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FESTIVAL DE CANNES

**INGRID BERGMAN**

**GEORGE SANDERS**

# **JOURNEY TO ITALY**

by

**ROBERTO ROSSELLINI**

**Official screening**  
**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012 at 7.30pm in the Buñuel room**

**ROSSELLINI PROJECT**

**Promoted and directed by**  
**Luce Cinecittà, Cineteca di Bologna,**  
**CSC-Cineteca Nazionale and Coproduction Office**

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## **ROSSELLINI PROJECT**

**In 10 great films, in a new restored version,  
the treasures of a cinema genius made available for world audiences**

The **ROSSELLINI PROJECT** continues on its path, the initiative created and directed by **Luce Cinecittà, Cineteca di Bologna, CSC-Cineteca Nazionale and Coproduction Office**, as a means of rediscovering and show-casing in all its glory the work of a great director, a reference point in the art of cinema: **Roberto Rossellini**.

**Three of Italian cinema's great institutions and an influential international production house have joined forces for a project of total digital restoration of a central and fundamental part of the filmmaker's filmography, and are promoting and distributing it on an international level.**

**10 films are involved in the Rossellini Project, and represent the heart and soul of his cinema: Rome, Open City (Roma città aperta), Paisan (Paisà), Germany Year Zero (Germania anno zero), L'amore, Stromboli (Stromboli terra di Dio), The Machine that Kills Bad People (La Macchina ammazzacattivi), Journey to Italy (Viaggio in Italia), The Fear (La paura), India, Interview with Salvatore Allende (Intervista a Salvatore Allende: La forza e la ragione).**

**These 10 extraordinary films have been part of a digital re-mastering project** carried out by Cineteca di Bologna, at the L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory, with specific work done on stabilising and cleaning up images and sound, to restore it to its best, with the most up to date technology. Photography and sound were returned to the brightness and richness of their original state and imperfections caused by the repeated use of film reels, were removed. These are probably the only signs of wear and tear that time has left of on these films.

**Thanks to the Rossellini Project, the films will then be presented during a series of special and dedicated events and shown at the most important festivals and international shows, returning them to their original splendour on the world stage.**

With the Rossellini Project, a void has been filled, a void which, after years of retrieval and restoration projects, critical editions and DVD box sets has witnessed the not always easy availability of copies, and the lack of an overall project of digital restoration. To sum up: the cinema of Roberto Rossellini had missed out on technological developments.

Now, thanks to this Project – which, after the restoration of film reels in the nineties with traditional analogue processes, enhances and enriches films with more advanced digital progress – these works of cinema have not only been newly restored, but also re-discovered as if they were something new. The feeling of novelty is also one of the particular qualities of Rossellini films, every time they are re-watched.

These are films which did not only mark the birth and consecration of neorealism, but also inspired cinema from different countries and generations, and gave it an autonomy that it did not have before, together with desire and ability to imitate life.

**Following the debut of *The Machine that Kills* at Cannes last year, and - Luce Cinecittà, Cineteca di Bologna, CSC-Cineteca Nazionale and Coproduction Office are proud to announce - of *India* at the last Venice film festival, the third step of the Rossellini Project is the presentation at the 65<sup>th</sup> Cannes film Festival of *JOURNEY TO ITALY*. This film is one of the very few to be worthy of the label *fundamental* for the history of cinema, marking, as it still does today and for the future, a threshold for all things “modern”. A film about which another master Jacques Rivette said, on the film coming out in France: “The arrival of *Journey to Italy* has suddenly made all other films look 10 years older.”**

RESTORATION

negatives kept at the Cinecittà Digital Factory. The English opening credits were restored using a positive copy kept at the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique.

The image was scanned at a resolution of 2K. After scanning, the images were digitally stabilised and cleaned, removing signs of wear and tear accumulated over time: dots, lines, scratches and visible signs of editing.

The studio has tried to restore the brilliance and richness of the original picture. After recording the sound, it was then possible to carry out a digital clean and eliminate background noise caused by wear and tear, whilst keeping the dynamics and the specific features of the original sound.

