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# Sighting Rossellini

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A book of texts, with introduction and films list by David Hegener for the 18 film retrospective of the works of Roberto Rossellini - University Art Museum, Berkeley

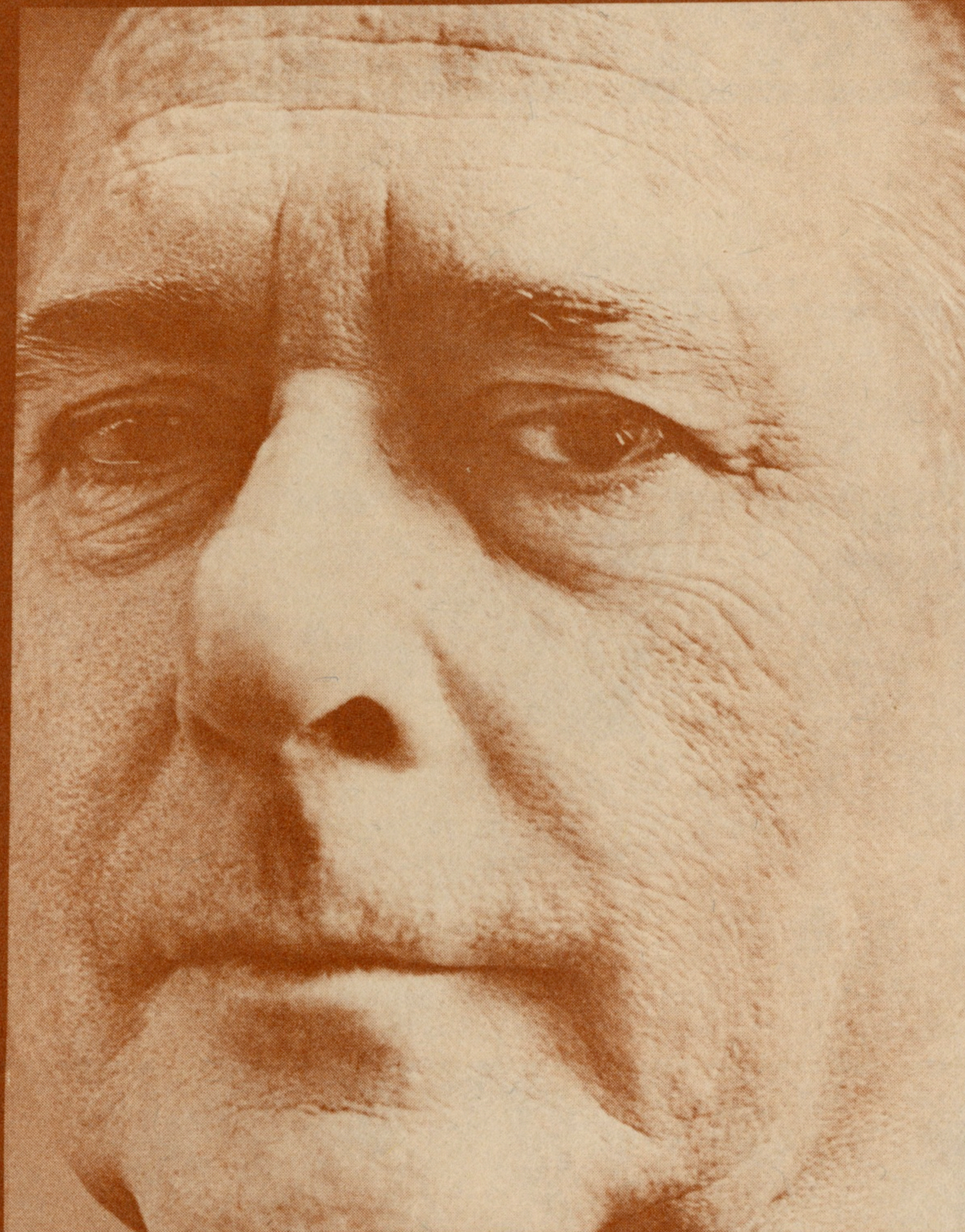
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A Retrospective Series  
Presented by The Pacific Film Archive,  
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cooperation of the Chair of Italian Culture,  
and Department of Italian, University of  
California, Berkeley.

David Degener, the compiler of this  
booklet, has published texts and trans-  
lations bearing on a variety of issues and  
personalities in film in *Film Quarterly*,  
*Organ*, and *Kinopraxis*. He is currently  
involved in preparing *Radical Cinema*,  
a book which views film history in the  
light of the class struggle. He expresses  
his thanks to Charles Lippincott and  
Phillip Lopate for their manful efforts  
on his behalf in Los Angeles and New  
York in documenting the present work.





*Rossellini*

*1971*





*Open City*

*1945*



# Introduction

The other masters of film have been making films longer than Rossellini. Hawks and Hitchcock, both still more or less active, have together spent a total of thirty-four more years in the profession. There are doubtless a number of hacks who surpass him in length of service, too. No one over the twenty-year mark, though—this figure, which is arbitrary, only means to distinguish him as indisputably old guard—has at any point in his career stood as close to what the passage of time reveals as a major turning point in the history of film, and no one now alive and still active has occupied such a position as often as Rossellini. These major turning points in the history of film are three.

In the early forties Rossellini's activity in film intersects with what in the terms of one formula, neorealism, is generally spoken of as limited in its material scope, though not necessarily in its ideological impact, to Italy—this not necessarily being one of the easy outs available to and often used by the bourgeois ideology, it may be noted in passing but not without point, for the assumptions and choices of what within one set of coordinates is Italian neorealism and only that, are at least in the form they took near the start the assumptions and choices informing the practice of anti-industry film, which maintains its positions and defines its being by opposing the industry not from without, which would vow it to amateur or underground status, but from within. It is *other* film, *different* film precisely in being different from, alternate to mainstream production, the industry product which on the most basic level of its operations uses the coordinates of commodity capitalism to locate its very horizons.

That these assumptions and choices are political in some sense at least is as plain

as it is how they are political. Indeed, that they are and how they are is plain in Italy itself, from what finally happened to Italian neorealism, which was that *it* became mainstream, wound up defining the acceptable, meaning the permissible, product. It wound up this way because those who are responsible for degrading it so ignored or denied that these assumptions and choices had meaning only or largely in opposition to the industry that had *previously* controlled the whole practice. They thought or felt that they could use it; instead it used them: in allowing them to make neorealist movies *for* the industry, it deprived them of the material basis for their opposition, which thereby restricted the impact of their assumption and choices to the strictly formal: neorealism *became* a set of conventions, a "manner," maybe even a genre.

Rossellini avoided this degradation to the strictly conventional. How he avoided it is the most immediately legible, though not in completely articulate form, in his formula "neorealism is a moral issue." Though seeming to restrict it and himself to a basis in pure idealism (idealism understood here both in a general, ethical sense and in particular philosophical sense it also has: the world-view opposed to materialism), restricts it in the sense that the term he chooses to identify what distinguishes neorealism from the other kinds of practice in film, namely moral, though both vaguely descriptive (when what it means is: un-emotional, non-intellectual, which is often; in this descriptive sense moral comes close to meaning: of or pertaining "just" to consciousness) and vaguely prescriptive (when what it means is not consciousness but conscience) is in either case quite immaterial, which seems odd or even self-contradictory, given the basic "object" orientation of this new, "real"-ism and given that moral rules every *thing* and every relation of *thingness* out, it only seems to restrict them, because

the mixture of consciousness and conscience called morals in which Rossellini locates the distinguishing feature of *his* neorealism at least is projected in his practice onto the plane where the assumptions and choices one makes about the things that one films intersect with the assumptions and choices that one makes about filming them; in his practice Rossellini makes these immaterial moral coordinates *sensible*—you *see* them, *in* what you see, *there* on the screen, *in this* angle, *that* framing, which *thus* registers choice and the assumptions determining it, this kind of transformation in practice being the first step in the process by which the bourgeois ideology may be re-constructed; it is apparent from remarks of the early fifties that Rossellini felt a real pressure to participate in or even organize this rebuilding; the pressure, though not the precise form of its outlet or focus, is reproduced fifteen years later in the motives he expresses for devoting himself to didactic film. That this well defines the import and relevance of Rossellini's relation to "Italian" neorealism is suggested by the basis on which he relates to a second major turning point in film history: the relation between the career and film history here being better described not as one of intersection but of tangency, because his impact on film history here is felt through relays, others whom he has influenced, himself and his works, by the choices and assumptions they render visible. At this second turning point in film history he is a model. The men who in 1955 were still writing movie reviews for Paris weeklies or doing odd jobs on the margins of the French film industry but who in 1958 would shatter the complacency of that industry and by 1968 would have completely redefined the terms in which movie reviews were being written, not to mention the terms in which the movies themselves were being made—these men made Rossellini their model. Truffaut reports



it in the memoir written for Mario Verdone's 1963 book *Roberto Rossellini*. So does Godard, in texts dating both from before and after he began to make his own films. Both tell us the same thing about him—that Rossellini owes the regard in which they hold him both to his place in neorealism, a place defined or sighted by a set of "moral" choices, and to a subsequent second position, assumed after he left neorealism behind in the industry to which it had surrendered, though those who flew the white flag were thinking that they had rather won.

This second position manifests itself not as moral but as formal or even technical in nature; it determines the choices that become concrete in lines of dialogue, camera angles, physical action; it comes to affect even the *kind* of story one tells in a movie, *kind* defined here by viewpoint, though this latter detail suggests that this second position is also *still* moral in nature, since it suggests that the novelty which is at stake here is an effect largely of viewpoint. In films like **Europa 51** and **Viaggio in Italia** Rossellini projects the assumptions and choices that inform his first films (meaning the ones that the world in general knew as neo-realist, **Roma città aperta** and **Paisa**, but including also the ones preceding them, which in Rossellini's own accounting are the ones in which it really began, the so-called fascist, war movies: **La Nave bianca**, **Un Pilota ritorna**, **L'Uomo della croce**) onto a different decor, one much broader, even almost unlimited in scope, the scope within which he operates making **Europa 51**, **Viaggio in Italia**, **La Paura** being coterminous with the phenomenon that can be identified as bourgeois (melo)-drama, that is, as a sector of "art" practice with a good hundred and fifty year history. This phenomenon is not restricted to any one medium; its manifestations are not material but ideological in nature, occurring in novel and theater as well as in film. That they are not material but

ideological in nature is argued just by the fact that in film it was the industry and strictly industry interests that determined the realization of the first bourgeois (melo)dramas on film. This implies that while Rossellini appears to have altered his purposes here he is still doing the same thing, at least insofar as it interests the industry: resisting, maybe even attacking it from within, on its own terms. This means that the action based in this second position is direct, though it *looks* to the world like it's indirect, since the world has to hear what somebody else has to say about the films in which he takes this action to see what he has done. That is, in films like **Europa 51** and **Viaggio in Italia** Rossellini "invented" modern, subjective cinema. Invented appears between quotes here to suggest that the relation between Rossellini and subjective cinema is no simpler, no better described as one of invention or even simply of origin than the relation between Rossellini and neorealism is. He invented subjective cinema for the world first in what the young French writers and would-be filmmakers noticed and said he had done in these films, then in the movies which they and a number of others began making. **L'Avventura** and **Le Mepris**—or to approach the limit cases, **Giulietta degli spiriti** and **Pierrot le fou**—would not exist now if **Viaggio in Italia** had not existed first.

These films are subjective in the sense that they mean to examine individuals, not to present a plot. (They could be distinguished among themselves further, though, by the terms in which they perform this examination: one could argue, that is, that in the Italian films the individual is viewed either in isolation [Antonioni] or in some kind of redundant, even narcissistic reduplication [Fellini], but that in the two French films the individual is placed in relation with at least one *other* individual and defined largely, though not exclusively, in terms of this *relation*.) The subjectivity of

**Europa 51** or **Viaggio in Italia**, meaning the intent to examine subjects—individuals possessed of consciousness, endowed with personalities, identified by "God-given" names—entails a set of choices that manifest themselves on the level of style or manner. The very first shot in the latter film, stunning at once in what it is, a sixty miles an hour forward track shot through the windshield of a speeding car on a highway somewhere in the south of Italy, and in what it seems *not* to be, namely significant, provides a better than adequate example of the terms in which this manifesting takes place: the persons, strangers, whose viewpoint the shot loosely speaking adopts presume to be overtaking the landscape, even aggressing upon it; what it visibly does, though, is absorb them. This one shot, shot meaning the set of choices that establish where to put the camera, what to point it at, is easy to identify; it is useful, then, in gauging the influence this new, *other* filmmaking has had. Forward tracks shot from speeding cars are legion in "serious" (or, alternately, in "vanguard") film of the last fifteen years; they don't all mean the same thing, though; some mean nothing, in fact. That this influence remain only formal, that it endure as convention is the great danger, and it has befallen the greater number of those who have felt its impact.

This is not Rossellini's fault, though; it is theirs, the result of the notion that one can adopt and repeat the manifestations in form without having to weigh and then bear the assumptions and choices about, oh, social life, man's fate, how to change it, things like that, that justify these manifestations in form. That is just what they do, they justify them, for the assumptions and choices occur in the moral sphere. That the fault is theirs and that it results from denying or ignoring the fact that for the man whose camera angles or movements they want to use, these same camera angles



and movements have meaning only in effect of his beliefs about the world, which here means something almost strictly social, and our lives in it, is pointed up by the disinclination of the other practitioners of subjective cinema to use one shot of his that comes close to being the signature, if only because no one, with the exceptions perhaps of Godard and Straub, has dared use it, dared to or cared to, since it is identified not by what it looks like but by what it does, which means that one has to share the intentions, the reasons for using it, which is something the hacks and opportunists can never do.

This characteristic shot could be called the shot sequence; the intentions which render it characteristic are intentions to link the individual to the material . . . — call it the material decor in which and against which he exists, to which he forever relates. That these intentions might even be said to dominate Rossellini's thinking is suggested by the fact that he has devised actual physical means (refinements on existing panfocal length lenses) to make it easier for him to realize the camera movements which these intentions require.

That these assumptions and choices are at the least crucial to his thinking, its development, and their manifestations in his filmmaking is indicated by the third major development in film viewed as history to which Rossellini relates in the course of his career. This third time his impact is felt directly again, in the films he has produced and directed for various state-owned television networks in Europe, chiefly the RAI. (His dealings with these outlets are seven years older than *L'Eta del ferro*, though, since footage shot for *India* was edited into two distinct if not really different films, *L'India vista da Rossellini* and *J'ai fait un beau voyage*, broadcast in segments by the RAI and the ORTF early in 1959.) Like the films in which Rossellini invented neorealism and subjective

cinema, it has taken some time for these too to catch on, which means for their novelty to be felt not as aggressing (when this is the feeling, all one can do is reject it) but as simply existing, being there to puzzle and judge. The first that was seen in the States, *La Prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV*, was booed at its first showing here; the New York Times reviewer reported it "a disappointment and, to this particular viewer, a mounting bore." It still is not easy to categorize this novelty, or even to name it. In Italy some attempt has been made to have it called didactic film. This writer suggests that the phrase used by Gorin and Godard to identify the intentions realized as *Tout va bien* will do at least to locate its nature roughly if not to define it exactly, this phrase being materialist fiction. The films that Rossellini has made since 1964 have all been made for broadcast by television. They are alike in their subjects as well, alike at least in the sense that their subjects are historical, which means that in none does the fiction exist in present time. This requires that they all be "costume" movies. Rossellini's motive for constructing such fiction would seem to be unique as well; as the interviews and articles record it, what moves him is a desire—or the need—to inform, not to educate, for in Rossellini's view education entails violence; he calls it castrating, since he views its effects as limiting, not extending, expanding. He has a notion of freedom, though, that informing is key to: it is freeing simply to pass information on. The man expresses the greatest respect for it and for the facts. He also takes much pleasure in them—in getting them, in passing them on. The recent films on historical subjects (preceded by or at least prefigured in two films made in the early sixties, *Viva l'Italia!* and *Vanina Vanini*) mean, he indicates, simply to provide their viewers with information about various things. Rossellini tends to think that the various things he chooses to relay information

about are pretty important, but their importance does not obtain in function of a particular conceptual system; they are important only (as an idealist would say) in and for themselves. This suggests that it might be misleading to describe this recent practice in film generically as practice of materialist fiction. The question remains, that is: can one indeed "be materialist" without having to *want* to? I tend to think that the answer is no, or at least that that's what it should be, since if it were rather yes, yes or maybe, the business of figuring out where one really stands "within" ideology would become insolubly complicated. This reservation once stated, though, I can proceed to note the respect in which the formula is also apt.

