

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Characters in Michelangelo Antonioni's Films

SANDRO (in "the Adventure") Open

Character Sandro is a typical man, yet his character is anything but simplistic. He is a successful, wealthy man who owns two houses. He is also handsome and dynamic. In fact, he is a man who, as he admits, never sleeps. That restless energy, however, conceals a deep-lying disappointment of failing to become an architect. His inner conflict is that he has failed to express his creative energy. That failure imbues his character with a sadness that sometimes emerges from beneath the otherwise content surface.

Imperceptive Sandro is neither selfish nor coarse, but he does not always show emotional intelligence. An example of his inability to 'read' people is the conversation he has with Anna just before she disappears. They have been away from each other for a month, during which Anna has learned to live without him and she isn't sure that she wants to renew their relationship. They are exploring the island when she tells him about her doubts. He says, confidently, 'It's the usual uneasiness. It will pass.' When she says it's stronger this time, he smiles indulgently and says, 'Then it'll take a little longer to go away.' She insists that they talk about it, but he declares that 'words are becoming less and less necessary. Words cause misunderstanding. I love you. Isn't that enough?' But it is not sufficient for Anna, who confesses that she wants to separate from him because she no longer feels anything for him. He picks up a stone and hurls it into the sea with a gesture of frustration. Not knowing what more to say and resigned to not understand her, he stretches out on the rocks to relax in the sun. The scene reveals Sandro's lack of perception into another's feelings, even those of his fiancé. He has answers for every problem she brings up, a ready-made solution rather than a considered response. There is a smugness about him, a failure to recognise the seriousness of another's problem.

Matter-of-fact What little we glean about Sandro's work suggests that he is an accountant with a construction firm. Earlier, he might have had more aesthetic interests, but now he is focused on getting things done on time and within budget. Not a bad attitude to have when dealing with large sums of money, but not ideally suited to achieving rapport with a lover. This matter-of-fact approach is displayed in a scene when he begins to express his interest in Claudia. After Claudia says that his sweet words are just an echo of what he said to Anna many times, he has an unemotional answer. 'Let's say I did [say these things to Anna]. I was in earnest with her as I am with you.' Sandro does not want to see his infidelity because he is desperately in love with Claudia. However, he expresses himself in terms of logic, not love.

Regretful Another aspect of Sandro's character is illustrated in the scene when he and Claudia stand on a roof top and look out at the ancient piazza of a town. Sandro begins to speak about his youthful ambition to become an architect and his disappointment with his current job. He tells the story about being asked to give the estimate to build a school. He worked for a day and a half and earned four million lire. 'So,' he explains, 'I went on giving estimates for other people's projects.' Claudia says she believes he could build beautiful things, but he wonders who wants beautiful things now. 'All of this,' he says gazing out at the piazza, 'was built to last centuries.' During this scene, Sandro reflects on his failed artistic ambitions and accepts his current wealth with a note of regret. Still mulling his past, he walks away, hands in pockets, before suddenly turning around and asking Claudia to marry him. She, it seems, would could help him forget his disappointed past. It is one of the few scenes that endear him to the audience.

Petulant Not long after that scene, we see the childish, self-absorbed part of Sandro's character. He and Claudia have spent the night in a hotel, Claudia is extremely happy and he strolls out to the piazza. Unable to enter a museum, he notices an ink drawing by an architectural student left out in the open. He dangles his car key as he scrutinises the sketch, comparing it with the original building. With a frown, he

lets the swinging key knock over the bottle of ink and ruin the drawing. Confronted by the young artist, he asks how old he is. When the student says 23, Sandro says that he too was once that age. A possible fight is averted by the appearance of priests and students coming from a church, but Sandro has shown a mean streak. It is a continuation of his reflections on an unfulfilled ambition to become an architect. His behaviour is, at best, petulant.