The restoration was carried out by the Cineteca di Bologna at the L'Immagine Ritrovata laboratory in 2012.

# **JOURNEY TO ITALY**

by Roberto Rossellini

Directed by Roberto Rossellini  
Written by Vitaliano Brancati, Roberto Rossellini  
Cinematography Enzo Serafin, A.I.C.  
Editing by Jolanda Benvenuti  
Camera man Aldo Scavarda  
Music Renzo Rossellini  
Sound Eraldo Giordani  
Set design Piero Filippone  
Costume design Fernanda Gattinoni  
STARRING Ingrid Bergman, George Sanders,  
Maria Mauban, Anna Proclemer, Paul Müller,  
Leslie Daniels, Anthony La Penna, Natalia Ray, Jackie  
Frost  
Produced by Adolfo Fossataro, Alfredo Guarini, Roberto Rossellini  
Sveva-Junior, Italiafilm-S.E.C  
Distributed by Titanus Distribuzione

**1954, Italy - France**  
**Running time: 97'**

**RESTORATION CARRIED OUT BY CINETECA DI BOLOGNA AT THE "L'IMMAGINE  
RITROVATA" LABORATORY IN 2012**

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## **SYNOPSIS**

A rich married English couple, Katherine and Alexander Joyce, travel to Italy because of an inherited property. Their relationship is tepid and conventional, mainly because Alex, wholly self-involved, appears to be completely uninterested in his wife. It is evident that the couple no longer have anything to say to each other and that the trip to Naples represents a very different experience for each of them. Finding themselves far from home, the balance of the relationship is upset once and for all and the two seem destined for divorce. Although the husband is completely absorbed by himself and his own life, the wife's wanderings end up having a disturbing effect on her. When all seems lost and their separation inevitable, Katherine and Alexander find themselves in each other's arms during a procession, perhaps destined to stay together.

## ROSSELLINI'S TRAVELS

by Gianni Amelio

I WAS 10 YEARS LATE WATCHING A FILM THAT HAD BEEN MADE 10 YEARS EARLY. And so I saw it at the right time and to strange effect: it was not *Journey to Italy* that I found dated, but the other, newly released films - even though they were great films. During the sixties alienation was in fashion and Rossellini was always wary of certain themes; he called them, rightly or wrongly, groundless and boring complaints. At the time, he even rejected his own previous films, those which were mother's milk for Truffaut, Godard and so many other young French directors. They were the first to have *La divorcée de Naples* (a crude French version of *Journey to Italy*) removed from the cinema screens, screening the complete original film instead.

A matter of inheritance is the pretext which takes an English couple in the midst of a relationship crisis to Naples. But Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders may find the encouragement to try again. The film is characterised by linear subjects and an (apparent) absence of script, in keeping with the maestro's style, which the less skilled have always labelled as lacking in "professionalism". But *Journey to Italy* actually has a cast iron script, because its strength lies in its characters and the context they are living in. Emotionally estranged from each other, they are foreigners in another city, and alternately are repulsed or attracted by the places and people they don't know. Lengthy dialogues are not necessary here, nor is filling each sequence with sketches and figurines. In this specific instance the film's "modernness" - which is spontaneous, not planned on the story board - comes from its creators and consequently brings the characters to life. As with all of Ingrid Bergman's films (with the exception of the more complex *The Greatest Love*), it is almost as if the film is a reluctantly dramatised mixture of truth and cinema of a personal diary and fiction is the price that must be paid to appeal to the commercial market.

Rossellini's stories are inspired by life, but not in a rhetorical and reassuring sense. His cinema does not aim to "engage" or have a mission to fulfil (Rossellini the "teacher" seen on television in recent times is another of his status tricks); it comes from real need, it contrasts the pleasure of living with the impossibility of living how and as much as we would like. Rossellini isn't innocently wide-eyed about reality, he doesn't impose his view of things; even exotic places (India, for example, but also Neapolitan traditions) are familiar to him. A clear and essential work, *Journey to Italy* truly is the film which teaches cinema. It tells us that even famous actors act not just using their own temperament, but also their ill tempers. Sanders struggled with Rossellini's non-method whereas Bergman sacrificed herself to its demands. Both are magnificent.