The phrase suggests itself to describe this recent body of work, that is, because on the one hand the relationship between the things and the people in front of the camera and, for want of a better word, the idea that people sitting in front of the screen have of them is one of fiction: the latter "know," which means recognize, that the former are decors and actors; more importantly, though, the latter know too that to enjoy the effects which the former are there to produce, they have to *suppose* that the time which they see them living "is" time lived in a past that it lies beyond film to record. (The name of the *other* relation between the reality of what occurs in front of the camera and the reality of the experience when it recurs there on the screen being documentary; there are only these two kinds of relation, at least in such film as already exists.) On the other hand, though, this relation is manifest in a detail, detail here in the sense of inventory, that can best though not only be called materialist, best for its degree of adequacy in characterizing both the subject of this fiction and the approach taken to it in constructing the fiction, understood now not as a relation, which is how it was understood a couple



of lines above, but as a practice based in this relation. This adequacy can be measured by noting what the manifestation of this fiction relation in any one film is detail of: it is detail (to borrow a phrase) of "social life, the phenomena of the life of society." Though this is historical fiction, too, then, it is materialist fiction first, in a sense that results from its being possible to call, uh, **Lawrence of Arabia** or **Mary Queen of Scots** historical fiction and make a certain amount of sense but impossible to call the same films materialist; one of the terms names two things, the other does not; this is what matters if what you are trying to do is distinguish between them, fix their *difference*. This adequacy can be gauged, too, by noting the method by which this detail is produced; since it consists in the choices that result in this visible inventory, the view that informs it can be inferred from the detail itself, which shows that Rossellini views this social life, in the present (meaning in making films like **Roma città aperta**, **Paisa**, **Germania anno zero**, **L'Amore**, **La Macchina ammazzacattivi**, **Stromboli**, **Europa 51**, **Viaggio in Italia**, and **India**) or in the past (meaning in making the *other* films—**Francesco giullare di Dio**, **Viva l'Italia**, **L'Eta del ferro**, **La Prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV**, **La Lotta dell'uomo per la sua sopravvivenze**, **Atti degli Apostoli**, **Socrate**, **Blaise Pascal**, **Agostino d'Ippona**, and **L'Eta di Cosimo**), it being this view (see the remarks on *coralita* in the 1952 *Bianco e Nero* interview) that unites the whole body of work—views it not "as an accidental agglomeration of things unconnected with, isolated from, and independent of, each other, but as a connected and integral whole, in which things are organically connected with, dependent on and determined by, each other." Not only does he view the phenomena of social life as interconnected and interdependent, though, but also as subject to what the same writer calls:

movement, change, development, coming into being and going out of being. Further, but always on the basis of what is visible in the films themselves, he views this development not "as a simple process of growth, where quantitative changes do not lead to qualitative changes, but as a development which passes from insignificant and imperceptible quantitative changes to open, fundamental changes, to qualitative changes; the qualitative changes occur not accidentally but as the natural result of an accumulation of imperceptible and gradual quantitative changes." In consequence of this view, Rossellini understands history "not as a simple repetition of what has already occurred," which is how it has always been interpreted by idealism, "but as an outward and upward movement, as a transition from an old qualitative state to a new qualitative state, as a development from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher." This view is reproduced almost to the letter in Rossellini's most recent texts and remarks. If one were to reduce it to a single phrase, it could be called an endorsement of Lautreamont's dictum, *Progress exists*. Finally, his view of the development that is what the films he now makes are about sees both the "negative and positive sides": every phenomenon, that is, has "a past and a future," is both "something dying away and something developing"; as a result, then, it is "the struggle between these opposites, the struggle between the old and the new, between that which is dying away and that which is being born, between that which is disappearing and that which is developing, [that] constitutes the internal content of the process of development." That Rossellini does indeed have an eye for, keep an eye on the struggle which the writer from whom I have been borrowing lines to qualify the view of social life informing the recent, historical films calls the "struggle between the old and the new, between

that which is disappearing and that which is developing" is unmistakable in **L'Eta di Cosimo**, the most recent of the historical films to be included in this retrospective. If it is right, now, to report the view of social life that informs and directs the method by which Rossellini produces the detail of the phenomena of life in society in which his history films consist "in" words that occur also in *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, a text published in 1938 as Stalin's, or to put it another way: if these borrowed words are indeed adequate to describe the view informing this method (and that is what they seem to be), then the method is in some very precise sense dialectical, since the text in which these borrowed words first occur is an account of the sense in which materialism is dialectical. The formulas I refer to Rossellini's view of social life are formulas defining the materialist "approach to the phenomena of nature, its method of studying and apprehending them." The reservations sketched some lines above and the question in which they come to a head, namely: can one "be materialist" without *wanting* to? reappear if one attempts then to apply the words in which Stalin explains the sense in which dialectics become materialist to qualify not Rossellini's *approach* now to the phenomena of life in society but his *interpretation* of them. The method *is* dialectical, but the interpretation is *not* materialist. This suggests that dialectical fiction might if not a better be at least a safer way to describe this new, third kind of film that Rossellini has invented in the recent historical films, safer than materialist fiction. The suggestion is better ignored, though, in view of the ambiguity that dialectical would introduce, ambiguity resulting from the proximity of its modern beginnings in speculative idealism (Hegel's) to the provisionally final sense that it has in the classics of Marxism-Leninism. This ambiguity would obscure the real



novelty of the filmmaking that produces these recent films, which is novelty (again) of opposition. Materialist qualifies their novelty as opposite in nature; it also identifies the level on which this opposing takes place: it is radical, since it is the one on which Rossellini perceives the world.

Considerations involved in choosing a name for this third point within film history at which the practice of Rossellini gives this history a push in an *other* direction permit us to locate the point within the practice itself at which the push in an *other* direction is always felt. In one of his first attempts to define the (neo)realism that people claimed he had invented, Rossellini says that one of the things that it is *not* is “story.” That may be what *it* is not, but at this remove in time, which is remove enough that the nature of his two other inventions stands clearly revealed now, what the assumptions and choices that *it* is come to bear on with the most readily sensible effects is narrative, or more precisely the way or ways in which narrative takes place in film, which in the first place means on it. I reduce the relation between film and narrative to this literal first place to suggest just how radically the narrative function is rooted in filmmaking: it is so deeply rooted that it is unavoidable, just as soon as the irreversible one-way continuum that any one length of exposed film represents is segmented, its continuity broken, whether in the mechanical sense of an actual physical break or cut in the celluloid support or in another, still completely material sense where the break is not in the physical film but on it, “put” there by a change in lens angle or focal length or by a camera movement.

Though it is not story that interests him, the place he holds within film, which in the first place is an industry, requires him to make some kind of room for it within his films, which he does: his films do tell stories, though not in the sense in

which the industry that defines the norms normally understands story telling. In its terms story absorbs everything else, absorbs or occults everything else, which in the first place means the film product itself, the story vehicle which the superior, even transcendent status awarded plot in industry ideology downgrades to mere support status: the movie’s still there but what really matters are the feelings you get, not the feelings it gives you, *they* don’t exist; no, they’re the feelings you *get*, which come from nowhere: they’re *always* there, just like you are, at least for the time being.

Rossellini’s films do not tell stories in this sense because they never allow you to reduce your experience of them to some “feelings you get” and reject or hold on to. This refusal has been termed “distancing,” a bow to Brecht’s terms but a misleading one, since it associates Rossellini’s intentions with Brecht’s. That there is any real overlapping, though, is doubtful. The experience of this refusal in a film like **Paisa**, for example, suggests that this so-called distancing would be better described as a rejection of the sentimental, which is not to downgrade it at all, though, since the viewer feels it on the level of his most deeply rooted expectations; that these expectations are the most deeply rooted gives some sense of the industry’s sway.

That Rossellini has a very firm sense of this sway and its extent is plain from his own remarks about the roles film has played and that it still might play in social life, which is what his films have always been about. They do not tell stories in the industry sense because of the role played by ellipsis in their construction, which is determined in its detail by logic, not feeling. Both Truffaut and Godard have singled out this determination by logic not feeling as at least one of the things in respect to which Rossellini’s practice is model. Recent developments in Godard’s career (beginning with the montage of **La Chinoise**—

see the statement of governing principles in the interview published in the October 1967 issue of *Cahiers du Cinema*—and ending, for the time being at least, with the film **Letter to Jane**) even suggest that this is the main sense in which Rossellini’s practice was model for him. This determination by logic results in a total redistribution of emphasis among the component parts of the film narrative. It often entails the kind of telescoping that the shot sequence exists at least in part to produce. Though the set of movements and in-camera reframings in which any one shot sequence consists is complex in its detail, the aim is always simple, since it is simply to get something done and to get it done as soon, which means as cheaply, as possible. This redistribution is often produced by omission:

Rossellini just omits what the logic determining his narrative does not demand. This tendency has been noticed from the start, resulting in early claims that he was lazy or even careless. It is sensible in the most recent films, too, where it reaches what may be extreme proportions in the third part of **L’Eta di Cosimo**; this incidentally supports the suggestion that we would do better to call the most recent films dialectical than historical, for history leaves nothing out: the earliest form of its records, namely chronicle, points this up; history starts out as a sum. Dialectics is a difference, though; it leaves things out; indeed, it has to, since what it exists to trace and identify is articulation, not continuity, which is what history is as raw record, and logic is just one of several names for articulation.

The preceding argument means to bear on Rossellini’s place in film history. It defines that place in terms of his relation to this history, which has always manifested itself in giving that history a push in an *other* direction. It further defines that place by sighting it from the point within his own practice of film where this push in an *other* direction is always felt, which is the point at which film “is”



narrative. This argument, though, remains somewhat aloof from the material conditions under which Rossellini produced the films that earn him his place in our esteem, produced not in the sense which it has just for the industry but in the sense that it has for those who see that it is industry in general and the capital which sustains it which determine his horizons as filmmaker and ours as film viewers, since it is they which determine the conditions of life under capitalism in its degenerate, imperialist phase. Since they are the material means and conditions of production that, according to one world view at least, determine everything else, if only in the sense that they provide this everything else with its basis in the material world, it would be wrong not to correct the abstracting tendency of the preceding argument and its corollary by referring his place in film history to the point from which Rossellini gives it these several pushes in an *other* direction, or to put it another way: by referring his place in film history to his position with regard to the film industry.

I have described this position as one held within it; this does not exclude its being marginal, too; that it is. Rossellini tells just how, though tacitly, in the text "Dix ans de cinema" written for the *Cahiers du Cinema* and published in them just about the time that his influence on the rowdies of the soon to break new wave was peaking. The bases on which he has always existed within the film world and from which he has operated against it are marginal in nature. They are marginal in the sense that he produces most if not all of his films himself. This may require him to spend much more time finding the backing for a film than he does actually making it, but it also means that he remains outside industry grasp, is not held to observe its taboos, which extend to the minutest details of technique. His French admirers were quick to grasp the freedom this earns him: it is only relative, but it is still freedom. Wit-

ness: one of Jean-Luc's first texts, which purports to be an interview with Eric Rohmer, that appeared in the October 1952 issue of *Les Amis du cinema* (it is perhaps imaginary, like the one "with" Rossellini published in *Arts* that tends to appear in Rossellini bibliographies in the "interviews" section, wrongly). Jean-Luc makes Rohmer say (or Rohmer says):

"Everyone hasn't yet understood the real lesson of Italian filmmaking: it should be utterly unthinkable that a cameraman tell you, 'Don't do that, I can't light it' or 'Don't move the actors around so much, I'll have to change my lights.' "

This is indeed unthinkable when the aim is self expression, which is what it was for the French would be filmmakers.

This is what Rossellini's first promoters said *he* aimed to do: express himself. In a text printed in the February 1952 issue of *Bianco e Nero* (an issue devoted to him and his work) one may encounter the claim that "Rossellini takes the screen like a piece of paper and writes on it in complete freedom, using the camera"—*camera stylo* indeed, somewhat before the letter at that. The latest phase in his career suggests that they were wrong, though, for in this latest phase the aim of self expression, if it ever existed, has been entirely absorbed by the felt need to document (himself) and inform (others)—the two terms designate pretty much the same process, though it has two faces or sides, which is why they are two: if the item of knowledge at issue is coming in, the process is documentation; if it's going out, if it's being passed on to someone else, the process, like the item, becomes information. In any case the need has always been there, though it may sometimes have been less noticeable. It certainly is so no longer.

David Degener





*Paisan*

*1946*





RR



# Texts

Limitations of space prevent the inclusion of more than just a fraction of the available material in this "texts" section, which means to present a view of the man and the career in his own words. This makes it even more necessary to detail the motives determining the selection that has been made. The texts span a twenty-five year period. The selection is weighted toward the opposite ends of this span. The compiler assumes an "inevitable" interest to the first texts, they being perforce the ones in which RR first manifests himself to the world as a "creative personality." The "middle" period, meaning the late fifties and early sixties, is the most heavily documented, but it is also the least interesting: RR seems to have spent a good deal of his time "giving film up" or at least talking about giving it up. The uncertainty resolves when he finds a new outlet for new aspirations in the early sixties: films made for circulation by telecast. The later texts, the ones heralding and paralleling the making of the history films, commend themselves to our attention, the compiler feels, for the way they "duplicate" positions stated at the outset of the career: the man goes on to break new ground, but he also leaves nothing behind. Finally, the first person interview texts have been counterpointed by a few third person texts reflecting the awareness that some others have had of his bases for greatness.

## Nov. '46

I don't like decors, I hate makeup, and I think I can do without actors. It takes only a thin film of powder to change the whole look of a face. I'm going to tell you a secret. The few times I've used people in my films who had already acted, they were virtual unknowns with

almost no experience. There are two exceptions in **Roma citta aperta**, Aldo Fabrizi and Anna Magnani. In selecting the actors for **Paisa**, I began by sitting down with my cameraman in the middle of the location where we were to shoot a given episode. People would gather round to gawk. I'd choose my actors from among them. If you're dealing with good, professional actors, they never really quite fit the idea that you have in mind for the character that you want to create. To create the character that he has imagined, the filmmaker has to struggle with the actor, bend him to his will. I don't like to waste my energy like that, so I only use non-professional actors. Besides, it is extremely hard to fit the good, professional actors in with the "amateurs," so I've preferred not to use the "good" actors.

Amidei and I never finish a script without visiting the sites where we expect to be shooting the film. Various things... the actors chance brings us, usually lead us to alter our original plans. Even the dialogue, down to the intonations, depends on the non-actors who are going to speak it. The one thing that you do have to do is give the actors time to get used to the atmosphere which surrounds the shooting.

Excerpts from an interview with RR by Georges Sadoul, published in the 12 November 1946 issue of L'Ecran francais as "I choose my actors from the crowd"; this is the first on record.

## Nov. '48

People may think I'm crazy, but I simply refuse to know how my film is going to end the day I start shooting it. I simply cannot work under that kind of constraint. A rigid script followed step by step, a studio with its tons of equipment, all the premeditation that goes into the decor and the lighting—there is nothing more hateful to me. How do I work?

Do you ever know how? The one thing that I am sure of is that when I start a new film I start with an idea but I don't know where it will lead me. The one thing in the world that interests me is man, man and the adventure of life, which is unique for each one. I am an individualist *first*. Everyone is unique in his kind, though he may seem to resemble everyone else. It's biological: my heart, my lungs won't do for anyone else, even though everyone else has a heart and lungs just like me. The reason why people think I'm such a great realist is that I have no fear of truth and that I take such a great interest in man. I *am* a realist, I agree, if what that means is that I leave the individual alone in front of the camera and allow *him* to make up his story. On the first day of shooting, I sit down *in back of* the characters; then I let my camera run after them. The number one enemy of film is the studio. I use one only when I have no other choice. But as soon as I get into one of these things I start having to dress a certain way; you know, put on the filmmaker's pants and the filmmaker's shirt; it's a uniform. And then they bring out all the equipment and display their technique. *You* have to put up a big front. That's when I start having to be intelligent. But as soon as I feel like I'm *being* intelligent, I feel like I'm fucked. I wish somebody would tell Carne that I think he's the greatest director in Europe, him and Clouzot, but that I wish he'd loosen up a little, shake off the studio, get out in the street and take a really good look at it.

Interview with RR by Roger Regent printed in the 2 November 1948 issue of L'Ecran francais as "As soon as I feel like I'm being intelligent, I feel like I'm fucked."

## Feb. '52

How did you get into filmmaking?



By accident. [King] Vidor's movies **The Crowd** and **Hallelujah!** had made a deep impression on me. They were maybe the only "classic" films that I'd had a chance to see then. I went to the movies a lot. My father owned the Corso Cinema. The first things that I did were documentaries. I had help from my brother in mounting them. **Prelude a l'après-midi d'un faune** [his second film, a short, made in 1937 or 1938] is not a visual ballet, as someone who'd never seen it might think. It is a documentary on nature, like **Ruscello di Ripasottile** and **Fantasia sottomarina** [his third and sixth shorts, made in 1939 and 1941]. I was struck by the water, the snakes that wound their way through it, the dragonflies skimming overhead. Kind of a limit sensibility, if you like, like the little lapdogs on the deck of **La Nave bianca** or the little flower that gets caught in the sailor's hook just as it's about to sink.

Do you consider yourself the father of Italian neorealism?

Others have to decide whether what people call neorealism made its most impressive "first appearance" in **Roma città aperta**. I would say, though, that the real beginnings of neorealism lie elsewhere. First, in a couple of fictionalized documentaries about the war; one of my movies, **La Nave bianca**, [his first feature, made in 1941] is one of them. Then, in some properly scripted fictional war films; I had a hand in **Luciano Serra, pilota** [made in 1938 by Goffredo Alessandrini] as scriptwriter, and I directed **L'Uomo della croce** [his third feature, made in 1943]. Finally, and most of all, in some minor movies like **Avanti c'è posto**, **Ultima carrozzella**, and **Campo dei Fiori**, where the formula for neorealism (if that's what you want to call it) was created spontaneously in the performances of the actors. Anna Magnani and Aldo Fabrizi played a big part in it. Nobody can deny that they were the first to embody neorealism. Or that her

music-hall "tough girl" numbers (on which she accompanied herself by beating a carpet) or her improvised "Roman stanzas" or the numbers Fabrizi performed on the stages of tiny neighborhood theaters are forerunners of things you can see in films of the neorealist period. Neorealism came into being unconsciously, as dialect film. Only later did it acquire some self-awareness, by living the human and social problems of the war and the immediate postwar period. In regard to its beginnings as dialect film, it's not a bad idea to go back to some of our less immediate historical predecessors. I have Blasetti in mind, for his film **1860** [made in 1933], and films like Camerini's **Gli Uomini che mascalzano** [made in 1931].

Leaving the historical precedents aside, though, isn't it right to say that postwar Italian film proposes a realism that was unthinkable before the war? Could you define it?

I am a filmmaker, not a critic, and I don't think I can tell you what realism is, not with any precision. I can tell you what I feel about it, the idea that I have of it, but someone else could possibly do it better.

To me realism means more interest in individuals. It means a need, peculiar to modern man, to account for reality in what I could call ruthlessly concrete terms, which is linked to the interest that people today take in statistical data and scientific results. It means a genuine need for taking a look at men, humbly, as they really are, without stooping to invent the extraordinary. It's the awareness that you do find the extraordinary if you just keep on looking for it. Finally, it's a desire to clarify things for oneself, not to overlook any of the realities, whatever they may be.

That is why I have tried to reach an understanding of things in my films, giving them the value they have. That's not easy to do. On the contrary, it is extremely ambitious, just the opposite

of easy, because to give a thing its true value, you have to know its true meaning. Do you think that the others who debate and represent it have as clear an idea as you do of what the term neorealism, or more simply realism, means?

