

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## Characters in Michelangelo Antonioni's Films

### **PIERO** (in "the Eclipse") Disagreeable

**Character** Piero is a young, enthusiastic and handsome man, who works as a broker in the Rome stock exchange. Although he is dedicated to his job, he is self-absorbed and shallow and acts like an overgrown adolescent.' He can be charming and playful, but he lacks any empathy. When Vittoria comments that he 'never stands still,' he replies, 'Why should I?'

**Materialistic** Piero is driven by his desire for making money at the stock exchange, a job at which he seems to excel. We see him flying around the floor of the exchange like a person possessed, but an even more telling illustration of his mercenary character occurs outside the world of high finance. His car, a fancy Alpha Romeo, has been stolen by a drunk, while Piero is trying to get Vittoria to invite him into her apartment. The expensive vehicle is driven away at great speed and, the next day, is dragged out of the river. The man who drove it is dead, but Piero is not too upset because, as he says, 'there aren't many dents it [the car].' Vittoria is shocked by his lack of empathy for the dead man and asks if he is only thinking of the dents. 'No,' he says, having completely misunderstood her question. 'I'm also thinking about the motor and the money.' He goes on to explain how much it cost and how much he can get for it and how much a new car might cost. It is a chilling example of the soulless, alienated capitalist society that Antonioni skewers in the film.

**Rude** Piero often behaves like a spoiled teenager, or a narcissistic adult, who can't see further than his own interests. A good example of this characteristic occurs in the middle of the film, when there is a morning of devastating losses for many of his clients. After his boss criticises his investment choices, he takes out his anger on a secretary and then, without skipping a beat, picks up the telephone and makes a date to meet a prostitute later that day. He is rude to the secretary and then to another client, who comes into his office. 'How many times do I have to tell you?' he says to the woman. 'You have your troubles. I have mine. Too bad.' He throws her out and berates a male client about taking up too much of his time. Piero can only understand his own situation, whether he's made money or not. Other people, his clients upon whose investments he depends, are no more human than a column of numbers on a sheet of paper. Petulant, bossy and short-tempered, Piero is rude to them all.