## ***Journey to Italy* and the “trilogy of solitude”**

*Stromboli (Stromboli, terra di Dio)* is the first film that Rossellini directed with Ingrid Bergman and was the result, as is often the case in the director's cinema, of the new life experience he was about to live through with the actress. They share a relationship that goes from human to artistic and which, instead of burning out after one experience, is reflected in a further six films. However, only three are strictly referred to as “the trilogy of solitude”: *Stromboli*, *The Greatest Love* and *Journey to Italy*. The time which elapses between one work and the next, and the various works which fit in between them during Rossellini's career in the early fifties do not point to clear planning. Yet, on the other hand, his entire filmography, from the very beginning, is a continuous string of films which run parallel to each other or which are put into action much later, of elusive ideas which are never realised and of projects abandoned halfway through or replaced by others. It is an ordered chaos throughout which the director remains true to himself and simply follows his own intuition. For this very reason, it is not clear whether the three films were conceived to fit together as a unit (each one is a stand-alone story). This is exactly why Rossellini, amongst the myriad production issues which he was always faced with, may have pursued, consciously or not, the idea of a group of films in which a single character develops in a different way but along a common theme. The theme is isolation which dominates the three films and, as already remarked upon by some of the critics at the time, also emerges in the subsequent films *Joan of Arc at the Stake (Giovanna d'Arco al rogo)* and *The Fear (La paura)*. Ingrid Bergman therefore became the symbol of a type of female suffering, portrayed using the character of a sorrowful woman, victim of a violence borne of a predominantly chauvinist society. A woman who, unable to react, remains crippled by her own frustration. In 1953, Rossellini started shooting *Journey to Italy*, the last part in this trilogy. This work is also filmed against a background of other overlapping projects which are clear markers of the director's frenetic activity. Amongst these are; the film with Italian comedian Totò *Where is Freedom (Dov'è la libertà)*, filmed in 1952; the never completed *Italia mia*, inspired by an idea from Cesare Zavattini; an episode of *We, the Women (Siamo donne)*; directing the stage production of Giuseppe Verdi's *Otello*; and finally, in collaboration with Vitaliano Brancati, *Duo*, which, when revised and simplified, became the first version of the film with Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders.

## A difficult process

On March 15<sup>th</sup> 1953, in the magazine *Cinema Nuovo*, Federico Frascani tells of the filming of the new Rossellini film, *Journey to Italy*. He declares “Vitaliano Brancati is one of the film’s screenwriters. In some way, his presence is a guarantee because Brancati is a writer with a great capacity for criticising habits, even in a bitter or cutting way.”<sup>1</sup> These words perfectly express the opinion a significant proportion of Italian critics held of Rossellini and his methods. The fact that he had a writer like Brancati at his side was seen as reassuring and gave hope for a film that was structured and far removed from the experimentation the critics found so difficult to digest. The painful and difficult re-working of the film however, underlined once more how much the director needed to remain faithful to his personal path and to forge new paths whilst doing so. This time, as well as the usual problems caused by improvisation, there were also language problems (the film is acted in English) and issues caused by the constant conflict between Sanders and the director. In a famous article published that year in the magazine *Cinema*, Riccardo Redi writes, in particular detail, of the clashes between the two. This conflict is above all the expression of a huge difference between their completely opposing concepts of what cinema is. Sanders accused Rossellini of being slapdash, going so far as to maintain that the much praised neorealism does not exist because it is, in his opinion, the mediocre result of a lack of funding to invest in a real production. And before the film came out he added “I heard the film will be called *Vino nuovo* (“New wine”) and that’s a perfect title, for new wine is always bad”<sup>2</sup>. Rossellini, in retaliation, did not hesitate to admonish the actor for his prima donna ways and for having an impossible personality. In fact, the director pushed his research outside his usual box, his method gives the characters even more freedom from the constraints dictated by the story, managing, or so it is said, to do without the script completely. This is a process which emphasises once again Rossellini’s need for creating his own reality. Gianni Rondolino also stresses this and in his biography of Rossellini writes, “[...] Enzo Serafin, who was the film’s director of photography (working with Aldo Tonti and Luciano Trasatti) recalls that *Journey to Italy* truly was filmed without a script, instead following the indications written on Rossellini’s note sheets, with the daily help of Vitaliano Brancati who was in charge of the dialogues. It was Bergman who acted as go between for Rossellini and Sanders, mainly inventing things and improvising in turn, because Roberto didn’t give her any direction”<sup>3</sup>. The small amount of reel used when filming is further proof of this – no more than 15,000 metres. But the result is once again surprising: Bergman’s character becomes the central point of the film. The tragedy of her character is the sum of the two previous female figures from *Stromboli* and *The Greatest Love*. This is a work which sees Rossellini take his clean and true-to-reality style to the highest level, all centred around the high drama of the action.