There is still some confusion over its meaning, I think, despite all these years of realist films. Some people still think of realism as a matter mostly of externals—going outdoors, contemplating the tired and downtrodden. For me what it is is truth in artistic form. When truth is reconstituted, the expression is attained. If it's only passed off as truth, if its falseness is perceptible, then the expression is not attained. Having ideas like these, of course, I cannot believe in the "entertainment" film as those in certain industry circles conceive of it, here and in America, unless I think of it as something that is partly acceptable, because it is partly capable of reaching the truth. What is the object of realist film, as opposed to "entertainment" film?

The living object of realist film is the "world," not the story, not the plot. It has no preconceptions, because the ideas arise in and out of themselves. It takes no interest in the superfluous or the spectacular; it rejects both; instead it digs deep into things. It doesn't stop at the surface, it digs in, in search of the finest threads of the soul. It rejects all artifice and formulas. It looks for the motives that lie deep inside us.

What are some other characteristics of realist film?

To put it in a single phrase, it is film that asks questions and asks itself questions. An American paper that attacked my film **Il Miracolo** noted that "since film is entertainment, a film has no business asking questions." But this is precisely what realist film means for us: it is film that tries to get people to think. In the period right after the war we came face to face with this obligation. None of us has tried to make what people call an "entertainment" film.



What mattered to us was the search for truth, the correspondence with reality. For the first so-called neorealist filmmakers, this took a great deal of courage; no one can deny it. Then after the ones you could call the innovators came the popularizers. In a sense, they were even more important than the first group, because they carried neorealism everywhere; they enabled it to define itself better. They didn't have to change anything. They may have expressed themselves better. They did bring neorealism to a wider audience. Then, of course, came the inevitable, meaning the travesties and the deviations. But neorealism had already come a long way.

Have you remained faithful to the idea of realism that you just expressed when making your films?

If I have, it just happened. I didn't have to force myself. I don't think that one should preserve his consistency at any cost. The man who does comes close to madness. If I remain faithful to certain principles, in which I firmly believe, then you can say I'm consistent. This does not seem too far off the mark, though, in the sense that beginning with my first documentaries, continuing through my first war films, my films of the postwar period, and the films that I'm making right now, a single, unbroken thread unites all the different interests. I cannot deny, for example, that the same kind of spirituality appears in **La Nave bianca** and **L'Uomo della croce**, in **Paisa** and **Francesco giullare di Dio**, in **Il Miracolo** and at the end of **Stromboli**.

Do you feel that **Francesco giullare di Dio** is a realist film?

Yes, I do. I never left reality behind in imagining the kind of man that Francis was: both in regard to the events, which are strictly historical, and in regard to the other elements related to them on the visual plane. Like the costumes. They are part of the "reality," too, but you don't feel that they're costumes, they're

so right.

What are the constant elements in your films that you feel you have always respected?

I don't have any formulas or preconceived notions. But if I look back on my films, I cannot deny that I see elements in them which remain constant; they get repeated from film to film, not on purpose, mind you, but just as a matter of course. Above all there is the *coralita*.<sup>\*</sup> Realist film is choral. Think of the sailors in **La Nave bianca**, the refugees in the shack of **L'Uomo della croce**, the population of Rome in **Roma città aperta**, the partisans of **Paisa**, and the monks in **Francesco giullare di Dio**.

**La Nave bianca** is a choral film. Remember the opening scene—the sailors get letters from their lady pen pals. Remember the battle scene. Remember the wounded men listening to mass or playing music. The same film shows the ruthless cruelty of the machine toward man. How unheroic the men are who live inside the warship; they work in the dark, among dials and instruments, wheels and levers. It doesn't look heroic or lyric, but that's what it is, terribly heroic.

Another one of the constants is the documentary way I have of looking at things and analyzing them. I learned this while making my first shorts, **Fantasia sottomarina**, **Ruscello di Ripasottile**, **Prelude a l'après-midi d'un faune**. I was only going on in the same vein when I made **Paisa**, **Germania anno zero**, and **Stromboli**.

Then there is the continual resort to fantasy, even in what in the strict sense are the documentary parts. The reason for this is that one side of man tends to the concrete, but the other tends to the imaginative. The first tendency should not stifle the second. See how much fantasy there is in **Il Miracolo**, in **La Macchina ammazzacattivi**, even in **Paisa**, if you will, and **Francesco giullare di Dio**—remember the rainstorm at the

beginning, the soldiers beating the little brother, St. Claire by the hut. The ending, too, which in the snow was supposed to take on a fantastic look of its own. Finally there is the religiousness. I don't mean the invocation of divine authority at the end of **Stromboli**, though, as much as I do the themes that I have been developing over the last ten years.

Do you think that you have retained the *coralita*? It is characteristic of your work?

Is it true that when I was getting my start I staked everything on *coralita*. The war had something to do with it: war is choral. I may have moved on, become more interested in characters and in getting more deeply into the main character—this is what happens with the child in **Germania anno zero** and the refugee in **Stromboli**—but that is just a normal development in my evolution as a director.

People say that they can see a difference in your films between the really well-done and effective episodes, like the child wandering through the ruined city in **Germania anno zero**, and the other parts, which seem to have been handled in an off-hand or even a slapdash way. Do you think they can?

Yes, I do. Every film that I've made has interested me only for one single scene—the crucial scene that (God willing) I already have in mind when I begin.

In every film there's the stuff that merely advances the story, like the opening of **Germania anno zero** or the shot that you saw me shooting for **Europa 51** a little while ago—there is this stuff, and there is the *main point* [*il fatto*]. The only thing that interests me is this *main point*; that's the point I want to reach. The other stuff gives me a bad time. I stutter, I wander, I lose sight of its point.

I know that it's one of my limitations, I can't deny that, but I must confess that an episode which has no real bearing on this main point bothers me, bores me, leaves me almost helpless. I only feel



at ease when I get to the decisive episode. **Germania anno zero**, I have to admit, *started* with the episode of the child wandering among the ruins. Nothing that comes before it interested me in the least. **Il Miracolo** came out of the cups of milk episode. The sixth episode of **Paisa** started with the corpses I'd seen floating down the Po bearing signs saying "Partisan." The river was full of them for months. You'd see several in a single day.

Do your ideas crystallize when you're writing the script or when you're actually shooting? Do you think of the script as an inflexible thing that cannot be altered, that always has the last word?

If we're thinking about the "entertainment" film, then yes, the script is inflexible. But if we're thinking about the realist film as it developed in Italy, meaning the kind that asks questions and searches for truth, then it is impossible to proceed on the same bases. In the case of realist film, inspiration plays the major role. It's not the script that's inflexible here, but the film. The writer turns out a line or a page—then he crosses everything out. The painter puts down a dab of red—then he covers it up with some green. Why can't I cross something out, too? Do it over, replace it with something better. That is why the script cannot be inflexible for me. If it were, I'd have to think of myself as a writer, not a filmmaker. But I'm not a writer. I make films.

I research and study the basic premise of a film that I'm going to make thoroughly. Then I draft a script, because it would be senseless to try to think everything up at the last minute. But the various episodes, the dialogue, the direction itself are "adapted" from day to day. This is where inspiration enters into the established plan. Finally I get to the point where I know exactly how I want a scene to be. The preparations are taken care of. Everything has been arranged and arranged for. I permit myself to say now

that this is where the part of filmmaking that really bores me begins, damn it. What is your view of the contribution that your collaborators make to the film?

The collaborators are the means to an end. The director has them at his disposal, like a library. It's his job to know what will work and what won't. This selection itself is part of his expression. If he knows his collaborators from cover to cover and knows what he can get out of them, it's as if he were expressing himself through them.

You like to make films that consist in several short episodes (**Paisa**, **Francesco giullare di Dio**, and in a pinch **L'Amore**) or sketches (**Invidia**) or films with self-contained episodes in them (in **La Nave bianca**: the barracks, battle, and hospital ship sequences; in **Germania anno zero**: the child wandering in the ruins; in **Stromboli**: the thunder sequence and Karin's escape).

Yes, I do. I do because I start hating the basic plot premise when I feel that it's limiting me. Logical connections are inimical to me. You do have to have stuff that merely advances the story in order to get to the *incident*; I am inclined, though, to omit as much of it as I can and in any case to treat it lightly. This is one of my limitations, I admit it; my language is incomplete. Frankly, though, I wish I could make only episodes like the ones that you've mentioned. If I feel that the shot which I'm working on matters only for the logical connection that it makes, not to the thing that I want to say, I am powerless: I don't know what to do. But if the scene is important, if it's essential, then everything's simple and easy.

What is the essence of film narrative, as you see it?

In my view it is *waiting*. The resolution comes out of waiting. The waiting brings in life, it liberates the reality, it is what provides the liberation after all the preparation. Take the fishing sequence in

**Stromboli**, for example. The episode begins with waiting. The wait makes the viewer curious to see what happens next. Then comes the explosion: the fish get slaughtered. Waiting is the force behind every event in our lives. The same thing is true of film.

\**Coralita*: The term has no equivalent in English. The *Dizionario enciclopedico italiano* defines the adjective (*corale*) which it nominalizes as follows: "In the language of contemporary literary criticism, 'choral' is used of works or parts of narrative and theatrical works in which the various elements and motifs (characters, action, environment, landscape, and so on) tend to fuse and unite in a harmonious whole like the vocal parts in a choral piece, rather than standing individually or predominating one over the other." Excerpts from an interview with RR by Mario Verdone, published in the February 1952 issue of *Bianco e Nero* (the whole issue was devoted to RR) as "Conversation on neorealism."

*June '54*

People have said and written over and over again that I discovered a new form of expression, neorealism. This may be true, since it is the one thing on which the critics agree: the common opinion is always the right one.

But I find it hard to believe. The *term* neorealism first began to be used when **Roma città aperta** became a success. It took time. When it was shown at Cannes in 1946, it went unnoticed. It was only some time later that people discovered it, and I still am not sure that they understood my real intentions. So I have been called the inventor of Italian neorealism. But what does that mean? I can't really . . . endorse the films that are being made in my country now. It seems clear to me that everybody has his own realism and that everyone thinks his is the best. Myself



included. My own personal neorealism is nothing more than a moral position which can be summed up in three words: love thy neighbor.

I am a simple man, but I find myself swimming in a sea of myths that people have created around me, for no reason at all. For example, everyone claims that there is a break in my work that starts with **Francesco giullare di Dio**. If this were true, I'd be the first one to know it. . . .

Another one is the myth of endless improvisation—the cartoon image of a bungler who thinks he's a creative genius. The truth is much simpler. Much more logical. I have the way the scene is to develop down in my head. This means that I don't have to *write* it down. The thing that matters the most to me is the rhythm. And since I always take the shooting itself into account (it always leads to some new ideas), the only improvising that I really do is to create a better rhythm, one capable of sustaining a state of tension that can only be resolved in a striking and brutal ending.

People say, too, that I have become a producer because I have a thirst for power.

Do you want to know the real truth, which is pretty banal? I finance my movies myself because no one else will.

They'd turn me down flat—with a smile.

Excerpts from an interview with RR by Henri Hell, published in the 16 June 1954 issue of *Arts* (Paris) as "I am not the father of neorealism."

**July '54**

Jacques Rivette recently wrote, "On the one side, there is Italian film; on the other, there is the work of Roberto Rossellini." He meant that you stand aloof from the neorealist movement, now that almost all the Italian directors

are neorealists.

Yes, if you mean that I stand aloof from a particular kind of neorealism, but what do you mean by this word? You are aware that there was a Neorealism Congress in Parma recently. The discussion went on and on, but the term is still vague. Most of the time it is only a label. To me it means a moral position from which one looks at the world. *Then* it becomes an esthetic position, but at the outset it's moral.

There is said to be a break in the body of your work beginning with **Stromboli**. That may be correct. It is hard to judge oneself. I think I'm consistent, though it isn't something I worry about. I think I'm still the same human being who still has the same way of looking at things. But you find yourself drawn to other subjects, your interests change, you take different paths. You can't keep on making movies in bombed out cities. Too often we make the mistake of allowing ourselves to be hypnotized by a certain milieu, the atmosphere of a certain moment. Life has changed, though. The war is over. The cities have been rebuilt. Somebody had to tell the story of reconstruction. Maybe I wasn't the right one to do it.

This is the theme of **Germania anno zero** and **Europa 51** both. There's an element of pessimism in these two films that is totally absent from **Roma citta aperta** but begins to come through in **Paisa**.

I'm not a pessimist. I think it's a form of optimism to see the evil, too. I have been told that I was presumptuous in **Europa 51**. Some people were shocked by the title. I thought it was quite humble.

I wanted to say very humbly what I felt about the life that we're living today.

I have a family, so daily life interests me. I have also been criticized for not coming up with any solutions, but that's a sign of humility, too. In any case, if I'd been capable of coming up with solutions, I wouldn't have made any films, I'd have done something else.

But when you do come up with an answer in **Stromboli**, the critics balk. I never understood why. It has to be my fault, though, because I didn't succeed in convincing anyone else.

Personally, we think that the Christian ending gives the whole work its meaning. That's your opinion. You're free to have it. But allow me to interview you for just a moment. In the last few years the critics haven't reacted to my new films with real hostility, but they have at least resisted them. Is it because I'm dealing with subjects that film generally ignores or is it because I'm using a style that is not cinematic? It isn't the ordinary language, I agree. I don't use effects. I dig in in a way that I think is quite personal.

What may be disturbing about your style is the absence of what people call "cinematic effects." You never emphasize the important moments. You aren't only objective, you're impassive. One gets the impression that everything exists on the same plane, and that it is deliberate.

I always try to remain impassive. I think that the really amazing, extraordinary, and moving thing about mankind is that the important acts and the major events take place in exactly the same way, with the same impact as the little things of daily life. I try to capture both, with the same humility. It's a source of dramatic interest.

Since you don't believe that there are two distinct periods in your work and since we share your opinion, aren't we forced to say that **Roma citta aperta** and **Paisa** took advantage of a misunderstanding?

Yes. But it could also be that I didn't express myself well enough.

But if you did in **Roma citta aperta** and **Paisa**, then it seems unlikely that you did not in the others. We prefer to think that there was a misunderstanding. The Christian idea just isn't as obvious in the films preceding **Stromboli**.



The fact that a filmmaker could be a Catholic and express his Catholicism openly in his films angered some critics. A lot of Catholics didn't like it. Proof of that is that Cardinal Spellman just banned *Il Miracolo*.

I think that *Il Miracolo* is a completely Catholic work. It began with a sermon by St. Bernard of Siena about a saint named Bonino. A peasant goes into the countryside with his two-year-old son and a dog. He leaves the child and the dog in the shade of a tree and goes off to work. When he returns he finds the child with his throat slit and toothmarks on his neck. In his grief the man kills the dog. Then he sees a big snake and realizes his mistake. Conscious of his injustice he buries the dog nearby and carves these words on the tombstone: "Here lies Bonino (that was the dog's name), killed by man's ferocity." Several centuries go by. A road goes past the grave. Travellers resting in the shade of the tree see the inscription. Little by little they start praying. They ask the wretch who lies buried there to intercede for them. There are miracles. There are so many miracles that the inhabitants of the surrounding area build a fine church and tomb for the remains of this Bonino. That is when they realize that he was a dog. You see how this is like *Il Miracolo*. Its heroine is a poor, mad girl. Her madness may be religious, but besides that she has faith—real, deep faith. She can believe whatever she wants to. What she believes may be blasphemous, I agree, but her faith is so strong that her faith redeems it. The last thing she does is completely human and normal: she gives her breast to her child. Some Catholics praised it. Others were afraid that there might be some misunderstanding. Still others felt that I had been acting in bad faith.

Your following films encountered the same kind of misunderstanding.

In France the reserves that Catholics expressed did not come from a concern with points of dogma. . . .

I may not have made myself understood. If I'd put ten additional details into each one of my films, everything would become perfectly clear. But these ten additional details are just what I cannot supply. Nothing is easier than doing a close-up. I never even shoot close-ups, for fear I might leave them in. When I show one of my films at a private screening to twenty or thirty people, they come out shaken, even in tears. The same people go to see the same film in a movie theater and they hate it. This has happened to me a thousand times.

When people talk about freedom the first thing they add is, "Freedom, yes, but freedom within certain limits." No, they reject even that—abstract freedom; it's too beautiful to be true. That is why I find such strength in Christianity: because freedom is limitless, truly limitless, as I see it. People today want to be free to believe in truth that has been imposed on them. No one wants to seek his own. But that is precisely what seems so paradoxical to me. You point your finger and say, "That's the truth," and he's happy: he *wants* to believe it, he becomes your follower, he'll do anything he has to to believe in this truth. But he never makes the slightest effort to discover it for himself. It's always been like that. The world makes great advances when true freedom exists. But true freedom hasn't often existed in the course of human history, though men have always talked about freedom.

This is what you are saying in *Europa 51*. Do you know where I got the idea for it? I was shooting the St. Francis film and I was telling [the actor Aldo] Fabrizi about the *Fioretti*. He listened to me, then turned to his secretary and said, "He was a madman," and his secretary said, "Yes, a real madman." That's where the first idea came from. I also got an idea from something that happened in Rome during the war. A store-keeper on the Piazza Venezia sold cloth

on the black market. One day his wife was waiting on a customer. He came up to them and said, "Madame, take this piece of cloth; I'm giving it to you as a gift because I want no more part of this crime; war is a horrible thing." Of course, as soon as the customer left the shop the man and the wife had a row and she started making life miserable for him at home. But the moral problem remained. Seeing that things weren't going to get any better and that his wife continued to commit what in his own moral terms were crimes, what did he do? He went to the police and turned himself in. "I did this and this and this and this. I have to get it off my chest." The police sent him to a mental hospital. The psychiatrist who examined him said something that really disturbed me. "I examined him and realized that the only problem this man really 'had' was a moral problem. I was so upset I couldn't get it out of my mind. Finally I said to myself, 'I have to judge him as a scientist, not as a fellow member of the human race. I have to judge him from a scientific point of view, not from a human point of view. From the scientific point of view, I have to decide whether he behaves like an average man. He does not. That is why I sent him to the madhouse.'" This is a true story, though I won't tell you the name of the eminent scientific personality it involves. I've discussed it with him a number of times. He always says the same thing. "I have to separate the human being in me from the scientist. Science has its limits. Science has to calculate, observe, and measure. The only things it has to go on are its conquests, the things it already knows. I have to forget about everything lying beyond those limits." Though this century is dominated by science—we all know its limits; they are atrocious—I still don't know how much trust we should place in it. This is what the film is about. I had a very clear idea: St. Francis, the incident that I just described, and Simone



Weil were what it came out of.

