

And in my opinion this is the ultimate proof.

I believe that many of our young filmmakers

should learn a lesson in dignity from his unshakable character

and his integrity toward a certain style of filmmaking.

Tireless worker, he never shies from experimenting,

Looking for new faces,

for atmosphere, and music...

Or a simpler rhythm, like this one...

now let's see how this can go with the remainder of the pianissimo,

do you think you can do it...

Elvira can you show us the second reel?

...for instance, this is the first Marilyn,

the other one looks more post-war:

she could be an existentialist, for instance...

when you say "Les feuilles mortes"...

In this case here, one has to make it up...

a sort of a gypsy, this way...

Antonioni refuses to use a traditional soundtrack.

He believes that music in a movie should deprive itself of its autonomy as an art form and play the role of an element shaping itself in the form of a global sensory impression; the ideal would be creating through noises a formidable soundtrack and to call an orchestra conductor to adjust it.

GIOVANNI FUSCO musician The Outcry 's track has only one piano, and the theme is also one with several variations.

Would you like me to play it?

You have been working with him for many years.

What are Antonioni's musical tastes?

Eh... he's quite difficult, that is to say refined.

He told me he studied the violin.

Really?

Eh... he says of himself he could have been a musician, he's always said it.

Who do you think is Antonioni's favorite musician?

Classical music, melodrama, Verdi, Rossini?

No, he really does not like melodrama or Verdi or Rossini, nothing.

A musician close to his sensibility?

-Schoenberg. -Schoenberg.

Pierrot Lunaire.

The choice of the instrument seems to be an important one in Antonioni's movies.

Yes, it is important. Because he always tries to exclude the usual American-style exploding soundtracks, you know what I mean?

He prefers few instruments, because he is a little like his stories, emotions are intimate, right?

I believe that in one of his movies he has even chosen one only instrument.

Yes, you're right. In his first one Story of a Love Affair, a saxophone, then in The Outcry one piano only.

But in the introduction there are three or four instruments.

The Outcry is a linear work that expands like the river Po whose course is navigated by the protagonists.

Here Antonioni's worker wants to estrange himself from his milieu and he's consumed by his passion in loneliness;

what is analyzed here is not a certain side of society anymore, but existence itself, where love, no matter which kind of love, unveils us to reveal our own inner nakedness, our own misery, our own helplessness, our nothingness.

This movie that Antonioni had nurtured within himself for years revealed him as one of Italy's greatest filmmakers.

While looking for a voice-over for Dorian Gray, Antonioni discovered Monica Vitti.

Undoubtedly this is one of the most perfect matches between a director and his interpreter in the history of cinema.

"I chose Monica Vitti" he said

"because no other actress inspires me the way Monica does;

besides, she brings me good luck;

before we met no actress was exactly what I was looking for."

And so L'Avventura was shot.

This drama of human loneliness is played within the volcanic solitude of the island of Panarea, off the coast of Sicily.

L'Avventura announces a new and audacious conception of dramatic composition.

A strange dance where the characters' movements on the island mix with the rhythm of the waves, tirelessly eroding those naked rocks.

The shooting of L'Avventura took several months,

both because of the difficulties encountered

in shooting the exteriors and the financial problems

that went so far as to cause the production company's bankruptcy,

leaving the whole project without money,

out of touch with the rest of the world,

trapped on the small island in the dead of winter.

Antonioni had to take charge of the whole project,

facing disappointment, strikes, and creditors,

while waiting for a new company to take charge of the production

so as to bring the project to completion.

MONICA VITTI actress That's Vulcano. Lisca Bianca.

Right, the tornado! It was so frightening

and it was coming our way and I was so very afraid.

So, what could we do? There was this man with us

who was a sort of a magician,

he had the Word. He was given it that Christmas, in church;

good, yes, yes, yes, I believed him immediately.

I'd go up to him and tell him: use the Word, now.

We must cut this tornado 'cause if it comes any closer we're finished.

While I was shaking like a leaf, he went on a cliff's top

and started making these gestures, putting his leg up there,

Like this, and traced a cross toward the tornado.
And him, he was calmly shooting the tornado.
As soon as the man traced the cross, the tornado dissolved.
I swear, it dissolved.
Michelangelo, who kept shooting, started insulting everybody.
I wanted to fire that guy.
Right, he wanted to fire that guy and send everybody home.
"Why did you do that? I wanted to shoot the tornado!"
"While it was sweeping us all up?"
"It doesn't matter, we should have kept going."
That guy was employed to keep an eye on the sea,
whether it was changing or if it was getting rough.
It was amazing because every time the sea
was getting rough he would let us know;
quick, quick, come along, we must leave the island
or get to Panarea as quickly as possible.
-Were you ever trapped? -Sure, we were.
One night and one day, without food or anything,
because the food was on the boat, on a larger boat
that couldn't manage to get out there 'cause the sea was too rough
and the island was inaccessible.
We saw the boat leaving with all the food in it, you know,
and our eyes moistened.
We stayed there a whole night under sort of a shed,
sitting on the ground.
It was so cold and windy, and the sea so rough...
And how long were you without a producer?
I don't remember how long.
Without a producer for three months.
During the summer the islanders get the food in
from the mainland all the time.
Who came to your rescue?
Well... nobody did. Not a journalist, not a photo reporter.
Nobody, nobody came.
This scene ended up on the cutting floor.
During their search for Anna in Sicily, the two protagonists
encounter a street entertainer who invites them to play a strange game.
The game is a theme always present in Antonioni's films.
Making a movie with Antonioni is always sort of an adventure,
full of unforeseen situations.
This is one of the elements that makes it an important period
in the lives of those involved.
And these events are always unforeseen.
For instance when we went to Cannes,