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<sup>1</sup> Federico Frascani, *De Santis e Rossellini alla scoperta di Napoli*, «Cinema Nuovo», n. 7, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1953, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> Riccardo Redi, *Buono o cattivo il vino nuovo?*, «Cinema», n. 124, 30<sup>th</sup> December 1953, p. 359.

<sup>3</sup> Gianni Rondolino, *Rossellini*, Turin, Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1989, p. 200.



## Rossellini lambasted by Italian critics

*Journey to Italy* was released in cinemas more than a year after the end of filming. As for *Stromboli* and *The Greatest Love*, once again Italian critics spoke of failure, arrogance and regression. His works are always compared to *Open City (Roma città aperta)* and *Paisan (Paisà)* which, in the eyes of the review writers seem to be the filmmaker's only truly successful films. Refusing to see the continuing developments of Rossellinean cinema, the intellectuals spoke of a betrayal of neorealism, showing that they wanted to pin down the director's work within something which, rather than a movement of cinematography, presented itself as a fleeting and temporary phenomenon. The magazine *Cinema Nuovo*, which was always particularly severe about Rossellini, did not even mention *Journey to Italy* when it came out. It was not until the following year that the film was fleetingly mentioned in the reviews of *Joan of Arc at the Stake (Giovanna d'Arco al rogo)* and *The Fear (La paura)*. Giulio Cesare Castello, a critic for *Cinema*, links the film to those previously starring Bergman, going so far as to speak of a "triptych with a tormented messianic tendency miserably present throughout"<sup>4</sup>. Fernaldo Giammatteo is even harsher in the pages of *Rassegna del film*: "If anything, *Journey to Italy* confirms anew, once and for all, that Rossellini has gradually developed – from the day he started forging his own path – the negative qualities which at the time of the "war trilogy" seemed to be not only rigorously controlled, but even bent in order to express something which was, overall, positive (which also needed certain withheld favours). In other words: at that time, the director's personality reached the point of perfect expression, the height of its force and communicativity, and he could show the audience his whole self, because everything had – thanks to the balance achieved – its own irreplaceable value. This value has been lost. The main reason being his tendency towards the macabre which existed even in the "war trilogy" (where it had a place) and which in *Journey to Italy* we find magnified and isolated. Let us take, as a typical example, the visit to the Fontanelle. The atmosphere becomes an ornamental detail and the director is smug about it – it is macabre for the sake of it. Let us move on to considering the whole atmosphere of the film. The macabre places, both archaeological and traditional, are part of a setting which we could compare to a mediocre documentary. The film seems to become a vulgar touristic device, over which a psychological complication has been superimposed which – quite obviously – has no effect whatsoever. It could truly be said that *Journey to Italy* is just what the title promises: a tourist visit around Naples and the surrounding area. With the – pointless – company of two people intent on torturing each other. The transition from the "human" Rossellini to the refined formalist (refined in a rather unusual way, with the ingenuity and views of someone who is not born for such things) is now complete."<sup>5</sup> The words of the Turin scholar summarise, as mentioned, the general opinion of Italian critics at the time. There are few exceptions. But for those who align themselves with Rossellini, the judgment is unconditionally a positive one. Edoardo Bruno is in this camp. In *Filmcritica* he describes *Journey to Italy* as the director's "most intimate"<sup>6</sup> film and, ten years later, would go on to write in the same magazine, "With *Journey to Italy*, Rossellini has opened the second act of a movement of anti-literary cinema which is modern from the perspective of neorealism intended as an open representation of reality"<sup>7</sup>. The Italian reviews of *Joan of Arc at the Stake (Giovanna d'Arco al Rogo)* and *The Fear (La paura)* deliver the critics' definitive condemnation of Rossellini.