What part does improvisation play in your films?

In principle, I shoot according to a prepared plan, but I allow myself the liberty to make changes. I also hear the rhythm of the film in my ear. This may be what makes it so hard for people to understand me. I know how important waiting is in reaching a certain point, but I do not describe the point, I describe the waiting, and then I go straight to the conclusion. I am incapable of doing it any other way: you already have the point, which is the heart of the matter, and if you try to expand it, it stops being the heart, it turns into something that has no shape or meaning or feeling. I received a copy of Claude Mauriac's book. The other evening I read what he wrote about **Stromboli**. He says that I stuck some documentary footage into the film that I'd already edited—the fishing sequence, for example. But it's not documentary, not in any sense of the word. I tried to reproduce the endless wait in the sun and then the horribly tragic moment when the slaughter begins: the death that appears after a long, lazy, and even benevolent wait in the sunshine. That was the thing that mattered: the character's point of view. Claude Mauriac is a careful and intelligent man, but how could a critic say something like that? He ought to have checked his facts.

You have a reputation for shooting without a script, for endless improvising. It is partly a legend. I have the "continuity" of the film in my head. And my pockets are full of notes. I must confess, though, that I never did understand why one needed a script unless it's to reassure the producers. What could be more absurd than the left-hand column: "Medium close-up—lateral track—the camera pans and frames..." It's a little like asking a novelist to do a script for his book: on page 212, an imperfect

subjunctive, an indirect object, and so on. The right-hand column is supposed to contain the dialogue. As a rule I don't improvise them. They were written a long time ago. I wait until the last minute to give them to the actors because I don't want the actors to get used to them. I keep the actors under control by rehearsing them as little as possible and by shooting as rapidly as possible, making the fewest possible takes. I count on the actors' remaining "fresh."\* I shot **Europa 51** in forty-six days; I used 16,000 meters of negative stock at the very most. The figure is even lower for **Stromboli**. The shooting did take 102 days, but we were stuck on the island, handicapped by the changeableness of the weather, the extreme variations in wind and tide; in the case of the fishing sequence, we had to wait a week for the tuna. To sum up: I do not do anything different from my fellow filmmakers. I can dispense with the hypocrisy of the script, though.

\*I have been asked to summarize my reasons [for denying that a script is necessary]. Here they are: 1) Since I shoot in real interiors and real exteriors with no previous scouting of the location, the only thing that I can do is improvise my direction to suit the decor. This means that if I ever did write a script, the left-hand column would be blank. 2) I choose my "secondary" actors at the location, just before shooting. I cannot write their dialogue until I see them. If I did try to write it beforehand, it would be stale and theatrical. This means that the right-hand column would be blank, too. 3) Lastly, I place a good deal of faith in inspiration. Excerpt from the second, November 1955 installment of "Ten years in film."

Excerpts from an interview with RR by Maurice Scherer (=Eric Rohmer) and Francois Truffaut published in the July 1954 issue of Cahiers du Cinema as an "Interview with Roberto Rossellini."

Aug. '55

In 1944 right after the war everything in Italy had been destroyed. This was as true in film as it was in everything else. The producers had almost all disappeared. People did make a few scattered attempts to get something going, but they were extremely limited in their ambitions. You had an immense amount of freedom then, because the absence of an organized industry favors bold and unusual projects. Every initiative was a good one. The situation allowed us to take on jobs of an experimental nature; people soon realized, in any case, that despite this aspect the films we were making were major works, both on the cultural and the commercial level. These were the conditions that prevailed when I began shooting **Roma città aperta**. A couple of friends and I had written the script while the country was still occupied by the Germans. I made the film for very little money, found as needed, a little here, a little there; there was just enough to pay for the raw stock itself; I never thought of getting it developed while the shooting was still going on, since I couldn't have paid the lab. This meant that we never had rushes to look at. Later, having located a little more money, I edited the film and showed it to a few people in film, critics and friends. Most of them found it disappointing. **Roma città aperta** was first shown in Italy at a little festival in September 1945; some of the people in the audience even booed. The reviews were unfavorable. Around this time I proposed to several people I knew in film that we start a company in Italy like Allied Artists to help us cope with the setbacks that I knew would occur just as soon as the producers and businessmen had put the Italian film industry back on its feet. But nobody wanted to start anything with the man who had made **Roma città aperta**; he wasn't an artist; everything pointed to that.



This was the background against which I made **Paisa**, which was first shown in Venice, where it was a disaster. Because they hadn't anything better, though, the Italian delegation, which hated the film, showed **Roma città aperta** at Cannes in 1946; it was shown at an afternoon screening; nobody seems to have gone, since none of the papers mention it. It was only in Paris two months later that my two films met with the enthusiastic reception I'd frankly stopped hoping they'd ever see. They met with such great success that the film people in Italy began to revise their opinions, though I didn't conclude from this that they wouldn't start calling me names again at some point in the future; but let's not get ahead of ourselves . . . A little later the man who had produced **The Little Fugitive** opened **Roma città aperta** in New York; the success it had there is a matter of record.

Film, which has taken on such importance in daily life, is *also* an art or *begins* to become one or is *sometimes* an art. Everything remains to be discovered. That is the filmmaker's great privilege; it ought to make him take steps to close the gap between film and the other forms of artistic expression, not to remain behind. The public is curious; its curiosity must be satisfied. . . .

Personally, I don't think that I've ever descended to compromise in my work; I have always held aloof from the industry and the "goods" it produces. I understood, as early as **Roma città aperta**, that for my own defense and the defense of my work I would have to stand up to the attacks and the criticisms without flinching. As soon as the Italian film industry got back on its feet, the industry men who were calling the shots tried to lop off the heads that stuck up out of the crowd. That is what always happens: they try to reduce everything to the lowest common denominator, and everyone is supposed to "fall into line."

I wouldn't, though, which I think is why the attacks against me were the most violent.

The fact that I produce my own films leads me to shoot low-budget movies on fairly tight schedules; this is the only solution, I think; it suits me fine. What costs money in making films is time. What is time used for? Time is used to gratify egos—the director's, the cameraman's, the actors' . . .

"Beautiful" shots—how I hate them!

A film should be well directed, that's the least you can ask of a director, but no shot has to be beautiful in itself.

The only thing that matters is the rhythm, and that is something that you just do not learn; you carry it around inside of you. I believe that the scene is the important thing; it is always resolved . . . it always comes to a head at a certain point. People like to dwell on this *point*. I don't; I think it's a mistake: it detracts from the drama. Neorealism consists in following a person, lovingly, through all the discoveries he makes, all the impressions he gets. He's so insignificant, moving around underneath something that towers above him; all of a sudden it falls on him, just at the point he shakes loose of his fear and starts to feel free in the world. The thing that matters to me is the wait; that's the part that you have to get into, not the fall. Take the tuna fishing sequence in **Stromboli**, for example. The fishermen wait it out in the bright sunshine. Then: "I've got a hit!" (they've already cast the nets) and all of a sudden the water starts churning and death strikes the fish—that is the culminating point of the scene. The death of the child in **Europa 51** works the same way. First there is the unsuccessful suicide attempt, but the child recovers, everything goes back to normal, and then all of a sudden, just when you expected it least, the child is dead.

This waiting manifests itself in my films as movement from one place to another, which is as it should be, since my work

consists simply in following the characters around. In traditional film, they tend to analyze a scene in the following way: long shot—you show the surroundings; then you pick out an individual, you move in on him—medium shot, medium close-up, close-up; then you start telling his story. I do just the opposite: a man moves from one place to another; in passing the surroundings in which he moves are revealed. I always start with a close-up; then the camera movement that follows the actor reveals the surroundings. I never leave him after that, no matter how complicated his path may become.

People too often believe that neorealism consists in getting a man out of work to play a man out of work. I choose actors on the basis of their looks—only that. It can be anyone; you can pick them right off the street. I prefer non-professional actors because they haven't as many preconceptions. I look at a man in life, I make it a point to remember what he looks like, for as soon as he gets in front of the camera, he feels lost, which means that he'll try to "act," which is what you have to avoid at any cost. The man makes the same gestures every day; they are always the same muscles that "work"; but in front of the camera he freezes; he forgets himself, which isn't hard, because he never really knew much about himself in the first place; he thinks he's something special now, though—somebody's going to film him. My job is to restore him to his true nature, pull him together, teach him the gestures he makes every day.

I have already explained how the worldwide success of **Roma città aperta** and **Paisa** started in France. I was in Paris in 1947, and it occurred to me to ask permission from the French government to shoot a film in Germany after the armistice. **Germania anno zero** would be the third panel in the war triptych. I worked out the financing with a firm



called Union Generale Cinematographique and without an idea in my head I set out for Germany, not to shoot any footage but to look around and bring back an idea for a script. I entered Berlin by car around five in the afternoon; it was March; the sun was about to set. I had to cross the whole city to reach the French sector. It was deserted. The streets were flooded in gray light. A man standing up could look down on the roofs. To find the streets under the debris they had cleared them off and piled up the rubble. Grass had started to grow through the cracks in the pavement. The silence was total. The least little noise underlined it. The one indication of life rose on the horizon: a large yellow sign. Slowly I made my way toward it, a huge placard standing on a cube of stone in front of a tiny store; it said "Bazar Israel." The first Jews had come back to Berlin. This was the end of Nazism. The hospitality of the four occupying nations enabled me to go wherever I wanted; I returned to Paris with a very clear idea of the film in my head. People in every country tell "funny stories"; these stories, whether "funny" or not, tell you a great deal about life in that country; at the time people were telling the following story. A man arrives in Berlin. He's given lodging. The next morning he is asked if he slept well. "Yes," he says, "despite of the trains that kept going past my window early this morning." "You must have been dreaming. There are no trains." "But there are. I heard the steam, the water pump, and so on." The host leads his guest to the window. There is no train. The next morning, the same noise awakens the guest. He gets out of bed, goes to the window, and sees some old German women clearing the rubble, passing bricks from hand to hand: *Danke schoen—Bitte schoen—Danke schoen—Bitte schoen* . . . Stories like this give you the proper angle. The Germans were human beings, just like the rest of us. How had they come

to this point, though? False morality? That's the essence of Nazism. Rejecting humility? Making a cult of heroism? Exalting strength over weakness? Pride over simplicity? This is why I chose to tell the story of a child. His innocence has been distorted by false education, which leads him to commit a crime which he thinks is an act of heroism. But the tiny flame of morality hasn't yet been extinguished. To escape from the pain and confusion it causes him, he kills himself. **Germania anno zero** turned out exactly like I wanted it to. I still come out of it shaken when I see it today. I think my judgment of Germany was correct; it was partial but it was correct. Nevertheless, and this was quite unexpected, **Germania anno zero** was very badly received. That's when I started asking myself questions. The film world had been reorganized. It had returned to its pre-war habits and style. **Germania anno zero** had been judged in terms of the pre-war esthetic, though what people had liked about **Roma citta aperta** and **Paisa** was their novelty in respect to this style. The world of politics had reorganized, too, and judged the film in political terms. The reviews told me what their writers thought about the German problem (or what the editor of the paper thought about it) but they weren't any help to me on the critical level. I have already gone on record in this magazine to the effect that film in my view is a new art. It has the potential for making many new discoveries. This potential is what makes the director's work so exciting. This was the spirit in which I made **La Voce umana**, based on a text by Jean Cocteau. Film is a microscope, too, no doubt about it. Film can show us things that are imperceptible to the eye, through close-ups, details, and so on—this is the sense in which film is a microscope. Better than anything else, **La Voce umana** gave me the chance to

use the camera like a microscope, of which I was doubly appreciative in that the phenomenon under examination was named Anna Magnani. Only the novel, poetry, and film allow us to get into characters, identify their reactions, and discover their motives for what they do. The experiment that went to its extreme in **La Voce umana** was useful to me in making all my subsequent films, because at one or another point in the shooting I always feel a need to lay the script aside and follow the character in the innermost detail of his thought, the part that not even he is maybe aware of. The "microscope aspect" of film is part of neorealism: a moral approach which becomes an esthetic fact. When the film finally came out, the Italian critics declared that **La Voce umana** was not a film. This is the only time that I saw them agree about something. After finishing **La Voce umana** I found that I had a film on my hands which was forty minutes long. This meant that it was virtually unsaleable, because our notions of programming are so rigid. I had to find another story that was the same length. Federico Fellini, with whom I used to work all the time, told me the story that I filmed as **Il Miracolo**. He claimed that it was a short story by some Russian or other, he couldn't remember the name. When he saw that I was crazy to do it, running around trying to find out who had written it so I could settle with the Writers' Union, he admitted that he had made it up himself. He'd lied to me, he said, because he was afraid that I'd think it was silly. One of the things that has always obsessed me (it reappears in **Stromboli**) is the total absence of faith, the lack of any desire to fight for something that was typical of the immediate post-war period. I was haunted by the idea that this kind of cowardice made people flock to "leaders" like sheep. The character played by Anna Magnani



in **Il Miracolo** is just the opposite. She is crazy, but despite her mental disorder she has faith; maybe it's crazy, *but it's faith*.

To get back to **Stromboli**, the thing that interested me there was the theme of cynicism. Cynicism was the greatest danger of the post-war period. Banking on the ingenuous love that he has for her, Karin marries a poor, naive soldier just to get out of the refugee camp. She trades the barbed wire for the island, but the island feels even more like a prison; she'd been dreaming of something else. Strong-willed and determined, she has emerged from the trials and sufferings of wartime almost unscathed; but now she's the helpless victim of little annoyances: her husband's a brute, the island's a bare rocky pile; and she's imprisoned in a second sense, too, because she is pregnant. That's the worst thing of all: it's so stupid, humiliating, ugly, and bestial. So she makes up her mind to leave. But at the crest of the volcano, which she has to skirt to get to the little port on the other side of the island, surrounded by hostile nature, broken by fatigue, bowed by an instinctive terror, reduced to an almost animal despair, she invokes God, unconsciously. "God!" is the simplest, most instinctive, and most commonplace thing that can come from the mouth of a person wracked by pain. It can be simply mechanical or it can express a very deep truth. In either case, though, it always expresses the deep mortification which is also the first step in conversion.

That is how I constructed the drama. It wasn't hard, though, to guess my real intentions, you could even call it my vow, if you bothered to read the Biblical verse that comes after the credits: "I have listened to them who asked me for nothing; I have allowed them to find me who were not seeking" (Isaiah, quoted by St. Paul).

The film was hotly attacked, in particular for the ending, for a number of reasons.

Everyone agreed on one thing, though, namely that I was an idiot. The film was mutilated in America; I've never seen what "they" did to it, but I've heard that it's thirty-five minutes shorter, that a "lyrical" voice-off track underlines all the action, and that at the end Karin is thinking of going back to her beloved husband who's waiting for her back at the house.

Just as soon as the shooting was finished, I did a fast rough cut, to give the studio in America an idea of what I wanted to do and guide them in cutting their negative (I held onto a second negative). This first version, which I never had time to polish, is the one that has been shown in Europe. Since I thought it was absurd that the film should be shown in this slapdash shape I went to court to obtain what they normally ask us to do: sit down and think about the montage, ask other people for their opinions, and make the necessary changes.

This was refused; I might have obtained satisfaction if I had been in a position to appeal. I won my case only in regard to the version shown in Italy, which is slightly different from the one shown in the rest of Europe and radically different from the American version.

**Stromboli** won the Rome Prize. While a few critics defended it, the majority attacked it wildly. What I had suspected was going on when **Germania anno zero** came out became very clear to me then: the critics were reacting on the basis of political beliefs which they no longer bothered to hide.

Excerpts from a text by RR, "Ten years in film," published in the August/September 1955, November 1955, and January 1956 issues of Cahiers du Cinema.

**Apr. '59**

Whereas **Paisa**, not so very long ago, was the rage of the Cannes Festival, **Fear**

came out last year in a seedy second-run cinema. But like Socrates (whose death was one of his film projects) and St. Francis of Assisi (whose life he filmed), Roberto Rossellini, abandoned by almost everyone, forged full steam ahead through the narrow gates of his art, no longer listening to anyone. Humility and logic were the only two beacons illuminating his voyage to the end of the cinematographic night, a voyage which led him to the fount of Indo-European civilization. Today, Roberto Rossellini has re-emerged with **India 58**, a film as great as **Que Viva Mexico!** or **Birth of a Nation** and which shows that this season in hell led to paradise, for **India 58** is as beautiful as the creation of the world.

Excerpt from text accompanying an imaginary "interview" with RR by Jean-Luc Godard, published in the 1 April 1959 issue of Arts (Paris) as "'A filmmaker is also a missionary'; Jean-Luc Godard gets Roberto Rossellini to talk"; translation by Tom Milne from Godard on Godard; critical writings by Jean-Luc Godard published in 1972 by The Viking Press.

**June '59**

**India** is the opposite of **Orfeu Negro** [**Black Orpheus**] in the sense that it would still be beautiful even if it had been shot at the Joinville studios. But this is of no consequence, as it says in some book of wisdom or other, "Truth is in all things, even, partly, in error." I find this "partly" sublime. It explains everything. It explains why the shot of the tiger is blown up from 16 mm, whereas the reverse angle of the old man is in 35 mm. **India** runs counter to all normal cinema: the image merely complements the idea which provokes it. **India** is a film of absolute logic, more Socratic than Socrates. Each image is beautiful, not because it is beautiful in itself, like a shot from **Que Viva Mexico!**,



but because it has the splendour of the true, and Rossellini starts from truth . . . . Excerpt from a review of RR's India by Jean-Luc Godard figuring in a collective report on Cannes Festival films in the June 1959 issue of Cahiers du Cinema; translation by Milne.