that was my first film festival, and it was my first film too. Getting there was like getting into a fair where everybody is concerned with very mundane stuff. The night of our screening the stairs were crowded with hundreds of photographers. It was a sort of... pointing their cameras at us like guns. The cinema was totally dark and crowded. The screening of L'Avventura at Cannes was a real life drama. From the very beginning, from the opening titles sequence, the audience was laughing and we couldn't understand why. They were laughing at the most... most tragic sequences, those that we had sweated the most over and we believed the most in. And this went on throughout the projection. Very few followed and loved the screening of L'Avventura. When I came out of the theater I was crying like a baby. I was desperate. I felt that all my work, all these months where I had invested all of myself so that we could achieve a good result, were all for nothing. We had all believed in this movie and it was all in vain, it was all for those laughing people and their mundane entertainment. The day after, something quite unexpected happened. We'd left our rooms and in the hall of the hotel we found a list, a very long list of signatures of important names of Italian and foreign filmmakers, journalists, critics, writers, people who had seen the movie, and this list was preceded by a statement: Yesterday, we saw L'Avventura the best movie ever screened at this festival. In La Notte, the drama of the protagonist couple explodes after a long process of gaining awareness of it; and one night will be enough for the disintegration of the relationship. These images shot in 8mm were taken on set. It's dawn, in the park of a sumptuous villa, and it isn't any good that the musicians might keep playing and our couple almost savagely listen, for the day that will rise won't be a better one. Did you collaborate with Antonioni exclusively on La Notte? ENNIO FLAIANO author Yes exclusively on La Notte, then we... evidently our dialogue was exhausted... our exchange... over, so we interrupted our collaboration. But I hold him in great esteem... I believe Italy has right now two great directors, one is Fellini, the other Antonioni.

The problem is that
Antonioni fluctuates toward the image
and Fellini toward costume design.
Do you think he relies very much on the screenwriter's input?
No, he's quite easy...
He allows all the suggestions he receives to mature
and naturally he adds his own ideas,
otherwise he wouldn't be the director we know.
Do you think of La Notte
as a difficult film from a production standpoint?
I believe that Antonioni can only live among difficulties
like certain fish that can only live in the abyss...
and if there are no obstacles he seeks them
because he believes they stimulate his imagination.
Could I have a grappa, please?
Make it two.
You don't like interviews.
TONINO GUERRA screenwriter It's more like I don't understand them...
I'd like to know... right, I really dislike these... these interviews.
So what's the genesis of a screenplay,
let's say the one of Red Desert?
Comes from a story...
This story is set in a particular place,
in our case Ravenna...
Then we did a lot of research.
We spoke with doctors and psychologists...
it is a little tough with Michelangelo and it is quite a difficult job,
quite difficult because there are certain expectations to be met...
difficult and amusing sometimes... right,
because we play, we fight a lot
because I am stubborn and he is stubborn too.
He might want to race me up five flights of stairs,
I take the elevator and he's up the stairs, running.
He gets there before me, and I find him sitting in my apartment...
you know he's very funny.
But when we play cards I win 'cause he is naive like a child...
Were you ever disappointed with the movie?
No, never, never disappointed because, let's say...
the screenplay is something dead
and Antonioni is constantly building.
Antonioni's images have something that transcends...
All the new meanings of the movie are in these images,
there's nothing to do, no, no... there's a huge difference, huge...
He has a great ability to evoke images, really like one would work

with a malleable structure; figurative.
This takes him away from cinema,
RENZO VESPIGNANI painter from what is the average result of a cinematic
image
and shows,
I would say, its artistic side.
And in this sense, I believe, we could say
that he has exercised an influence
on a certain branch of Italian painting, quite indirectly,
and nobody has ever critically looked at this side of his work.
Perhaps, even those that have benefited
from this influence haven't thought about it.
Personally, for instance,
I found all the final sequence of Eclipse very suggestive.
I don't know if it were a cinematic masterpiece,
this is not my area of expertise,
but I thought it really contained great plastic
and figurative innovations.
A plastic suggestion that is not the result of great or bad photography,
or ultimately strictly based on the composition of the shot.
When relating to things, he's dealing with a different perception
and space, at least in that film in particular.
Of course it's difficult today finding a painter
depicting the corner of a house or a counter like in Eclipse.
Still, that kind of spatial relation,
that way of understanding the image's surface,
runs throughout all modern painting.
Antonioni is a director of the present and its only, fleeting reality.
He feels compelled to be connected to his time,
not only to express and interpret it in its harshest
and most tragic aspects,
but also to register its resonance within ourselves.
We live in a world of research: and the researcher of emotions,
like every other researcher, lives in expectation.
In this sense Antonioni is modern, young,
devoted to experimentation.
He is willing to remain at hand
and open to the future.
What are the best experiments you have conducted to date?
Right now we are studying mental categories in different people,
so that we might understand cause and effect.
For instance when you see a worm climbing the branch of a tree,
you might describe it two different ways:
SILVIO CECCATO scientist the worm is climbing the tree to eat the leaves,

