

# blood of my blood

sangue del mio sangue  
a film by Marco Bellocchio

tiff.40 toronto  
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D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA  
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Competition







**t**wo haunting Italian tales from different centuries in the convent prison of Bobbio, caught somewhere between past and present: a young 17th century priest falls under the spell of a bewitching nun and a modern-day tax investigator tries to push a mysterious old man out of hiding ... From the acclaimed director of *Dormant Beauty*, *Vincere*, *Good Morning Night*, *My Mother's Smile*, *The Conviction* and *Fists In The Pocket*.



## synopsis

**f**ederico, a young priest, is summoned by the 17th Century Inquisition to a convent prison in the town of Bobbio. His mission is to coerce Sister Benedetta to confess that she has seduced and driven to death her previous confessor, Federico's brother. Benedetta must undergo three trials – water, fire and tears – to prove her innocence if she does not confess. Federico, too, falls under the spell of the hypnotic Benedetta ...

**t**he present-day Bobbio prison is run-down and abandoned. Tax investigator Federico is helping a Russian millionaire buy the old ruin. But a secretive old man has been living there for years. He is only occasionally seen out at night, and is referred to as "The Count". Federico needs to prove the man is a fraud to make the big sale...



# bobbio

**b**OBPIO is a small town in the province of Piacenza in Emilia-Romagna, northern Italy. It is located on the Trebbia River valley southwest of the city of Piacenza. Ernest Hemingway described Val Trebbia as „the most beautiful in the world“. The town is nestled at the foot of Monte Penice, 1,460 metres (4,790 ft) above sea level, on the left bank of the Trebbia.

The history of Bobbio is identified with the Abbey founded in 614 by St. Columbanus, an Irish missionary. It became one of the principal centers of religious culture in medieval Italy. The monastery of Bobbio and its library – the richest of the early centuries of the Middle Ages – are mentioned in Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose*. Historians have speculated that Bobbio was the town in which Leonardo da Vinci completed the Mona Lisa.

Bobbio has long been admired for its history of art and culture, its spectacular natural surroundings, and for its ancient monuments. The historical center has maintained the characteristics of the medieval village. The Ponte Vecchio, also known as Ponte Gobbo (Hunchback Bridge) and Devil's Bridge, is an ancient stone bridge of Roman origin, which crosses the Trebbia in eleven irregular arches.

With BLOOD OF MY BLOOD, writer-director Marco Bellocchio returns to Bobbio where he shot his first film *Fists In The Pocket*. Every summer, Bellocchio, whose family is originally from Bobbio, holds a workshop there for young people – *Farecinema (Making Movies)*. The Bobbio Film Festival has existed since 2005 and Bellocchio established the “Golden Hunchback” award for the best film shown in the medieval cloisters of St. Columbanus.

One summer while location scouting, he discovered the old Bobbio convent prisons, closed and abandoned for many decades. In this convent prison in this town of Val Trebbia, BLOOD OF MY BLOOD was brought to life.







## comments from marco bellocchio

### a return to the present

**b**LOOD OF MY BLOOD was born from the accidental discovery of the ancient prisons of Bobbio. It inspired in me the story of Benedetta, a nun buried alive in the Santa Chiara convent prison. It seemed to me that this story unearthed from a past so remote deserved a return to the present of today's Italy, a provincial Italy that modernity and globalization have erased. The film highlights a number of themes shared with other films of mine, such as *The Mai Sisters* – a work particularly dear to me – also set in Bobbio. The films' endings are similar: a love for the past and the need to make a clean break with it.

### where past and present meet

**i**n the many films that I've written and directed, there are some direct connections and issues that always seem to take me back to my first film, *Fists In The Pocket*, sometimes in subtler and less straightforward ways. I imagine because this is my life; this is who I am. We all live our lives based on our own personal history, on our own life experiences. These pop up and emerge in the images that we see. BLOOD OF MY BLOOD is a kind of showdown. One of its themes is a brother mourning a brother. I had already told the tragedy of my twin brother committing suicide in *The Eyes*, *The Mouth*. Here, indirectly, is the same tragedy – Federico's brother died for love. This inspires revenge in the surviving brother, but he will be seduced by the same woman. BLOOD OF MY BLOOD is a quirky film, but it has a certain freedom, where past and present meet. It is not that kind of American film where everything is very clearly explained.









## comments from marco bellocchio

### **i** bobbio

have a personal attachment to Bobbio because that's where I spent my holidays when school was out. That was the extent of my horizon because I was 11 years old before I saw the sea for the first time with my church school. Bobbio was the river leading to the sea and it was where I had my first relationships with friends and girls. Piacenza was where school was, plus a large family with a lot of problems and the parish community, too. I don't remember anything else, nothing of the city, for example. Suffice it to say, I hold Bobbio more dear in my memory. I spent long summers in Bobbio, in the afternoons down by the Trebbia River. I learned to swim in those clear waters. I remember the days and nights there in which I fell in love for the first time and in which, out of fear of rejection, I failed to declare my love.

### **f** a family film

or BLOOD OF MY BLOOD, I brought together many from my cinematographic «family.» There's Roberto Herlitzka, who was unforgettable in *Good Morning, Night* and *Dormant Beauty*. And Lidiya Liberman, who I discovered for the role of Helena in my theater production of *Uncle Vanya*. I directed Alba Rohrwacher in *The Mai Sisters* and *Dormant Beauty*. Also Federica Fracassi from *Dormant Beauty*. There's Toni Bertorelli who was terrific in my films *The Prince Of Hamburg* and *My Mother's Smile*. My fourth film with Bruno Cariello. Also Filippo Timi and Fausto Russo Alesi from *Vincere*. And I can't forget members from my blood family. My daughter Elena Bellocchio who acted in *The Mai Sisters* and my son Pier Giorgio Bellocchio, who made his debut in film as a baby.