## Mar. '63

The first time I met Rossellini, seven or eight years ago, he was totally discouraged. He had just finished making a film in Germany, **La Paura**, based on a story by Stefan Zweig, and he was thinking seriously about giving up film: every one of his films since **L'Amore** had been a commercial failure and in Italy at least they'd been critical failures as well. The admiration which some young French film critics expressed for his recent films, and in particular for the ones that were supposed to be the biggest flops, namely the **Fioretti** [=**Francesco giullare di Dio**], **Stromboli**, and **Viaggio in Italia**, was a comfort. It put an end to his isolation. Seeing a group of young writers who had plans to make films of their own choose *him*, of all people, as their master really lifted his spirits.

It was about this time that Rossellini asked me to work for him. I said I would, and while carrying on with my newspaper writing I was his assistant for three years, in which he never shot a single foot of film. I never wanted for something to do, though, and I learned a great deal just from being around him.

He'd be talking to someone on the telephone, he'd hang up, and he'd get an idea for a film. He'd call me up. "We start next month." So immediately I had to go out and buy all the books on the subject, draw up a reading list, round up a whole lot of people—I had to *get going*. When Roberto Rossellini is writing a script, he never has any problem with the narrative: the one thing he needs is a good starting-point. Given *this* character,

say, and his religion, the food he eats, his nationality, what he does in life, he can only have *these* needs, *those* desires. Conflict appears if his needs and desires get just slightly out of joint. This conflict develops in and of itself, in accord with the historical, ethnic, social, and geographic realities of the place he lives. He doesn't have any trouble ending the film, either: the end is dictated by the sum, which may be optimistic or pessimistic, of all the elements in the conflict. What Rossellini is trying to do, basically, is get back to the *man*, whom we have lost sight of in all the fiction that we have created about him—get back to him *first* through a strictly documentary approach, *then* by projecting him into the simplest plot possible narrated in the simplest way possible.

In 1958 Rossellini knew that his movies didn't look like the others', but he felt—rightly—that it was up to them to do the changing and make theirs look like his. He said things like this: "In America the film industry is based on the sale of projection equipment and box office receipts. But Hollywood movies cost too much to pay off. They do it on purpose, to discourage independent production. This means that it's madness to try and imitate American movies in Europe. If films really do cost too much to conceive and make freely, then let's not make any more movies, let's make movie outlines, sketches for movies."

This is how, in Jacques Fleaud's phrase, Rossellini became the "father of the French new wave."

Every time he came to Paris we'd get together and he'd have us show him our "home" movies. He'd known all the "new" names long before they began to surprise French producers in 1959 by popping up in the weekly list of films going into production: Rouch, Reichenbach, Godard, Rohmer, Rivette, Aurel—he knew them all. As a matter of fact Rossellini was the first to read **Le Beau Serge** and **Les 400 Coups**, and it was he

who gave Rouch the idea for **Moi, un Noir** after seeing **Les Maitres fous**.

I know that it's a risky thing to say but I also know that it's true: Rossellini isn't any more fond of film than he is of art in general. He prefers life, he prefers mankind. He never opens a novel, but he spends all his time reading, digging up information; he spends whole nights reading—books on history, sociology, science. He always wants to know *more*. Lately, he's been talking about how he wants to make "cultural" movies. Rossellini is neither an "operator" nor is he ambitious: he is a man who likes to know things, who finds things out, who is much more interested in others than he is in himself.

One might ask how he ever got involved in filmmaking. The answer is that it was by accident, or rather for love. He was in love with a girl who'd been noticed by some producers and contracted to make a film. Roberto was a jealous man, so he accompanied her to the studio. The film didn't have a big budget and they saw him standing around with nothing to do, so they asked him to chauffeur Jean-Pierre Aumont to the studio every morning, since he did have a car.

Rossellini's first films were documentaries about fish. I have an idea that it was his love for Magnani that made him resign himself to making fictional film. There was another stimulus, too, which was the war. If you get right down to it (and Rossellini's only recent success, **Il Generale della Rovere**, confirms it), Rossellini's style is acceptable to the general public and to the critics only when he uses it to describe war—newsreels having made us used to this kind of raw, brutal truth. But is it wrong for us who love and admire Rossellini to think that he is right in filming marital strife, capering monks, and Bengal monkeys as if it were fighting in the streets, I mean like newsreels always have?

Excerpts from a text by Francois Truffaut,



"He prefers life," dated March 1963, written for Roberto Rossellini by Mario Verdone, published in 1963 by Editions Seghers as the fifteenth volume in its series Cinema d'aujourd'hui.

Aug '63

Filming, therefore, is simply seizing an event as a sign, and seizing it at the precise second when, gently (a scene from **Lola**), brutally (a shot by Fuller), cunningly (a composition by Bunuel), logically (a sequence from **Voyage to Italy**), the significance springs freely from the sign which conditions and prefigures it. Excerpt from a text by Jean-Luc Godard, "Les Carabiniers under fire," published in the August 1963 issue of Cahiers du Cinema; translation by Milne.

Oct. '64

There are several ways of making films. Like Jean Renoir and Robert Bresson, who make music. Like Serge Eisenstein, who paints. Like Stroheim, who wrote sound novels in silent days. Like Alain Resnais, who sculpts. And like Socrates, Rossellini I mean, who creates philosophy. The cinema, in other words, can be everything at once . . . Excerpts from a text by Jean-Luc Goard, "La Femme Mariee," published in the October 1964 issue of Cahiers du Cinema; translation by Milne.

Apr. '65

What do you think of **Viaggio in Italia** today? People still talk about it a lot, but you have had very little to say about it yourself.

I have said very little about it myself because what can I say? Is a man supposed to defend himself? That's what it seems to call for, though, the attacks

were just so violent . . . But in any case this is a line in which you just have to take the risks.

What does the end mean, according to you? Many people think it's mystical. We don't.

It's hard to remember these things ten years after, you know, it's all so long ago; besides, something done is best forgotten. Let's see, the ending . . . Okay, I remember, there was a lot of controversy, even though what it was about seemed pretty simple to me. There they were, two great big pieces of meat, and all the people around them were midgets—I mean, shorter than midgets, 'cause they were down on their knees. That's how it ends, I mean with this sudden isolation, which is total. All right. You can say, "But that isn't clear." (I'm remembering what they said to me then.) "Because if that's what you had meant, you would have had to have a long shot in which you'd see . . ." and so on. I didn't want the long shot, though. There are things that are implicit in things. Not everything that we do in our life, unfortunately, (and I do mean unfortunately) is rational. I think that all of us act as much under the impulse of emotion as under the impulse of reason. Though a certain causality links everything in life, (when you get right down to it, this is why life is beautiful and interesting) there is no point in turning it into a dissertation. That's what really struck me. I mean, how could there be a reconciliation? What could bring it about? The fact of being completely foreign to everything. Terribly foreign is how you feel when you're alone in a crowd that uses a different measuring stick, in every sense, has a different height. You feel like you're naked. It's just natural that you try to cover yourself up.

So it's not really a happy ending.

Of course not. When you get right down to it, the film's very bitter. They rush into each other's arms in the same way that someone who's been caught naked

shrinks, shrinks into his towel, shrinks into the surroundings, covering himself in a certain sense. This is the value the ending was supposed to have.

It does.

I may have been wrong in not making it "completely clear," using "gimmicks." I never think of them, though . . . This is a fairly common phenomenon in modern life, I think. A sizeable number of marriages are business firms. I mean, a lot of people get married because one of them has a chance to do a certain kind of work and the other has a certain number of connections, so the wife does the public relations and the husband functions as the economic operator, to use the current terms. Life's more than that, though. The couple in **Viaggio in Italia** conformed to that pattern. Outside of work, off the job, outside of their daily tasks they have nothing to say to each other. The vacation is what destroys them, the vacation more than anything else. The fact that they've just become the owners of a lovely villa, in one of the most beautiful spots in the world, means nothing to them, because they have nothing to say to each other. If they aren't talking in stock market quotations, if they aren't discussing the chances of closing this or that business deal, they simply don't have a relationship.

But in the course of the film a number of hidden feelings come out into the open . . .

Yes, there's Italy, too, which is feelings, important ones, I mean all the documentary stuff that goes past Katharine's eyes as if it weren't there . . . It's another kind of life, they represent totally different ethnic groups, the encounter is also ethnographic . . .

Are you aware that a number of people think that the miracle is the dramatic center of the action?

But you hardly see it. Yes, there is a miracle, but it's so confused and hysterical . . . There's a human dimension to it, too, though, a dimension of faith, in the



sense of good faith. I mean, what do these two people want? They want to be perfectly rational. They want to be that and they want to be perfectly ordinary, too, at the same time. They don't want to be brilliant, they just want to be as "normal" as they possibly can. They are rational because they base their lives on things they have to believe in at any price.

There's that false poet she's always quoting. He talks about Italy as if it were a land of the dead. Land of the dead, really! It's not, because even death here is so alive that they hang rosaries on skulls. I mean, the basic feeling for things is quite different. For them, death has an archaeological value. For us, the value it has is vital. It's a different kind of civilization entirely.

The ending of *Stromboli* has come in for a lot of criticism, too.

For the exact same reasons as *Viaggio in Italia*. This woman has made it through the war. She's collaborated, she's been interned in the concentration camps, but she's always been sharp enough to come out of it intact; all of a sudden finds herself in a corner, no way out. So what does she do? She cries like a baby, which is the one healthy thing she could do, the one tiny hint that there's still something human alive in her, right? What does a baby do when he cries? What does a baby do when he gets hurt? He cries, *Oh Dio, Dio, Dio*, right? That's what you say when you cry out—either *Mamma* or *Dio*. Does Karin leave or does she return? I don't know. I don't know, because that's where another film starts. There is hope in it, though. There is hope because Karin has shown that she *is* capable of human feeling, at least once. . . .

What is your position with regard to the kind of films that are being made right now?

I'm not interested in film *per se*. You can't get by on allusions. Life is already

so full of pressing matters that allusions are totally useless. What we need now is straight talk. We have to have the courage to admit that in the last hundred years art has turned into complaining. An artist is more important or less important according to whether he complains more or complains less. Now they call it denouncing. The truth is that it still is complaining, because if it *was* denouncing . . . Denouncing happens directly. You have to be much more aggressive to be denouncing. And then what's the point of denouncing? If you realize that something is wrong, then you should take rapid steps to correct it. Now all they do is complain, point out every little thing that's wrong . . . It's not true, though. Not everything is wrong. Some things are, some things aren't. The worst thing about the things that are wrong is man's inability to adapt to the life that he has made for himself. That's the truth. The real alienation, in the etymological sense of the word: alien, foreign, is when a man is a stranger to his own life. Unfortunately, life has become extremely complicated. This means that you have to make an immense effort to understand it. You'd have to get down and really work at it, which people don't do, because the world is filling up with people who don't want to work, so the time comes when people live just on sensations and feelings, and then they start complaining. There may be a lot of people complaining, but there ought to be just as many people who don't. That is, complaining, if it stays on the plane of irrational feeling, does not seem very effective to me, if the struggle involves some extremely concrete thing. The concrete things are always right under our feet. We are not aware of it because we never spend any time studying these problems.

But wouldn't you say that *Viaggio in Italia* was a film about alienation before the letter?

Yes, of course: it's a film about alienation.

This is why I'm telling you that not even my own films please me, because when I was getting into this kind of stuff it was, logically, kind of to find my own bearings, but now, when you notice that it's everyone's bearings and it's everyone's search, it has turned into an attitude, the attitude of someone complaining.

Yes, but neither *Viaggio in Italia* nor *Europa 51*, for example, is complaining. And they were made ten years before . . . That's what is so terrible about it. I feel deeply implicated. And now everyone is part of this trend . . . When culture could be condensed into a concise body of knowledge—little in volume though great in all other respects—I mean when it consisted of Greek thought plus Greco-Roman history and mythology plus the Bible, then artists did as much as they could to make it alive and comprehensible to everyone, because it was their civilization. It *was* civilization. Do you see anything like that today? There's nothing like it anywhere in modern art. So I needed at one point to get away from a certain world, in order to then return and begin doing something completely different. The changes have to be total. They are going to involve facts that have come out of biological, physiological, and demographic observations. It took a billion years for the world's population to reach three billion. By the year 2000, meaning in thirty-five years, it will have reached six billion, if it keeps growing at the present rate. This is an extraordinary fact. What else really matters? Men have to be tough-minded enough to deal with this fact, which arises from man's conquests in medicine, the production of food, and the scientific and technical disciplines. Well-being has led to this: the human life span has increased from an average twenty-seven years to an average of sixty-six or sixty-seven. The world used to belong to the very young. Alexander the Great was a rowdy little boy. Today they'd give him four slaps on the back of his head. Look



what he did. The world is inhabited by old men today, thanks to the lengthening of the life span. These are the basic givens. If one were to get into them deeply, take all these different things into account, I think new artistic emotions might arise which can be valid and can make such an impression that everyone becomes aware of these big problems. . . .

What do you think of improvisation?

That's still where we are. If the ideas are sound, then one can allow himself the luxury of a little improvisation. Because when you reach the point of actually filming something and what you are going to film is supposed to impress, it can't have the flavor, it can't have the smell of authenticity if it's premeditated in advance. This is where improvisation becomes valid. . . .

Was *Viaggio in Italia* improvised?

Well, at night we still didn't know what we'd done in the morning. It takes time. There is a certain logic in things that one just cannot calculate. So you're standing there, you've got that decor, those actors—well, they oblige you to take a certain path, which the characters themselves kind of trace. Which means that you don't have to stand there and flip a coin to see whether you should go right or left.

One of the best examples of "character/event" is in *Europa 51*.

All of my films are like that. I preached it so often in France, where I have always been someone, that the young people there, who had been born into a certain climate and who had received a certain education, felt it immediately. Then these ideas are still valid for you? Yes, but they still are part of complaining, and that makes me shudder. These feelings were taking shape for me right in the period—1953, 1954, 1955—the period of *Viaggio in Italia* and *La Paura*—when there was so much emphasis on denouncing. That is what started me thinking, as a matter of fact. What is the

use of denouncing? There isn't any. It does have a use if you have a very precise philosophy and you want to take some very definite action. If somebody wants to do something useful, he has to take every aspect of the problem into account, which means the negative elements as well as the positive elements. You have to look in Jules Verne to find the positive elements. The industrial revolution was a major development, a completely new thing. It involved a lot of . . . social injustice, whatever you want to call it, a lot of the kind of things they denounce. It came about when man developed science and did it by using technical means that he had never even dreamed of before. That is the real discovery, that is the big one. Man had been a slave: he had always had to supply the motive power himself; he'd gotten a little help from animals, then from wind and water, but that's already a long way into it. At a certain moment, motive power is *invented*: steam is invented, electricity—this is an extraordinary conquest; it is a completely new factor introduced into the life of man and its possibilities. The discovery of fire by Prometheus—this is something that thousands of poets have sung, thousands of painters have painted, thousands of sculptors have sculpted, and it *was* the beginning. But tell me what else they have said something about. This extraordinary thing: having taken something from nature and conquered it, so that it became a tool—how extraordinary a thing it is and how inspiring. There is real disproportion between this aspect of it and the fact that someone complains because energy makes it possible to start factories and factories bring in machines that manufacture things that are useless or more or less useful to man, blah blah blah, and man has proceeded to fall under the spell of these things . . . It's true to say that this is something to complain about, but that that's all there is to do about it, complain, is something I just don't acknowledge. Knowledge is the

most human thing that there is. There's nothing more human than knowledge. We don't know anything any more, though. I think this is one of the basic facts about our lives.

How does your return to history fit in with what you've been saying?

Why are we still only complaining?

Because we've forgotten what came before us. If we want to put everything in order, we have to put history in order, too. You saw how much history there was in *L'Eta del ferro*. . . . History was written—in good faith—to educate.

*Educate* is a word that has a beautiful meaning and it also has a horrible meaning. It comes from the Latin word *educare*, which comes from *ducere*, which means lead—it means grabbing somebody by the neck and dragging him around wherever you want to. A lot of history was written with just this aim. You look at it now and you're tempted to rewrite it, to make it fit the facts. Mommsen wrote his books, which are a mine of knowledge, to prove that the Germans were the only Aryans in Europe. Someone comes up with an idea. It looks new. It *is* new. Everyone jumps on it. But then it turns into a slaughter, it turns into falsification, that's how we make the kind of errors we have. That is why it is important to look at history, look *into* it. What should we try to bring *back into* history? Man—man at his humblest. What does the exceptional man matter to us? I'm not so taken with the superman myth. *Viva l'Italia* is a documentary made after the fact. It tries to figure out what indeed happened. There are some very precise data. There is the diary that Bandi kept. He stuck close to Garibaldi, he was no poet, he wrote everything down. If you read Bandi, you understand what kind of man Garibaldi was. I didn't make anything up. You read in Bandi that Garibaldi was waiting for the Bourbon generals to arrive to surrender Palermo. They entered the room. He was standing there peeling an orange. When



he'd finished he divided it up and gave every man a piece. People were there who saw it and wrote it down. It only takes a little research. The meeting with Mazzini: the only thing in Bandi is what they said in front of the door. What they said on the other side of the door isn't recorded, no one was there, but it isn't hard to reconstruct: read the letters that Mazzini wrote to his lady friend in England. . . . What can you tell us about India?

I discovered another world. I learned a great deal there. I went looking for something new in a world that I thought would be a certain way. They have a conception of man that seems perfect, perfectly rational to me. We call it mystical, but that's stupid. If we say that it's *not* mystical, though, that's stupid, too. In India, thought seeks to become completely rational, so their vision of man is a vision of man as he scientifically, biologically is. Mysticism is part of man. From an emotive point of view, mysticism is maybe the highest expression of man. Since they respect everything that is human, they respect these dimensions as well. Besides, Indian thought, which seems so mystical, which *is* mystical, is profoundly rational too. Don't forget that the zero was invented in India. The zero is both the most rational and the most metaphysical thing in the world. Their vision of man is total, it makes room for every human tendency, and they try to preserve every human tendency, too. In a world like our own, where a thing has to be black or white, the shades in between, the nuances simply do not exist. But the world, and man in particular, is made up of nuances—only that.

What do you think of the "new wave"? I haven't seen much of their stuff. I was very close to them at one time, very close, very much of a friend for a time; then they began to go off on their own. I guess when you get down to it, if I have contributed anything to them, it was in preaching till they got tired of

hearing it that one must not endow film with supernatural powers; it's just a means of expression, one of many. You have to approach it as matter of factly as you do the pen you pick up to write with. The important thing is knowing what you have to write. The important thing is writing what you want to. No one should sit down to write something in order to please someone else. That would be insincere. Absolute freedom for the camera comes when you demystify the filmmaking rites.