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<sup>4</sup> Giulio Cesare Castello, *Viaggio in Italia*, «Cinema», n. 146-147, 10<sup>th</sup> December 1954, p. 738

<sup>5</sup> Fernaldo Di Giammatteo, *Viaggio in Italia, La pattuglia sperduta*, «Rassegna del film », n. 24, October 1954, pp. 48, 49.

<sup>6</sup> Edoardo Bruno, *Viaggio in Italia*, «Filmcritica», n. 42-43, November-December 1954, p. 225

<sup>7</sup> Edoardo Bruno, *Cinema di tendenza*, «Filmcritica», n. 143-144, March-April 1964, p. 144

## Rossellini and the “Nouvelle Vague”

Whilst in Italy critics were firing poison arrows at Rossellini’s cinema, which according to some after *Open City* (*Roma città aperta*) and *The Fear* (*La paura*) no longer had anything to say, a group of young French intellectuals were reigniting the cultural debate surrounding the director. In July 1954 they published the first big interview with Rossellini in *Cahiers du cinéma*. The two young Bazzinians<sup>8</sup> were François Truffaut and Eric Rohmer, future masters of the so-called cinema of the *Nouvelle Vague*<sup>9</sup>. They were the first to understand the profound renewal of Rossellinian cinema and to defend him vigorously, considering him a maestro in each and every way. *Stromboli* and *The Greatest Love* had already been well received, and *Journey to Italy* was no different. It excited the minds of the young reviewers. Driven by this film, they approached the filmmaker, forming around him the group destined to follow its own artistic path behind a camera. Rossellini spent around two and a half years in Paris (he took short trips to Rome, Barcelona, Stockholm, Munich). It appears to be a period of relative inactivity which actually conceals a time of artistic and personal change: thanks to the approaches of the young French critics, Rossellini found a new stimulus, becoming in turn a point of reference for the future filmmakers. The positive atmosphere he was immersed in and the on-going cultural discussions were a priceless breeding ground for his future projects and allowed him to resolve many issues, including in his personal life. It is not by happenstance that at the end of 1956 he finally decided to realise his Indian film, putting an end to his emotional and artistic relationship with Ingrid Bergman forever. After her voluntary “exile” in Italy, the actress returned to America and became permanently reabsorbed by the Hollywood star system. Rossellini, however, must once again follow his own impervious path of an ever-changing style of cinema and a method which is always hungry for experiments and reality.

Below are two personal accounts, from Roberto Rossellini and François Truffaut respectively, of the meeting between the Italian director and the then French critic. They are followed by excerpts from Jacques Rivette’s lengthy discourse in defence of *Journey to Italy*. The article was published in April 1955 in *Cahiers du cinéma* and compares Rossellini’s work to that of Matisse. This comparison will be repeated in another important contribution by André Bazin and entitled *Difesa di Rossellini* (*Defence of Rossellini*).

### Roberto Rossellini and François Truffaut

I was in Germany and one day I received a letter from a Mr Truffaut who I didn’t know at all. I had filmed *Journey to Italy* and the French distribution company, which was also the co-producer, had completely changed the film, they had changed the title; calling it *La divorcée de Naples* and they had even manipulated the story. In the letter, the young Truffaut told me that he had launched a campaign amongst French critics to have the film banned and to have a copy that wasn’t dubbed but had subtitles put into circulation. And he succeeded. This originated my friendship with these young men who have always been beside me, with a perhaps over-effusive regard. Now, what did I try to do with them? I tried to promote what, in actual fact, came to being with the explosion that was the *Nouvelle Vague*. I was preaching

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<sup>8</sup> André Bazin is the original founder of the French critical magazine *Cahiers du cinéma* and Truffaut’s artistic sponsor.