## comments from marco bellocchio

**i** catholicism  
grew up in a Catholic world. That was part of my education, of what was around me as I was growing up. So in terms of images or ideas, even though I'm not a believer myself, my imagery is drenched in Catholicism. It stayed with me because of all that deeply rooted Catholic education. Even though now I'm not a Catholic, there are still traces that pop up. For a lot of Catholics, there is a conformist component, a blind connection to the institution that is often used as a tool. But there are some Catholics who genuinely have true faith. I am opposed to the first kind of Catholics, those I see as hypocrites: people who use the church and pretend to believe in order to gain power. But those who devote their lives to solidarity, to helping the poor, they move me. Their philosophy is not something that I share, but I respect it.







# marco bellocchio

## writer/director

From teenage rebellion to religious institutions to political subversion, the films of Italian director Marco Bellocchio have explored the social and political contradictions of his country. His prolific 50- year career has been closely intertwined with the complexities and discrepancies of Italian history.

Bellocchio’s works are known for being politically-engaged and often attacking symbols of Italian conformism. His darkly funny debut feature, 1965’s *Fists In The Pocket*, about an existentially- tormented teenager, is often credited with having anticipated the youth rebellion that would shake the foundations of Italian society. Throughout the 70s, Bellocchio’s cinema explored the political tumult of the time. He denounced religion with 1971’s *In The Name Of The Father* and the military with 1976’s *Victory March*.

From the 80s on, Bellocchio’s films have often focused on coming to terms with a personally and politically turbulent past. He has questioned ideologies and moral issues and fought to make sense of his characters’ motives. He has confronted the conflict between the Church and the radical Left without aligning himself with either. His films compose a rich, fascinating and humane investigation of Italian life, whether modern or historical.

Bellocchio was born in Piacenza, Italy, in 1939. In 1959, he suspended his studies in philosophy at Milan’s Catholic University to enroll at the Experimental Center for Cinematography in Rome. He made several short films in the early 60s and studied at London’s Slade School of Fine Arts. Bellocchio was awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice International Film Festival in 2011.

### feature filmography



- 2015 *Sangue Del Mio Sangue (Blood Of My Blood)*
- 2012 *Bella Addormentata (Dormant Beauty)*
- 2010 *Sorelle Mai (The Mai Sisters)*
- 2009 *Vincere*
- 2006 *Il Regista Di Matrimoni (The Wedding Director)*
- 2003 *Buongiorno, Notte (Good Morning, Night)*
- 2002 *L’Ora Di Religione (Aka Il Sorriso Di Mia Madre – My Mother’s Smile)*
- 1999 *La Balia (The Nanny)*
- 1997 *Il Principe Di Homburg Di Heinrich von Kleist (The Prince Of Hamburg)*
- 1994 *Il Sogno Della Farfalla (The Butterfly’s Dream)*
- 1991 *La Condanna (The Conviction)*
- 1998 *La Visione Del Sabba (Aka La Sorciere)*
- 1986 *Diavolo In Corpo (Devil In The Flesh)*
- 1984 *Enrico IV (Henry IV)*
- 1982 *Glio Occhi, La Bocca (The Eyes, The Mouth)*
- 1980 *Salto Nel Vuoto (A Leap In The Dark)*
- 1977 *Il Gabbiano (The Seagull)*
- 1976 *Marcia Trionfale (Victory March)*
- 1972 *Sbatti Il Mostro In Prima Pagina (Aka Viol En Premiere Page)*
- 1971 *Nel Nome Del Padre (In The Name Of The Father)*
- 1967 *La Cina E Vicina (China Is Near)*
- 1965 *I Pugni In Tasca (Fists In The Pocket)*



# cast & crew

## main cast

The Count – *Roberto Herlitzka*  
Federico – *Pier Giorgio Bellocchio*  
Benedetta – *Lidiya Liberman*  
Cacciapuoti – *Fausto Russo Alesi*  
Maria Perletti – *Alba Rohrwacher*  
Marta Perletti – *Federica Fracassi*  
The Franciscan Inquisitor – *Alberto Cracco*  
Angelo – *Bruno Cariello*  
Doctor Cavanna – *Toni Bertorelli*  
The Madman – *Filippo Timi*  
Elena – *Elena Bellocchio*  
Rikalkov – *Ivan Franek*  
The Count's Wife – *Patrizia Bettini*  
The Father Confessor – *Sebastiano Filocamo*  
Cardinal Federico Mai – *Alberto Bellocchio*

## main crew

written and directed – *Marco Bellocchio*  
cinematography – *Daniele Cipri*  
editors – *Francesca Calvelli, Claudio Misantoni*  
music – *Carlo Crivelli*  
production design – *Andrea Castorina*  
costumes – *Daria Calvelli*  
sound – *Christophe Giovannoni*  
line producer – *Alessio Lazzareschi*  
casting & coach – *Stefania De Santis*  
assistant director – *Lucilla Cristaldi*

*Kavac Film, IBC Movie and Rai Cinema present*  
*BLOOD OF MY BLOOD (Sangue del Mio Sangue)*  
a film by *Marco Bellocchio*  
produced by  
*Simone Gattoni (Kavac Film), Beppe Caschetto (IBC Movie)*  
coproduced by  
*Fabio Conversi (Barbary Films), Tiziana Soudani (Amka Films), Gabriella de Gara (RSI Radiotelevisione Svizzera)*  
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## international press

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