Let's talk about L'Eta del ferro. How did it come into being?

That's not what came into being. I mean, what came into being was the need to do something *different*. That's what I said at the Einaudi Bookstore.\* At a certain point I began to feel useless. I think this is what's wrong with all modern art. It complains, it whines, but it never tries to find out what the real problems are. The thing that seems so plain to me now is that this complaining is based on a refusal to know the world. The truth is that we're complaining because we are confronted by a world whose architecture we cannot grasp. This is the basic problem, I think. At a given moment, then, there arises a need to trace an outline, identify the horizons of what lies around us as precisely as possible. Because that is the only way that we can sight our directions, see where we are in time and in space. You have to have reference points to construct a geometric figure, you have to have reference points to identify a space. This is why I began little by little to study, do research, understand the things that exist. Everyone knows that the automobile exists. But there is a reason for this which has nothing to do with its being something you buy on time and drive on highways. Doing this research I began to discover things that were not just amusing or interesting, they could also be stimulating for an artist. What was my intention? It was to convey this cultural need, this

didactic experience, this educative experience to others, leaving everything else behind. My intention was to find new sources, new things. If we are truly aware of things, then they can begin to take a new direction. I think that art always basically has had an aim which is as much one of summing things up as it has been of passing things on. What kind of thing does today's art sum up? What kind of thing does it pass on? It is the expression of moral "discomfort," unhappiness, incomprehension, but that's all it is. I don't think that man's problems, not his real problems, are problems only of non-communication—nothing so subtle . . . Problems of non-communication are problems for psychiatry, not for mankind. They are limit cases, envisioned by dilettants—let's call a spade a spade. Man discovers how to *make* energy, he discovers electricity, he discovers steam, thermodynamics, and so on. This is an immense conquest, so immense that man travels through space today in vehicles powered by this energy, crosses continents, takes airplanes, turns on the lights by flipping a switch, presses his shirts with an electric iron . . . It is an amazing conquest, it is a victory for man over nature. Tell me, who has felt any emotion about it? Who are the artists who have dwelt on it? It is as amazing as the conquest of fire, but it is much, much more important. We are indifferent. We even start to complain. Now, if we fail to realize its importance, how can we ever have a sense of the world in which we live, of the goals that this world can have? We have to get on top of this civilization, guide it toward goals that we have selected for it. But, oddly enough, while technology and science continue to develop—and when I say technology and science I mean it in the true, deep sense of the word, which is knowledge: positive statements full of human resonance—art surrenders to fantasy, which is the most irrational thing in existence. A rational world is under construction,



but everything that calls itself art looks for its outlet in fantasy, fantasy that always turns round on itself and turns into complaining, which actually limits fantasy. Why the Iron Age? Because our historical epoch is called the Iron Age. That was one of the very first things to mention, wasn't it? If we have to begin by writing the alphabet, we have to establish what the letters are. **L'Eta del ferro** can establish what the letters are; what follows will develop from that. It involves programs that will have to be developed on very rigorous grounds so they can be used in teaching and have educational value. I've drawn up an outline, which follows the line of my own investigations pretty closely. Since this line of investigation has helped me put my own thinking in order, it may help others, too. This is what my pedagogical system amounts to. I don't step outside it to think it abstractly. No, I repeat the experiments that I have already made.

\*The text of these remarks was published in the March 1963 issue of *Filmcritica* as "Conversations on culture and film." Excerpts from an interview with RR by Adriano Apra and Maurizio Ponzi published in the April/May 1965 issue of *Filmcritica* as "Interview with Roberto Rossellini."

Oct. '65

One of the most dramatic aspects of contemporary civilization is that the immense improvement in living conditions resulting from the conquests of science and technology has provoked a disconcerting feeling of uneasiness and discomfort instead of bringing happiness and moral good health: there is a vague feeling in the air that our civilization has not long to last, that it is already mined from within. Unrest, violence, indifference, boredom, anxiety, spiritual inertia, passive resignation are phenomena appearing on every level in

the life of individuals and society. Man today, in the so-called developed nations, seems to have lost both his sense of himself and of things; modern art provides the best picture of this set of phenomena. What conclusions are to be drawn? Must we repudiate our civilization, which claims to be rational and positive but which seems unable to achieve a lasting balance? No, certainly not. Steps must be taken, however, to bring the confusion, maladjustment, and aberrations which seem to be increasing day by day to an end. Modern art may give us the key to the aberration which seems to prevail today: literature, poetry, and so on seem not to have noticed what has been happening in the world since the headlong race for progress began in the second half of the eighteenth century with its great scientific and technological discoveries and changed the face of the world and society. There can be no doubt about it: artists have remained indifferent to the machines which with flawless precision and breathtaking speed have performed the most complicated and difficult operations and in so doing given man a new destiny. Neither the discovery and spread of new sources of man-made energy nor man's success after thousands of years of backbreaking toil and effort in taming the forces of nature, in lengthening his life-span, and in increasing his chances for security and well-being have inspired the artists. Who could name five works of art within any one branch of art that were inspired by these victories? What we want to do is what no one else has yet done. We are workers in film and television. We want to make films and television program which can aid man to discover the real horizons of this world. Using means which are as scientifically exact as they are pleasing, we want to show him everything that the art or the cultural products distributed by the audio-visual media have yet to show him or, even worse, which they have held up to ridicule and scorn.

We want to make the guiding threads of his history available to him again and represent dramatically, comically, and satirically the events, struggles, turmoil, and psychology of the personalities who created the modern world, while observing a criterion of synthesis between spectacle, informative content, and culture. The last two hundred years of human history, which have seen the birth and development of our contemporary civilization, provide us with an immense body of subject-matter on which to draw in creating dramatic works.

We trust that by working in this direction we will contribute to the development of new means of information and distribution which, together with education, are indispensable to the process of enlightenment which will permit man to recover the happiness he has lost, because it will enable him to understand the meaning of his responsibility for and place within world history.

Text by RR published in the October 1965 issue of *Cahiers du cinema* as "Manifesto" pp. 7-18; a headnote states that "In Rome Robert Rossellini has just released the following manifesto to the press"; a note printed after the text indicates that the manifesto was signed by RR, Gianni Amico, Adriano Apra, Gianvittorio Baldi, Bernardo Bertolucci, Tinto Brass, and Vittorio Cottafavi.

Oct. '66

I shot **La Prise de pouvoir per Louis XIV** in twenty-eight days, working five hours a day. That means that it took just a hundred and forty hours in all to make. The scenes which are supposed to have been filmed in front of the Vert-Galant were shot on the banks of the Seine, near Mantes, in front of a big electric power plant on which images of the Louvre were superimposed thanks to a process that I invented.

The only actors I used were unknowns



or not really actors at all. Louis XIV couldn't look like he was playing a role. The man who has the part, Jean-Louis Patte, had never acted. He reads scripts and directs avant-garde theater for the ORTF. Mutual friends introduced us. I never even asked him to test. He was too scared. Just imagine! Playing Louis XIV! Not me. By the time we got around to shooting, though, we had become such good friends that it all came quite easily. I trust even more now in improvisation than I did before. My Mazarin isn't an actor either. He is a real Italian, though, superstitious, and he was so worried about playing a dying man that he could do it only if he had a radish in his hands under the sheets to bring him good luck. The day I was supposed to film the king's dinner (in the chateau at Maisons-Lafitte; Mazarin's death was filmed in the chateau at Barsac), my daughter had to have an emergency operation on her spine. I left for two days. My son Renzo shot the dinner and kitchen sequences. He was the one who wanted to learn the damned profession, so I made him learn everything. Today he's an expert. He knows everything. He could be a director of photography if he wanted to.

I like to have young people around me. What I am working on is much too big for me to be able to bring it off all by myself. I'm in Paris right now to round up a group of young people on whom I can rely. The more there are of you, the more work you get done. I'm not unhappy. Here and in Italy both, I'm beginning to find the right people—good young people. They'll go far . . . There have to be a lot of us, because there's an enormous amount of work to be done . . .

Guess what the Greeks did in Socrates' time when they went to market? They didn't have pockets, and what was the sense of carrying around a purse if all it had in it was a couple of drachmas? Well, a good many Greeks in the fifth century before Christ kept their money in their

mouth. They spit it out when it came time to pay. It was the accepted practice. Now maybe the historians know about that. But not the mass public. And what about democracy? People are always talking about Greek democracy. But does the mass audience really know what it is? You have to show them. You have to let them know what it is. Did you know that in Athens they had to have five hundred judges in order to try a case? They assembled at dawn, one was selected by lot, and by the time the sun went down he had to have given a judgment one way or the other. This was to prevent bribery and to keep the proceedings short. How many who talk about democracy know that an exile had the right to return to the city and present his case? The court deliberated on the beach. The exile shouted his self-defense from on board the ship that had brought him home. Who in the mass audience knows that in Athens every one of the elected held power in turn? There were hundreds. Every day of the lunar year there was a different one presiding. All that's in books. But not in movies. It is so strange, though, and so interesting that I don't want to make any more movies that don't exist to show things like that. For me, starting now, film-making means showing things like that.

I've always read a lot. I don't sleep much at night. I read in bed, a couple of different books at a time, six or seven. I don't like to concentrate on one single book, waiting to get to the end of it. I take what I can get. When I'm in Paris (which is at least six or seven days a month) the bellhops at the Raphael see me arrive empty-handed and leave with cartons and cartons of books. My house in Rome is full of them. I had to fix up a garage so I could store the ones I'd . . . —let's say: used up. I select my own reading material. I buy books at random. I go into every bookstore. I poke around. I buy books by the shelfful.

As I read I write down everything that comes into my head, on the margins; it takes a certain amount of guts . . . Later on, before I put the book back on the shelf, I make out bibliography cards, which I arrange by subject: love, friendship, myth-making capability, fear, and so on. Later on, these cards will help me put together a certain kind of man. The man whom I chose for such and such a sequence of the survival film, for example. In one sequence I wanted to show how the first king's sceptre came into being. What it was was simply the stick with which prehistoric man poked through the fallen leaves to find food, but through the ages it became the symbol of supremacy.

Most of the time the books that become the key books for me, the ones that produce the biggest reactions, are the ones nobody notices. One of the most recent is this book on the history of teaching, *Introduction a l'histoire des monnaies*, [sic] by Rene Sedillot, who is a Jesuit. The author of this apparently insignificant book uses a scheme of classification which is very exciting. He gave me ideas that are basic to the direction of my research now. Guess what gave me the idea for a script on Descartes? A book by Benedetto Croce on Giambattista Vico, a violently anti-Cartesian Neapolitan Jesuit. Reading it I realized that in order to get television viewers to understand Descartes I first had to show them the fantastic disorder prevailing when Descartes arrived on the scene. If I am successful in translating it into images (which should be easy: all I have to do is follow Descartes across Europe; he served the Protestant cause for the Dutch; he served the Catholic cause for the Bavarians; and allow me to say in passing that Italy was a terrible disappointment for him, I'm not exactly sure why) I hope that television viewers will see right away why Descartes found it necessary to write a discourse on method.

We do not know what our civilization is.



I make movies to try to find out. Film can give us a good deal of help. At the Venice Festival somebody asked Philippe Erlanger what he thought of my Louis XIV. He replied, "Everything that's in the movie is in my book, but I still found it fascinating. Everything was completely correct and yet there wasn't a thing that I recognized. I discovered a whole new world." Film can help us learn about things that would otherwise pass completely unnoticed. It casts new light on what the historians have said. For example, Livy says that an *immense* battle took place somewhere in ancient Rome. I went to the site he indicates to see for myself. I was amazed to find that the place is no wider than the Champs-Elysees. Now the truth lies somewhere between Livy's *immense* battle and the one that I'm going to shoot; it will *not* be immense.

Do you follow me? I make these movies because I am trying to understand. The most moving and the most dramatic thing that there is in the world for me is the immense effort that men make to understand. Do you know what they did with the sick in Babylon? They took them to the market-place. They laid them out between the crates of fruit and vegetables. The relatives stood anxiously around waiting for some one to come up and say, "My aunt or my brother had that disease last year; this is how they cured him." In the same way everyone has to tell what he knows about our civilization.

Text by Michel Gall transcribing remarks by RR printed in the 8 October 1966 issue of Paris Match as "Louis XIV viewed through the eyepiece" pp. 97-98.

Aug. '68

Can you tell us something about the film that you're shooting for television right now?

I'm working on a twelve hour series

[**La Lotta dell'uomo per la sua sopravvivenza**] illustrating the history of man since he first appeared on earth in terms of his struggle to survive and adapt; if you like, it's the story of progress.

Is this like the other programs? I mean, is it "didactic," too? Do you think that this is the right word for what you are doing, and in particular for what you've been doing for television?

We can always agree or disagree on the definitions. The words wind up being labels, which will find acceptance if they are convenient. I don't know what you mean by "didactic." It seems kind of vague to me. But "neorealism" was kind of vague, too, and it was accepted.

"Didactic" may be accepted, too.

In any case, two kinds of motive got me interested in working for television. In the first place, I went through a period thinking that film was completely useless. Useless because (and it needs to be said) the things that films are made about are always the same things; the repetition is endless. Film never has been very useful, in any sense of the word. It also needs to be said, though, that a certain amount of "entertainment" could come from the exploration of subjects . . . the in-depth study of things that people don't even suspect yet, that don't belong to the horizons of everyday culture; this too is a form of entertainment, it seems to me. Then, too, I think that in this moment of the history that we are living, characterized as it is by such rapid breaking developments, progress, which up to the end of the last century was dreadfully slow, has assumed a rate which continues to accelerate at an alarming speed.

Experts say that, on the average, knowledge doubles every five years now; this will accelerate, too. How are we ever going to get our bearings? Because that becomes the main problem. In film, as in all other manifestations of culture, the attitude toward progress is one either of extreme cynicism or of utter despair; this only means that the action

we take must be that much more effective. It's no use tearing your hair out; tear your hair out if you will, then move into action. If progress has to be "stopped," stop it; that is, discover a way to stop it, if (as some people think) it means the end of the world.

Let me interrupt you. You said a minute ago that film has never been very useful. When and how did that happen?

I can see how just in terms of my own personal history. As I look at it, film became valid, effective, and useful just after the war, because it helped us get our bearings, understand certain things: we had to draw up the balance sheet on one whole historical period. Then we entered a new phase, in which we began to explore new things, become aware of new problems that were arising. All of a sudden it became very "fashionable" to voice disappointment in progress. Then there was another attitude, which was reflected in the terms that it used, which confused knowledge with tiny little portions of knowledge. . . .

To get back to the work that I'm doing right now, there are two kinds of motive that led me to film this kind of stuff. First, I wanted to try and find some other motifs which could be used for dramatic purposes, which would mean a new set of themes and a widening of the horizons of my own personal explorations. Second, if we have to live with this wildly accelerating progress (and we do), we either become its victims or we have to become conscious of it. This is the other aspect. They are two different aspects which in the end blend into one. This is where the need I felt to make this kind of film or this kind of television, moving in this direction, came from; call it "didactic" if you want to, but only if "didactic" does not rule out a certain complexity of content; there is a tendency to reduce everything to simple outlines. Unfortunately things tend to be somewhat more than simple outlines.



In *La Prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV*, for example, the thing that hits the most careless viewer is the oddest thing about it—from the phenomenological point of view, it is also the most engaging—namely: the desire to comprehend why men ever dressed up like that; what it boiled down to, in fact, was a return to a kind of clothing that was typical of *primitive* man. This “oddness” gave me an opportunity to do a little investigating and find out to just what degree it was psychological and political action for Louis XIV. The knowledge of man that led him to do certain things was completely empirical, that is, but it was also as old as mankind. It is kind of odd, isn’t it, that he managed to bring the frondeurs under control with Versailles, wigs, and so on. It’s kind of odd too, that all this came within the ambit of an economic development, namely the beginnings of a kind of industrialization, understood in the sense it has today: assembly-line manufacture of certain products, and so on. I don’t know if you remember the conversation with Colbert, but it makes everything perfectly clear. I didn’t make up a single thing in it. If you want me to prove it, I can show you my documentation. It was a montage; I used scissors: I took a line here, a line there, an idea here, an idea there, then I stuck it all together in such a way that the text as a whole is simple and easy to understand.

In a previous interview with Filmcritica you in a certain sense defend the notion of the director as “dictator.” How do you reconcile this with television? Have you encountered any difficulties in this regard?

None.

Well, yours is a privileged position, then, because it’s notorious that television directors have a very hard time asserting themselves as the sole author of a given work.

But the same thing happens in film, doesn’t it? . . . And in any case the work

that I’m doing now isn’t *for* television. I am making a product with television *in mind*, but I’m not using the television organization to make it; if I were I’d be a real victim.

If you hit on the right track, you find a way to distribute your stuff. Everything remains to be done. The struggle for survival is complex.

In regard to the actors you use in this latest work, is the criterion the same as it was for *Louis XIV*?

Yes. I always use the same criterion. My son is directing this film, though. I’m the producer, I coordinate things, get things going, but my son is directing the film. Though my double role of producer and father made it easy (they overlap, in any case), I tried not to influence him. Since he got the film ready for shooting with me, though, he recognized the advantage of using non-professional actors.

So in the practical sense it was made just like *L’Eta del ferro* . . . How does this collaboration with Renzo work?

I have the idea for it. I still place a great deal of faith in improvisation, because if you know what’s going to happen, there is no use in planning it: you’re unmanaging yourself at the outset. That’s why I’ve tried to make my son understand that at least in terms of getting accustomed to the profession it is really important; it is really important because it means that you are assuming the full responsibility. One story has to be worked out at your desk. Another story can be worked out in shooting, on the basis of the concrete elements that it involves. Having said this by way of introduction, I can add now, though, that I give my son an outline of the things that ought to be said—but not how they’re supposed to be said—and I give him some stuff to use in writing the dialogues. Then it’s all up to him.

Some technical innovations are involved in this latest work, aren’t they, like the electric dolly in *Louis XIV*?

