

Please note: The photo-essay simply tells the story of the film in basic intermediate-level Italian. Each paragraph corresponds to an image or images on the blog. This basic translation is a tool to assist Italian learners understand the text. In writing our photo-essays, we aim for a fluid Italian and normally write an English translation to match it. However, since "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning" is an English language film, we've retained the original lines from the movie for the most part – the only exception being incorrect grammar that would be confusing in this language-learning tool. The film is set in 1950s working class Nottingham, with its characteristic grammar and vocabulary. Where there is no Italian equivalent for the characters' lines, we've chosen the closest conversational equivalent in Italian. We explain some terms within the text and others in the English translation documents.

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, Part I

Karel Reisz, Director (1960)

Arthur Seaton, a 22-year-old machinist in Nottingham, works hard by day and he drinks and parties hard at night. With no interest in settling down, he is carrying on an affair with Brenda, the wife of an older coworker. Then he meets Doreen, a sweet girl with marriage in mind.

The film opens in a bustling, noisy machine parts factory. The camera does a slow pan to a young machinist at work. It's Arthur Seaton (Albert Finney). As we watch him work, we hear him speak in voice-over: "954 ... 955 ... another four more and that's the lot for a Friday... 1,000 of these a day. No wonder I've always got a bad back. But I'll be done soon... I could get through in half the time if I went like a bull, but they'd only slash my wages, so they can get stuffed." He washes his dirty hands and dries them off with a rag as he continues his commentary, "Don't let the bastards grind you down. That's one thing I've learned."

He goes on, "Jack's one who hasn't learned it. He wants to get ahead. 'Yes, Mr. Robboe. No, Mr. Robboe. I'll do it as soon as I can, Mr. Robboe.' And look what it got Robboe: a fat gut and lots of worry."

"Fred's alright. He's one of them who knows how to spend his money – like me. Enjoys himself. That's more than those poor beggars know. They got ground down before the war and never got over it. I'd like to see someone try to grind me down. That would be the day. What I'm after is a good time. All the rest is propaganda." With that, he throws down the rag, gets up and leaves.

Next we see workers as they leave the factory at the end of their shift. Some run, others walk. The opening title sequence begins to roll over these shots.

Next, we follow Jack, whom Arthur had disparaged earlier. He is riding a motorcycle with an unoccupied sidecar. Jack (Bryan Pringle) turns into a street of simple three-story brick houses with bay windows, each one identical and sharing walls with its neighbors.

Jack's son comes out to meet him and they walk into the house together, Jack with his arm over the boy's shoulder. (A special appearance is made by the Italian film motif: the clothesline!) Jack greets his wife Brenda (Rachel Roberts) as she is taking out the trash.

In the tradition of the Italian neorealist filmmakers who filled their screens with *italianità*, the British directors* who made films in the genre "kitchen sink realism" turned their cameras on the everyday life of England's industrial cities. Here we see a group of boys playing in the middle of the street, while a girl leans against a building and talks to a child sitting on the window sill. Arthur turns into the alley towards his house and rides past a cross-looking woman wearing a headscarf and an apron, leaning against the wall.

**Karel Reisz, who directed this film, is considered a British film director, but he was actually born in Czechoslovakia. He was a World War II refugee who immigrated to England as a child in 1938 to escape the Holocaust. (His parents died in Auschwitz.)*

Arthur enters his family's house, where his parents are watching television.

"Hi, love," his mum says.

"Do you want your money, Mum?" he asks.

"Okay."

Arthur sits at the kitchen table and counts out his cash.

In the background we hear an advertising jingle from the television. So far, Arthur's dad hasn't acknowledged him in any way.

"Here you are," Arthur says, handing some money to his mother. He puts what's left in his shirt pocket.

"Everything go off alright at work, Dad?" he asks. "Did you hear about the accident in the three speed factory today?"

"No, not much," responds his father, who then turns to his wife, "Another cup of tea, please, Vera, love."

Arthur's mother serves him his supper. "I got you something good, seeing as it's Friday night," she says.

As he eats, Arthur continues, “This fellow got his hand caught in a press. He didn’t look at what he was doing. Of course, he’s only got one eye. He lost the sight of the other one, looking at telly day in and day out.”

His father barely responds, murmuring, “Alright.” Then he says, “Ta, love” to his wife, for the tea, never taking his eyes off the television.

It’s Friday night! Arthur is in his room. He puts on his jacket and tie, checks his reflection in the mirror and goes out the door.

Dressed up for his night out, Arthur walks through the gate and down the narrow alleyway behind his house.

Absentmindedly, he bumps into two ladies who are watching some commotion in the street. In fact one of them was already there earlier, when Arthur came home on his bike: the cross-looking woman with the headscarf.

“Mind what you’re doing, can’t you?” one calls out. Then she says to the other, “That Arthur Seaton’s going to get a good thrashing one of these days.”

Oblivious of the women, Arthur runs down the street and just makes it onto a bus as it pulls away.

The next scene opens at a pub where two customers are chatting with the barman as they pay. The lady is wearing a fur stole, pearls, a pendant, and gigantic earrings.

Someone is playing an upright piano; empty beer bottles are collected on top. We hear the quiet hum of conversation.

At a table, Arthur is sitting next to Brenda – in fact, Jack’s wife. We first saw her taking out the garbage as Jack arrived home from work.

Arthur downs one beer and calls out for two more, but no one hears him.

A band is playing now. A young man with a modest pompadour sings:

What do you want if you don’t want money?