or the worm is climbing the tree because it's going home...
you're seeing the same thing
but through two different mindsets;
if I can understand that selective process I will program my machine
so that it will then be able to talk.
Cybernetics, machines, mysteries of technology are all elements
that have fascinated Antonioni like a toy for a kid;
the Ravenna of Red Desert is a game
of constructions on an adult scale.
Antonioni explores the voice of figurative suggestions,
shatters the traditional symbolism of colors
and comes back to nature by way of an abstract paganism.
But the fundamental question he's asking is the following:
in this desert of great industrial landscapes, this red desert,
colored by the bleeding of human flesh,
what is the color of our emotions?
ANTONIO CERVI producer Red Desert was Antonioni's first color picture,
so it was an important event for him,
and I believe for cinematic history too;
moreover, because Antonioni paints,
so he has to think over his paintings,
about the choice of color, how to find them, to invent them.
And all of this sometimes is done artificially
or even with a helping hand from nature,
and nature doesn't always give you the colors you need
then and there - think about it.
You could say Antonioni has two distinct personalities.
Antonioni the friend you meet for dinner,
who invites you to his home, the mundane Antonioni, if you want,
you meet for coffee or a trip; and Antonioni the director.
Antonioni the friend - the everyday Antonioni, not the director -
is a very funny, endearing, intelligent man,
who understands your problems, listens to you, tells jokes.
On set he totally changes, there is no communication
between Antonioni the director and Cervi the producer,
no relationship whatsoever.
The producer does not exist, absolutely does not.
It's a question of... a question of exclusivity;
he is the one who must create, go through,
mold his work and he goes headlong
and he doesn't care about anything.
That producer might die and another one
or one hundred replace him,
still, he must go through, keep going, unstoppable.

He estranges you, then tells you
when you'll go and see the movie, then you'll understand.
FRANCO INDOVINA director I believe the way Antonioni is portrayed
derives from how he behaves on set.
Every time I saw Antonioni arriving on set,
I noticed in him something like a sense of unease,
as if he were to share some intimate detail of his life,
made of modesty, jealousy, and love, with so many other people,
with the operator, the grips, his assistant,
the set designers, the actors they all bring something...
something personal but obscure that...
that does not perfectly correspond to his ideas;
this is where the greatest part of his effort is rooted,
and this high concentration of his, born from the effort
of transporting every one of these people within his vision,
and the exact feeling that he has for the movie.
But this is the way they like depicting him,
'cause in everyday life Antonioni has the gift of youth -
he is extremely young - vital and modern,
contrarily to the way they want to pigeonhole him
somebody interested in reality and all of its aspects.
Somebody you can go to a pop concert with,
watch the tour of Italy, or experimental theater.
On set, if he could, he would work hidden like a thief;
he would work with his own camera, to shoot his clouds
and build the perfect light, build the perfect actor,
that would be his ideal.
He is interested in reality in all of its aspects.
But what is the relationship between Antonioni and his actors,
and his ideas on directing?
Let's listen to Monica Vitti, after seeing her here in a scene
from After the fall, by Arthur Miller.
I know that some actors, especially foreign actors,
have defined their relationship with Antonioni as a difficult one.
Well... this is what happens to actors that are used to being spoiled
and believe they are the most important element in the movie.
It is true that for Michelangelo the actor
isn't the only important element,
but one of the elements he is dealing with while working.
In his movies there's the narrative, what needs to be said,
the photography, the landscape, and sometimes the color,
and even an object, things that have certain values
and also the actor.
Antonioni doesn't consider the actor in his traditional role,

he doesn't really rely on the intelligence of the actor,
as much as on his instinct.

Besides, I believe it is much more important
to be one of the elements of a work that
has some worth than to be the protagonist of one that has none.
Quiet, quiet now.

Move away, you move away, fine very well.

You move away but not toward me, stay with the car.

Let's try to shoot it. Quickly now, all is quiet, let's do it.

Damn it, as soon as I said it...

Speed...

Action.

Stop.

You must turn or we lose continuity, c'mon, ready?

We're shooting, go ahead.

Action.

This line, you must recite it like to yourself, not to him.

It's something you're thinking. Understand?

Let's get a

Speed.

and shoot the total eclipse of the sun.

It was suddenly cold.

And a silence different from all other silences.

The light on the land different from all other lights.

And then darkness.

Total stillness.

All I could think was

that during an eclipse

feelings cease to exist too.

Antonioni shot those images without really knowing why,

obsessing over a strange premonition;

and he will not use them

because he doesn't like explicit definitions;

they belong to the most intimate memories of an artist

who never ceases to explore the unknown.