Yes. This is another thing that I’ve paid

a great deal of attention to. You can’t always do what you want in film and in television because everything costs so much. So what you have to do is try to reduce the cost, which means freeing yourself from the organization, or capital, or the producers—you can call this slavery whatever you like. When I started making my so-called neorealist films, the main thing I had in mind was finding new methods of working. The very thought of shooting a film outside of a movie studio was inconceivable then; logically it meant an enormous limitation. Filming outdoors, making little discoveries, finding out how to hold the lights up without having to make holes in the wall—there was a whole string of little technical discoveries; some were naïve and makeshift, but they opened the way for a new kind of filmmaking which was immeasurably freer. There was a flood of new people into filmmaking, because it cost less to make films this way and it was easier. This has always been one of my pre-occupations, then, and I’m always on the lookout for something new.

Can your filmmaking still be called realist? I am convinced that it can. But not because I want to be consistent. I’m not interested in consistency. That’s not one of my tics.

From neorealism to the phase which we could say laid the groundwork for the new wave to the so-called didactic cinema that you’re making today, there is a single line of interval development that takes place within well-defined bounds . . .

The line of development seems pretty consistent to me, though it never set out to be.

How much time did it take to make this latest work, which, if I’m not mistaken, was produced on the same criteria as *Louis XIV*?

They were the same. This is the basis of everything else. Otherwise I could not remain independent. The less money you



have, the less of a slave you are. As far as the actual time it took to make the film goes, we started last March; the project was not in production for that whole length of time, though, if only because the various chapters are so different and as soon as we finished one, we'd have to go off and think it through before starting the next one. There is another factor as well: improvements in organization and the means of production. Little by little we've achieved much greater efficiency, and the costs have gone down in proportion.

Interview with RR by Michele Mancini, Renato Tomasino, and Lello Maiello published in the August 1968 issue of Filmcritica as "Conversation with Roberto Rossellini."

Oct. '71

16 August/Monday

Maglino Sabino. Abandoned shack. First day of shooting. No footage was shot. The decors weren't quite ready. . . .

17 August/Tuesday

I examined the zoom apparatus conceived by RR and constructed to order. The director of photography, Mario Fioretti, explains its characteristics and possibilities to me. It is a special version of the Pancinor, a 25/250 millimeter zoom lens, modified by interlock motors which have a breaking effect and reduce oscillation. In addition it has a long-distance control unit, composed of a control mechanism fixed on a tripod and connected to the camera by a cable that can be disconnected.

The system has two important advantages: it makes it possible to get uniform motion with the lens, and it makes it possible for RR to work the zoom himself, even with the camera on the tracking dolly.

The inconvenience of not being to look into the camera while the zoom is in

operation is perfectly compensated for by the sensitivity and experience of his eye and by his close working relationship with the director of photography.

During the rehearsals the long-distance control cable is disconnected. Looking through the eyepiece, RR regulates the movements both of the actors and camera and the corresponding variations for the lens, the zooms-in, the zooms-out, the details that need to be emphasized by breaks in continuity.

This compels one to conclude that technical innovations not only are possible but absolutely necessary when their results transform the means of visual communication.

18 August/Wednesday

(There has been some talk about what some people have termed RR's carelessness in shooting his last few films.) The ease with which he shoots is the result of great clarity and a method of working which he has considered in all its details over a long period of time and refined in practice. Carefulness or carelessness simply do not enter into the picture. What is confronting me is a method in effect of which the various raw filmic materials fall into place and interrelate with one another to reach a single goal: knowledge. Another example of this lies in the way he uses actors, who are left extremely free, so free that they sometimes feel frustrated. He does not seem to take any interest in what has been called the "delivery." He only occupies himself with the action, the actors' movements; to these he pays extremely close attention.

Something that Pierre Arditi, the actor who plays Pascal, said to me the other day is perhaps indicative. He claims that Rossellini gets him to *move* so naturally that everything else just follows.

Following the character in his actions, we discover the decor that reveals its various aspects through the movements of the camera, being transformed before

our eyes; that is, taking all the positions intervening between the initial and final points; the result of this is montage within the shot itself, continual movement (of light, colors, and angles) through which the "eye" circles objects and persons and examines them.

20 August/Friday

We have moved to Odescalchi Castle in Bassano. "The shot sequence is more businesslike . . . if it gives a greater sense of intimacy," is all that RR will say to a writer who has attempted to theorize on his long takes. Then he asks the grips whether this way they don't have to do as much work.

Even his words, like his films, have the effect of re-dimensioning, demystifying everything.

"Shot sequence" is meaningless, anyway. The problem does not lie in the number of cuts. There is montage within the shot itself. S. M. Eisenstein made this very clear. "The conflicts within the shot are the potential montage . . . They intensify until it breaks out of its intellectual shackles and projects its conflict through the component pieces of the montage." He is not interested in the shot sequence for its own sake, then, and he can only speak of it as "more businesslike," though this in itself has great importance if you remember that high production costs form one of the biggest obstacles to new film, since what new film means is many different films aimed at very specific audiences.

21 August/Saturday Scene 36/Take 1

This is the scene, set in Paris, where Blaise, already very ill and laid up in bed, receives a visit from the Duc de Roannez. Contrary to the general rule, this scene is rehearsed several times. Every element is supposed to develop simultaneously with all the others and with absolute precision.

Pascal, prematurely ageing and ill, is lying in bed in the middle of the room.



He is the central point of the scene. Everything else revolves around him. The camera comes to a halt on one side of the bed, frames Pascal, who stops writing and settles down to sleep. The duke comes through the door at the back. The camera and Roannez each move 180 degrees in a semicircle around Blaise, but they are moving in opposite directions; they get closer and closer until they both reach the same axis in respect to Pascal; then they stop. Then they start moving away from each other until they reach the point from which the other set out. Meanwhile the zoom lengthens from 25 to 250 millimeters (i.e., the entire range of possible focal lengths for this lens) during the first half of the semicircle; it shortens to 25 again after the pause at the beginning of the second half. The geometry is perfect. But when you look at the scene through the eyepiece, you get a completely different impression. The geometry disappears. We see the duke appear in the space between the bedposts while the camera focuses on Pascal, keeping him in frame, letting him go out of frame, then picking up on him again. At the end of the scene, the whole crew applauds.

#### 24 August/Wednesday

We don't have a real script to work with; what it is is some 350 pages of material, worked out by RR in collaboration with Marcella Mariani and Luciano Scaffa. On the basis of this material, day by day, a precise form will be given to the scene that is to be shot. Before every scene, RR looks at the dialogue he wrote the night before. He often makes changes. Then he constructs the scene, given the position of the camera and the movements it will make. Never leaving the set, he waits for the grips and electricians to do their work; I have never heard him hurry them up. On the other hand, he'd have no reason to: the crew is virtually perfect. These men know their job and they carry it out, in-

dividually and collectively, in such a way as to avoid the complications that might arise; they are so efficient that you never notice the many problems that do arise in the course of a day's shooting. When the lights are in place and the director of photography has given his okay, RR rehearses the scene with the actors, though he never demonstrates the action himself, perhaps to keep the actors from trying to imitate him.

After a couple of rehearsals the whole scene is shot without a cut. Only rarely does he ever redo a detail. I seem to think that up to this point he hasn't made a single reverse angle shot. No scene is rehearsed more than two or three times. The first take is often good, so instead of shooting it over again they stop and go on to the next.

#### 27 August/Friday

According to RR, "The camera has a precise logic of its own. The important thing is to have the intuition to put it in the right place, keeping in mind that everything is going to come back to it. As soon as you locate this precise point, which is distinguished from all the others as the most logical point, everything else falls into place; everything acquires such rhythm and smoothness that there is no longer any need to make the actors go through acrobatic exertions to reestablish an order 'foreseen' by the script."

#### 28 August/Saturday

Among the scenes that are shot today is the scene of the wager theory. In the salon of the Duc de Roannez, during a dice game, in reply to questions about religion posed by one of the gamblers, Pascal states his famous and very contemporary wager theory. Pascal: "Reason is incapable of settling anything; it can only note that there is an infinity of things which escape it. You are no skeptic, because the skeptic knows that man needs certainties. And you're not content with approximate explanations.

You're no dogmatist, either, because you realize, just as we do, that life is continual uncertainty and change. So, what are you left with? Does God exist or does he not? Which answer will you choose? It's like gambling: you have to place your bet, then face the consequences, whatever they are. There's nothing else you can do. You're committed. Though it satisfies neither the heart nor the mind to *bet* on the final outcome of everything."

Still skeptical, the gambler asks, "And if I lose?" At this very moment it becomes his turn to play. The lady shakes the dice, she wins the toss, and smiling she pockets the stakes. This all seems to happen by accident.

The dice have gone around the whole table just in time for him to make his little joke, "And if I lose?"

The only point at which a certain premeditation comes into play was when RR told the lady to smile while she was taking the money.

But hard as I try to remember, I am sure that when he was deciding on the details of mise en scene, he did not make any advance arrangements for the dice to reach the gambler just in time for him to put his question to Pascal or for the game to conclude with his defeat. Maybe he left it up to chance.

Looking at the whole scene again in projection, none of these details stand out especially; on the contrary, they remain in the background, stay kind of obscure.

#### 1 September/Wednesday

The scene of the encounter between Descartes and Pascal was shot today. Up until the Monday just past no one knew who'd be playing the part of Descartes.

None of the actors who'd been suggested seemed right. Then at the last minute Roberto remembered a friend of his and got him to come in from France. Though he never saw his part until a minute or two before he stepped in front of the



camera, he turned out to be the perfect Descartes, bearing a striking physical resemblance to the historical character. As during his neorealist period RR has gone back to using little known actors for his films or even people and friends who are not actors, maybe because they haven't been programmed by use and typecast in the eyes of the public. If he uses an actor who is too well known, he runs the risk that given his already established personality the actor will "play" this historical character. The way he is handling it now, though, makes it possible for a process to develop by which the historical character becomes this particular actor in the eyes of the viewer.

#### 4 September/Saturday

The only things left to shoot are the exteriors in France, but it seems they have already decided to stay in Italy and use mirrors and special effects.

Excerpts from an article by Andrea Ferendeles, "Roberto Rossellini's 'Pascal' ", published in the September/October 1971 issue of Filmcritica.





*Germany Year Zero*

*1947*





Europe '51

1952





*Voyage in Italy*

*1953*



# Films

[This filmography is based on those appearing in the monograph on RR by Mario Verdone published in Seghers' *Cinema d'aujourd'hui* series and in Jose Luis Guarner's *Roberto Rossellini*. The inadequacies of and discrepancies between these two lists indicate that a good deal of hard-core research might still be done to clarify the details of RR's career in film.—The reader may assume that any film in the following list was directed by RR unless there is an explicit indication to the contrary.]

**Dafne/Daphne**, 1936, short

**Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune**/Prelude to the afternoon of a faun, 1937 or 1938, short

**Fantasia sottomarina**/Underwater fantasy, 1939, short

Produced by Incom; photographed by Rodolfo Lombardi; music by Edoardo Micucci.

**Il Tacchino prepotente**/The turkey who was a bully, 1939, short  
Photographed by Mario Bava.

**La Vispa teresa**, 1939, short  
Photographed by Mario Bava.

**Il Ruscello di Ripasottile**/Ripasottile brook, 1940 or 1941, short  
Produced by Excelsior and S.A.C.I.

**La Nave bianca**/The white ship, 1941, feature-length  
Produced by Scalera and the Film Center of the Ministry of the Marine; subject by Francesco de Robertis; script by Francesco de Robertis and RR; RR's direction supervised by Francesco de Robertis; photographed by Emanuele Caracciolo; decors by Amleto Bonetti; music by Renzo Rossellini; non-professional actors.

**Un Pilota ritorna**/A pilot comes home, 1942, feature-length  
Produced by A.C.I.; subject by Tito Silvio Mursoni (=Vittorio Mussolini); script by Michelangelo Antonioni, Rosario Leone, Massimo Mida, Cherardo Gherardi, and Ugo Betti; photographed by Vincenzo Seratrice; music by Renzo Rossellini; non-professional actors, supplemented by Massimo Girotti (the pilot) and Michela Belmonte (the girl).

[In 1942, RR is said to have collaborated on *I Tre aquilotti*/Three air cadets, a feature directed by Mario Mattoli; RR's brother Renzo Rossellini did the music.]

**L'Uomo della croce**/Man of the cross, 1942 or 1943, feature-length

Produced by Continentalcine-Cines; based on a story by Asvero Gravelli; script by Asvero Gravelli, Alberto Consiglio, Giovanni D'Alicandro, and RR; photographed by Gastone Medin; music by Renzo Rossellini; Alberto Tavazzi plays the priest.

[In 1943, RR (with Cherardo Gherardi and Nino Giannini) collaborates on the script of *L'Invasore*/The invader, directed by Nino Giannini under RR's supervision.]

**Desiderio**/Longing, 1943 (disavowed by RR, finished in 1946 by Marcello Pagliero), feature-length  
Produced by Sovrania and S.A.E.I.R.; based on a story by A. I. Benvenuti; script by Rosario Leone, Giuseppe De Santis, RR, Diego Calcagno, Marcello Pagliero, Guglielmo Santangelo; photographed by Rodolfo Lombardi and Ugo Lombardi; music by Renzo Rossellini; actors include Elli Parvo (Paola), Carlo Ninchi (Giovanni), and Massimo Girotti (Nando).

**Roma citta aperta**/Rome open city, 1944-1945, 100 minutes  
Produced by Excelsa Film [=RR]; based on a story by Sergio Amidei and Alberto

Consiglio; script by Sergio Amidei, Federico Fellini, and RR; photographed by Ubaldo Arata; decors by Roberto Megna; edited by Eraldo Da Roma; music by Renzo Rossellini; non-professional actors, supplemented by Anna Magnani (Pina), Marcello Pagliero (Manfredi), Aldo Fabrizi (Don Pietro Pellegrini).

**Paisa/Paisan**, 1946, 124 minutes  
Produced by O.F.I., Foreign Film Productions Inc., and Capitani Film; based on stories by Victor Haines, Marcello Pagliero, Sergio Amidei, Federico Fellini, RR, and Vasco Pratolini; script by Federico Fellini and RR; English dialogue by Annalena Limentani, photographed by Otello Martelli; edited by Eraldo Da Roma; music by Renzo Rossellini; non-professional actors.

**Germania anno zero**/Germany year zero, 1947, 75 minutes  
Produced by Tevere Film (Rome) [=RR] and Sadfilm (Berlin); based on a story by RR; script by Carlo Lizzani, Max Kolpet, and RR; photographed by Robert Juillard; decors by Roberto Filippone; edited by Eraldo Da Roma; music by Renzo Rossellini; actors include Edmund Moeschke (Edmund), Frank Kruger (his father), and Erich Guehne (the professor).

**L'Amore**/Love, 1948, 69 minutes  
Produced by Tevere Film. In two parts:  
**La Voce umana**/The human voice (completed in 1947); based on *La Voix humaine*, a one-act play by Jean Cocteau; script by RR; photographed by Rene Juillard; decor by Christian Berard; music by Renzo Rossellini; acted by Anna Magnani. **Il Miracolo**/The miracle; based on a story by Federico Fellini; script by Tullio Pinelli and RR; photographed by Aldo Tonti; edited by Eraldo Da Roma; music by Renzo Rossellini; non-professional actors, supplemented by Anna Magnani (Nanina) and Federico Fellini (the vagrant).



**La Macchina ammazzacattivi/The machine to kill evildoers**, 1948 (not edited till 1952), 80 minutes

Produced by Universalia and Tevere Film; based on a story by Eduardo De Filippo and Fabrizio Sarazani; script by RR, Sergio Amidei, Giancarlo Vigorelli, Franco Brusati, and Liana Ferri; photographed by Tino Santoni and Enrico Betti; edited by Luigi Rovere; music by Renzo Rossellini; actors include Gennaro Pisano (Celestino).

**Stromboli, terra di Dio/Stromboli, land of God**, 1949, 107 minutes

Produced by Be-Ro [Ingrid Bergman and RR] for RKO (Hollywood); based on a story by RR; script by RR, Art Kohn, Sergio Amidei, Gianpaolo Callegari, and Renzo Cesana; religious theme inspired by Felix Morlion; photographed by Otello Martelli; edited by Jolanda Benvenuti; music by Renzo Rossellini; non-professional actors, supplemented by Ingrid Bergman (Karin), Mario Vitale (Antonio), and Renzo Cesana (the priest).

**Francesco, giullare di Dio/Francis, God's jester**, 1950, 75 minutes

Produced by Rizzoli Amato; based on *I Fioretti di San Francesco*; script by RR, Federico Fellini, Felix Marlion, and Antonio Lisandro; photographed by Otello Martelli; edited by Jolanda Benvenuti; music by Renzo Rossellini; non-professional actors, including Fra Nazario (Francesco), supplemented by Aldo Fabrizi (Nicolaio) and Arabella Lemaitre (Chiara).

**L'Invidia/Envy**, 1952, 20 minutes [sketch for **I Sette peccati capitali/The seven deadly sins**]

Produced by Film Costellazione (Rome) and Franco-London Film (Paris); based on a story by RR based on *La Chatte*, a novel by Colette; script by RR, Diego Fabbri, Turi Vasile, and Liana Ferri; photographed by Enzo Serafin; decors by Hugo Blaetter; music by Yves Baudrier;

actors include Andree Debar (Camilla) and Orfeo Tamburi (Orfeo).

[In 1952, RR (with Antonio Pietrangeli) collatorates on the script of *Medico condotto*, directed by Giuliano Biagetti under RR's supervision; Renzo Rossellini did the music.]

**Europa '51/Europe 51**, 1952, 100 minutes

Produced by Carlo Ponti and Dino De Laurentiis; based on a story by RR; script by Sandro De Feo, Mario Pannunzio, Ivo Perilli, Brunello Rondi, Diego Fabbri, Antonio Pietrangeli, and RR; photographed by Aldo Tonti; decors by Virgilio Marchi; edited by Jolanda Benvenuti; music by Renzo Rossellini; actors include Ingrid Bergman (Irene Girard), Alexander Knox (George Girard), Sandro Franchina (Michele Girard), and Ettore Giannini (Andrea).