What do you want if you don’t want gold?

Say what you want and I’ll give it to you, honey,

I wish you wanted my love, baby.

When Brenda makes a comment about a customer who's had too much to drink, Arthur responds, "You get thirsty working at a machine all week." He takes another gulp of beer and says, "I'm going to get another."

"Well hurry up then," she replies, "They'll be closing up in a couple of minutes."

We watch Arthur make his way through the crowd to the bar, where he orders another pint. Pretty drunk already, he picks up the glass with great concentration and heads back into the crowd.

He stumbles into a man seated at a table – in fact, it's the man we saw at the start of the scene. His companion, the lady with the fur stole, demands that Arthur apologize. In response, he dumps beer onto the front of her blouse. The woman then orders her companion to do something about it, but Arthur just walks away, and in no hurry.

He walks out to the landing at the top of the stairs. He looks drunkenly over the bannister and then falls down the flight of stairs.

The scene ends with Arthur stretched out on his back, half-conscious, smiling, contented.

Arthur is washing his face – his whole head actually – in the sink. It's dark in the room and we don't know where he is.

Brenda walks in, looks at Arthur in surprise and asks, "Did you get in through the kitchen window?" Ah! So it's Brenda and Jack's house. She goes to the window to close the curtains, "You never think, do you? You'll have all the neighbors talking, you know." But she doesn't seem angry.

"I left the pub in a hurry or else I would have waited for you," he replies.

"Yes, I heard all about it – falling down the stairs and dumping your beer on that woman." Brenda's tone is only mildly reproachful. None of it seems to really bother her at all.

"It wasn't my fault," he protests. "Someone pushed me from behind. I tripped on the rail coming down the stairs."

"I'll believe you," she answers, adding: "Thousands wouldn't." This is a theme we'll be hearing more of as the film goes on.

"Hey," he says to her, "Come here."

"What for?" she asks.

But she knows exactly what for. She walks into Arthur's arms and they kiss passionately. Their kiss is reflected in a mirror hanging on the wall. Arthur gets a look at himself in it, too, as he embraces his lover.

"Don't let's stay down here too long," she suggests, "Let's go upstairs. Come on."

We hear them talk as they walk up the stairs.

"Jack will be gone till tomorrow. Best make the most of it," Brenda suggests.

"Don't worry."

"Can't you wait until we get upstairs? ... Oh!"

A dissolve brings us to the street outside. It's Saturday morning. The street is empty except for a car parked at the curb and a lone woman in the distance sweeping the sidewalk. Farther down still, there's an industrial chimney.

Arthur gazes down with affection at Brenda, lying next to him, but off-screen. He looks happy.

He begins to survey the room and a slow pan follows his gaze. We start at the night table next to him: there's an alarm clock (it's 10:00), a table lamp with a fringed lampshade, a pack of cigarettes and an ashtray. His trousers are hung neatly over a wooden chair; Brenda's little bottles of perfume are arranged tidily on the vanity, which has a big oval mirror; a portrait of Jack dominates the bureau. Arthur takes it all in. The place looks lived in – by someone else.

The camera starts a new pan around the bed as Arthur turns over, leans on his elbow and gazes with satisfaction at Brenda, asleep next to him. He blows gently on her face. She shifts, but doesn't awaken. "Come on, Brenda, wake up, duck," he says sweetly.

Finally, she opens her eyes. She looks at Arthur happily and snuggles into his arms.

"Oh, that's nice," he says.

"What's the time, love?" she asks.

"It's half past 11:00."

"What?!" she exclaims, sitting up suddenly, then realizes that it's not true. He laughs and laughs.

“You’re pulling my leg again,” she says. We remember Brenda’s good-natured acceptance of Arthur’s behavior in the pub. And we notice here that, although she is meant to be an older woman, she looks beautiful and desirable. Director Reisz has arranged the scene with care.

“Of all the liars, you’re the biggest I’ve ever known,” she gently scolds.

“I always was a liar – a good one,” he replies, smiling cheerfully. He seems pretty proud of it.

“Liars don’t prosper,” she responds sweetly.

His smile starts to fade.

But he bounces back, “You’re lovely, Brenda.”

A dissolve brings us to the kitchen, where Arthur, dressed in shirt and tie, is having his breakfast.

He says, “Pour us some more tea, duck. It’s thirsty work falling down stairs.” She laughs quietly. He goes on, “You’re good to me, Brenda, love, and don’t think I don’t appreciate it.”

Thinking of Jack returning, she replies, “It’ll be the last breakfast you ever have in this house if you don’t hurry.”

He asks to see her again, but she warns him that Jack might start to catch on. They should probably wait for a while. She urges him to hurry.

And sure enough, here comes Jack on his motorcycle with their son in the sidecar.

She entreats her lover, “Arthur, he’s coming. Get a move on, love.” But first he needs to finish his coffee and then give her a big kiss.

He leaves the kitchen just as Jack is pulling into the driveway behind the house. Arthur puts on his jacket and pauses for a moment, looking back, as Jack parks and his son runs into the house.

In the hallway, on his way to the front door, Arthur trips over the boy’s bike. Meanwhile, Jack and his son come in the back. Brenda takes off her son’s hat and gives him a hug. Arthur tries to right the bike quietly.

“I didn’t expect you back so soon,” Brenda says to Jack.

“Well, we had a clear run all the way down from Lincoln.”

We hear a thud and Jack asks, “Who’s in there?”

“Nobody, as far as I know,” replies Brenda, “Perhaps a cat got in.”