**Dov'è la libertà?/Where is freedom?**, 1953, 84 minutes

Produced by Ponti-De Laurentiis and Golden Film; based on a story by RR; script by Vitaliano Brancati, Antonio Pietrangeli, Ennio Flaiano, and Vincenzo Talarico; photographed by Aldo Tonti and Tonino delli Colli; decors by Virgilio Marchi; edited by Jolanda Benvenuti; music by Renzo Rossellini; actors include Toto (Salvatore Locajono).

**Viaggio in Italy/An Italian vacation**, 1953, 75 minutes

Produced by Sveva-Junior-Italiafilm; script by RR and Vitaliano Brancati; photographed by Enzo Serafin; decors by Piero Filippone; edited by Jolanda Benvenuti; music by Renzo Rossellini; actors include Ingrid Bergman (Katharine Joyce), George Sanders (Alexander Joyce), Leslie Daniels (Tony Burton), Natalia Ray (Natalie Burton), and Maria Mauban (Marie).

**Ingrid Bergman**, 1953, 20 minutes [sketch for **Siamo donne/We women**]

Produced by Titanus-Film Costellazione; script by Cesare Zavattini and Luigi Chiarini; photographed by Otello Martelli; edited by Jolanda Benvenuti; music by Alessandro Cicognini; actors include Ingrid Bergman (herself).

[In 1953, RR directs *Otello*, an opera by Giuseppe Verdi, at Teatro San Carlo (Naples). Also in 1953, RR directs *Jeanne au bucher*, a play by Paul Claudel with music by Arthur Honegger, presented at Teatro San Carlo (Naples), La Scala (Milan), Opera (Paris), Liceo (Barcelona), Stoll Theater (London) and elsewhere.]

**Napoli '43/Naples 43**, 1954, 15 minutes [sketch for **Amori di mezzo secolo/Mid-century love**]

Produced by Excelsa and Roma Film; script by RR; photographed in colors by Tonino delli Colli; decors by Mario Chiari; actors include Antonella Lualdi (Carla) and Franco Interlenghi (Renato).

**Giovanna d'Arco al rogo/Joan of Arc at the stake**, 1954, 80 minutes

Produced by Produzione Cinematografiche Associate (Rome) and Franco-London Film (Paris); based on *Jeanne d'Arc au bucher*, a play by Paul Claudel; script by RR; photographed in colors by Gabor Pogany; edited by Jolanda Benvenuti; music by Arthur Honegger; actors include Ingrid Bergman (Giovanna) and Tullio Carminati (Fra Domenico).

**La Paura/Fear**, 1954, 81 minutes

Produced by Aniene Film (Rome) and Ariston Film (Munich); based on *Angst*, a story by Stefan Zweig; script by Sergio Amidei and Franz Graf; photographed by Carlo Carlini and Heinz Schnackertz; edited by Jolanda Benvenuti and Walter Boos; music by Renzo Rossellini; actors include Ingrid Bergman (Irene Wagner), Mathias Wiedman (Albert Wagner), and Renate Manhardt (Joanna Schultze).



[In 1954, RR supervises **Orient Express**, directed by Carlo Ludovico Bragaglia. In 1954, RR also directs **La Figlio di Jorio**, a play by Gabriele D'Annunzio, with music by Ildebrando Pizzetti.]

**L'India vista da Rossellini**/India through Rossellini's eyes, 1958 [16mm documentary in ten episodes (18-29 minutes each), broadcast January-March 1959 by RAI]  
Produced by RR for RAI [Radio-Televisione Italiana].

**J'ai fait un beau voyage**/I had a great trip, 1958, 239 minutes [16mm documentary in ten episodes, broadcast January-August 1959 by ORTF]  
Produced by ORTF [Radio-Television Francaise]; directed by Jean Lhote, using the material for **L'India vista da Rossellini**; with RR, interviewed by Etienne Lalou.

**India**, 1958, 90 minutes  
Produced by Aniene Film (Rome) and Union Generale Cinematographique (Paris); based on a story by RR; script by RR, Sonali Senroy das Gupta, and Fereydoun Hoveyda; photographed in colors by Aldo Tonti; edited by Cesare Cavagna; music by Giovanni Bross, Philippe Arthuys, and Jean Danielou; non-professional actors.

**Il Generale della Rovere**/General della Rovere, 1959, 130 minutes  
Produced by Zebra Film (Rome) and S. N. Etablissements Gaumont (Paris); based on a story by Indro Montanelli; script by Sergio Amidei, Diego Fabbri, Indro Montanelli, and RR; photographed by Carlo Carlini; decor by Piero Zuffi; edited by Anna Maria Montanari; music by Renzo Rossellini; actors include Vittorio De Sico (Bardone, alias Grimaldi), Hannes Messemer (Colonel Mueller), Sandra Milo (Valeria), and Giovanna Ralli (Olga).

**Era notte a Roma**/It was night in Rome, 1960, 120 minutes  
Produced by International Golden Star (Genoa) and Films Desmagne (Paris); based on a story by Sergio Amidei; script by Sergio Amidei, Diego Fabbri, Brunello Rondi, and RR; photographed by Carlo Carlini; decors by Flavio Mogherini; edited by Roberto Cinquini; music by Renzo Rossellini; actors include Leo Genn (Pemberton), Giovanna Ralli (Esperia), Sergei Bondarchuk (Fiodor), Hannes Messemer (von Kleist), Peter Baldwin (Bradley), Sergio Fantoni (Don Valerio), and Renato Salvatore (Renato).

**Viva l'Italia**/Long live Italy, 1960, 138 minutes  
Produced by Tempo-Galatea-Zebra Film; based on a story by Sergio Amidei, Luigi Chiarini, and Carlo Alianello; script by Sergio Amidei, Diego Fabbri, Antonio Petrucci, Antonello Trombadori, and RR; photographed in colors by Luciano Trasatti; decors by Gepy Mariani; costumes by Marcella de Marchis; edited by Roberto Cinquini; music by Renzo Rossellini; actors include Renzo Ricci (Giuseppe Garibaldi), Paolo Stoppa (Nino Bixio), Franco Interlenghi (Bandi), Giovanna Ralli (Rosa), and Tina Louise (the French journalist).

**Vanina Vanini**, 1961, 125 minutes  
Produced by Zebra Film (Rome) and Orsay Film (Paris); based on *Vanina Vanini*, a story by Stendhal (*Chroniques italiennes*), and other texts; script by RR, Franco Solinas, Antonello Trombadori, Diego Fabbri, Monique Lange, and Jean Gruault; photographed in colors by Luciana Trasatti; costumes by Danilo Donati; music by Renzo Rossellini; actors include Sandra Milo (Vanina Vanini), Laurent Terzieff (Pietro Missirilli), Martine Carol (Countess Vitteleschi), Paolo Stoppa (Prince Asdrubale Vanini), and Isabelle Corey (Clelia).

**Torino nei cent'anni**, 1961, 45 minutes

Produced by P.R.O.A. for RAI; script by Valentino Orsini; commentary by Vittorio Gorresio; photographed by Leopoldo Piccinelli, Mario Vulpiani, and Mario Volpi.

[In 1961, RR supervises Benito Mussolini, directed by Pasquale Pruinas. In 1961, RR also directs **Un Sguardo dal ponte**, adapted by Gerardo Guerrieri from *A View from the Bridge*, a play by Arthur Miller, with music by Renzo Rossellini, at Rome Opera.]

**Anima nera**/Black soul, 1962, feature-length  
Produced by Documento Film; based on a play by Giuseppe Patroni-Griffi; script by RR; photographed by Luciano Trasatti; decors by Elio Costanzi and Alfredo Freda; costumes by Marcella de Marchis; edited by Daniele Alabiso; actors include Vittorio Gassman (Adriano), Nadja Tiller (Mimosa), Annette Stroyberg (Marcella), and Eleanora Rossi-Drago (Alessandra).

**Illibatezza**/Purity, 1962, short [sketch for **Rogopag**]  
Produced by Arco Film; script by RR; photographed by Luciano Trasatti; decors by Flavio Mogherini; music by Carlo Rusticelli; actors include Rosanna Schiaffino (Anna Maria), Bruce Balaban (Joe), Carlo Zappavigna (Carlo), and Gianrico Tedeschi (the psychiatrist).

[In 1962, RR directs *I Carabinieri*, a play by Beniamino Joppolo, at the Spoleto Festival; he subsequently collaborates with Jean Gruault on the script of *Les Carabiniers*, directed by Jean-Luc Godard.]

**L'Eta del ferro**/The Iron Age, 1964 [film for television in ten one-hour episodes]  
Produced by 22 Dicembre and Istituto Luce; script by RR; directed by Renzo Rossellini Jr., under the supervision of RR; photographed by Carlo Carlini; narrated by Giancarlo Sbragia; non-



professional actors.

**La Prise de pouvoir par Louis XIV/**

The rise to power of Louis XIV, 1966,  
100 minutes

Produced by ORTF; based on a story by  
Philippe Erlanger; script by Jean Gruault  
and Jean-Dominique de la Rochefoucauld;  
photographed in colors by Georges  
Leclerc; decors by Maurice Valay; cos-  
tumes by Christiane Coste; edited by  
Armand Ridet; music arranged by Betty  
Willemetz; non-professional actors,  
including Jean-Marie Patte (Louis XIV),  
Ryamond Jourdan (Colbert), Silvagni,  
Katharine Renn (Anne of Austria),  
Pierre Barrat (Fouquet), and Francoise  
Ponty (Louise de la Valliere).

**Idea di un'isola/Idea of an island, 1967**

[one-hour documentary for American  
television]

Produced by Orizzonte 2000 [=RR];  
photographed in colors by Mario Fioretti.

**La Lotta dell'uomo per la sua soprav-  
vivenza, 1967** [film for television in  
twelve one-hour episodes]

Produced by Orizzonte 2000 for Logos  
Film (Paris), Romania Film (Bucharest),  
Copro Film (Cairo); script by RR;  
directed by Renzo Rossellini Jr., under  
the supervision of RR; photographed in  
colors by Mario Fioretti; decors by  
D'Eugenio Saverio and Gepy Mariani;  
costumes by Marcella de Marchis; music  
by Mario Nascimbene; non-professional  
actors.

**Atti degli Apostoli/Acts of the Apostles,  
1968, 342 minutes**

Produced by Orizzonte 2000 for RAI  
(Rome), ORTF (Paris), TVE (Madrid),  
and Studio Hamburg (Hamburg), with  
the collaboration of Les Films du Car-  
thage; based on *Acts of the Apostles*;  
script by Jean-Dominique de la Roche-  
foucauld, Vittorio Bonicelli, Luciano  
Scaffa, and RR; directed by RR with  
the collaboration of Renzo Rossellini

Jr.; photographed in colors by Mario  
Fioretti; decors by Gepy Mariani and  
Carmelo Patrono; costumes by Marcella  
de Marchis; edited by RR; music by  
Mario Nascimbene; non-professional  
actors, including Edoardo Toricella (Paul),  
Jacques Dumur (Peter), Mohamed Ktari  
(Mark), and Mohamed Kouka (John).

**Socrate/Socrates, 1970, 120 minutes**

Produced by Orizzonte 2000 for RAI  
(Rome), ORTF (Paris), and TVE (Madrid);  
script by Jean-Dominique de la Roche-  
foucauld and RR; photographed in  
colors by Jorge Herrero Martin; decors  
by Bernardo Ballester and Giusto Puri  
Purini; costumes by Marcella de Marchis;  
edited by RR; music by Mario Nascim-  
bene; non-professional actors, including  
Jean Sylvere (Socrates), Anne Caprile  
(Xanthippe), Ricardo Palacio (Crito),  
Emilio Miguel Hernandez (Miletus),  
Gonzalo Tejel (Anytus), Jean-Dominique  
de la Rochefoucauld (Phaedrus), and  
Bernardo Ballester (Theophrastus).

**Blaise Pascal, 1972, 125 minutes**

Produced by Orizzonte 2000 for RAI  
(Rome) and ORTF (Paris); script by  
Marcella Mariani, Luciano Scaffa, and  
RR; photographed in colors by Mario  
Fioretti; actors include Pierre Arditì  
(Blaise Pascal).

**Agostino d'Ippona/Augustine of Hippo,  
1972, 120 minutes**

Produced by Orizzonte 2000 for RAI;  
script by Marcella Mariani, Luciano  
Scaffa, and RR; other credits unavailable.

**L'Eta di Cosimo/The Age of Cosimo de  
Medici, 1973, 240 minutes** [film in  
three parts, identified on the print being  
screened as: **Cosimo de Medici, Part One;**  
**Cosimo de Medici, Part Two** (referred to  
elsewhere as **The Power of Cosimo**); and  
**The Age of Cosimo de Medici. Leon  
Battista Alberti: Humanism]**

Produced by Orizzonte 2000 for RAI;  
script by RR, Luciano Scaffa, and Mar-

cella Mariani; English dialogue by  
Sonya Friedman; photographed in colors  
by Mario Montuori; decors by Franco  
Velchi; costumes by Marcella de Marchis;  
edited by Jolanda Benvenuti; music by  
Manuel De Sica; actors include Marcello  
di Falco (Cosimo de Medici) and Virginio  
Gazzolo (Leon Battista Alberti).





RL-4

*The Rise to Power of Louis XIV*

*1966*





*Blaise Pascal*

1972



# Film Schedule

Saturday, October 19, Pacific Film Archive  
4:15 (\$ .75 admission), 7:30, 9:30pm  
**Open City** (1945, 100 mins)

Tuesday, October 23, Pacific Film Archive  
7:30, 9:45pm **Paisan** (1946, 124 mins)

Friday, October 26, Pacific Film Archive  
4:15 (\$ .75 admission), 7:00, 9:50pm  
**Germany Year Zero\*** (1947, 75 mins)  
**L'Amore** (1948, 69 mins)

A film in two parts:

**The Miracle**

**The Human Voice\***

Saturday, October 27, Wheeler Auditorium  
7:30pm **Roberto Rossellini in Person**  
**The Flowers of St. Francis** (1950, 75 mins)  
9:30pm **Blaise Pascal** (1972, 120 mins)

Sunday, October 28, Pacific Film Archive  
7:30pm **Stromboli\*** (1949, 109 mins)  
9:30pm **Europe 51** (1952, 110 mins)

Tuesday, October 30, Wheeler Auditorium  
7:00pm **Roberto Rossellini in Person**  
**The Age of the Medici** (1973, 252 mins)  
Intermission with questions to Rossellini  
at 8:30pm

Friday, November 2, Pacific Film Archive  
7:30pm **Europe 51** (1952, 110 mins)  
9:30pm **Stromboli\*** (1949, 109 mins)

Saturday, November 3, Pacific Film Archive  
4:30pm **The Machine that Kills Bad People\***  
(1948, 80 mins)

Tuesday, November 6, Pacific Film Archive  
6:00pm **The Machine that Kills Bad People\***  
(1948, 80 mins)

Friday, November 9, Pacific Film Archive  
7:30, 9:30pm **Voyage in Italy**  
(1953, 75 mins)

Tuesday, November 13, Wheeler Auditorium  
(Tentative) 6:00pm **Interview with**  
**Salvador Allende** (1973, 60 mins)  
7:30, 9:30pm **India** (1958, 90 mins)

Friday, November 16, Pacific Film Archive  
7:00pm **Viva L'Italia** (1960, 138 mins)  
9:30pm **The Rise to Power of Louis XIV**  
(1966, 100 mins)

Tuesday, November 20, Pacific Film Archive  
7:30pm **The Rise to Power of Louis XIV**  
(1966, 100 mins)  
9:30pm **Viva L'Italia** (1960, 138 mins)

Friday, November 23, Pacific Film Archive  
7:30pm **Man's Struggle for Survival**  
(1967, 105 mins)

English narrated condensation of 12 hour  
series

9:30pm **Socrates** (1970, 120 mins)

Tuesday, November 27, Pacific Film Archive  
7:30pm **Man's Struggle for Survival**  
(1967, 105 mins)  
9:30pm **Augustine of Hippo**  
(1971, 120 mins)

Thursday, November 29, Pacific Film Archive  
7:30pm **Blaise Pascal** (1972, 120 mins)  
9:45pm **The Age of the Medici** (Part 1,  
1973, 84 mins)

Friday, November 30, Pacific Film Archive  
7:30pm **Augustine of Hippo**  
(1971, 120 mins)  
9:45pm **The Age of the Medici** (Part 2,  
1973, 84 mins)

Saturday, December 1, Pacific Film Archive  
7:30pm **Socrates** (1970, 120 mins)  
9:45pm **The Age of the Medici** (Part 3,  
1973, 84 mins)

\*No English subtitles, but synopsis  
provided.

All prints 35mm except "Open City"  
and "Man's Struggle for Survival."

## Possible Additions to the Series

Additional programs are very likely to  
be scheduled during the course of the  
Retrospective, either as daytime screen-  
ings or added evening screenings. Also,  
additional programs may be scheduled  
after December 1.

It is highly likely that we will show the  
individual chapters of Rossellini's twelve-

part series **Man's Struggle for Survival**.  
Each is 60 minutes; none have English  
titles or narration. It is also possible that  
we will show Rossellini's 1960 feature,  
**Era Notte a Roma**, though without sub-  
titles, as well as sections from **Acts of**  
**the Apostles** (1968).

## Tickets

Advance tickets for the Wheeler Audi-  
torium programs may be purchased  
during the week prior to the event at  
the Pacific Film Archive box office, at  
the University Art Museum, 2621 Durant  
Avenue, Berkeley. 642-1412. Tickets  
for Wheeler programs may also be pur-  
chased at the Wheeler Auditorium box  
office after 6:15 on the day of the event.  
Tickets for evening programs at the  
Pacific Film Archive-University Art  
Museum Theatre may be purchased at  
the Pacific Film Archive box office after  
6:15 on the evening of the event; one  
hour prior to show time for any matinee  
programs.

For information on the different prices  
for tickets for Wheeler showings and  
Pacific Film Archive theatre showings,  
and on the different categories of  
tickets for both places, please pick up  
an information sheet at the Pacific  
Film Archive, or call 642-1412.





*Winnipeg Struggle for Survival*

*1967*





*The Age of the Medici*

1973



### **Credits**

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Pacific Film Archive, University Art Museum, 2621 Durant Avenue, Berkeley 94720