<sup>9</sup> The term *Nouvelle Vague* refers to the cinema movement which formed, at the end of the 50’s, when some of the key contributors to *Cahiers du cinéma*: Godard, Truffaut, Rohmer, Chabrol, Rivette got behind a camera.

make happen: to be free from the big industry machines and to make very low cost films,

including by using less expensive technical equipment [...] I think that, actually, what they saw in my films was contempt for the traditional form of cinema. I remember that there was a period when not a single critic accused my films of being badly filmed, or me of being inattentive or even careless. Well, the fact that there was an accusation from a certain critic very attached to more traditional forms, actually got these boys excited. So I think that their enthusiasm was not so much down to the artistic material as the way in which things were expressed, and also the mental attitude of freedom, real and total freedom which means not tying yourself to anything.

(Roberto Rossellini in «Bianco e Nero», n. 1, January 1964, quoted in Franca Faldini and Goffredo Fofi (edited by), *L'avventurosa storia del cinema italiano*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1979, p. 339.)

### **François Truffaut and Roberto Rossellini**

When I met Rossellini he was completely discouraged; he had finished filming Stefan Zweig's *The Fear (La paura)* in Germany and was seriously contemplating giving up cinema. All his films after *Amore* had been commercial failures and also failures in the eyes of the Italian critics. The admiration the young French critics had for his films – and precisely the most “damned” ones: *Francesco, Stromboli, Journey to Italy* – was a source of comfort to him. That a group of young journalists who were planning on becoming filmmakers had chosen him as a maestro of cinema put a stop to his solitude and reawakened his immense enthusiasm. It was at this time that Rossellini proposed to me that I worked alongside him; I accepted and, although I continued working as a journalist, I was his assistant for three years during which he didn't shoot a metre of film! But there was plenty of work and I learnt a lot from him. [...] When Rossellini writes a script he doesn't worry about narration; the starting point is enough. In light of his character, his religion, the food he eats, his nationality, he is bound to have certain needs and wishes. And if the needs and wishes don't coincide, that is enough to spark a conflict which will naturally develop of its own accord, if you take into consideration the historical ethnic, social and geographic circumstances he grew up in. Even finishing the film isn't a problem: the ending will be dictated by the sum, good or bad, of all the elements of the conflict. For Rossellini, it's about finding the man that so many poor fictional stories have made us lose sight of. It's about finding him above all by using a strictly documentary-style approach, then to let him out in the simplest subject possible, told in the simplest way possible. Rossellini knew full well in 1958 that his films weren't like the others, but he held the healthy belief that it was for others to change in order to resemble his. He used to say, for example: “The film industry in America is based on selling screening equipment and on hiring; Hollywood films cost too much to make a profit, and they cost too much on purpose, to discourage independent production. So it's madness to imitate American films in Europe if the films actually cost too much to be conceived and made freely, so we're no longer making films, but film drafts, sketches.” This is how Rossellini became, in the words of Jacques Flaud, “the father of the French *Nouvelle Vague*”. All those names which, in 1959, surprised French producers when they came across them every week on the lists of films in production had been known to Rossellini for a long time: Rouch, Reichenbach, Godard, Rohmer, Rivette, Aurel. Rossellini was even the first person to read the screenplay of *Le beau Serge*, and of *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. He inspired Jean Rouché for *Moi, un noir*, after watching his *Les maîtres fous*.

(François Truffaut quoted in Mario Verdone, *Roberto Rossellini*, Paris, Seghers, 1963, it. tr. in Franca Faldini and Goffredo Fofi (edited by) *L'avventurosa storia del cinema italiano*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1979, pp. 339-341.

## Letter on Rossellini by Jacques Rivette

"*Healthy regulation. Order reigns.*" You don't value Rossellini at all; you don't like him, it seems to me that in *Journey to Italy* everything is in order. But no; your rejection is not so complete that it doesn't push you to seek the opinion of the Rossellinians. They irritate you; worry you, as if you weren't so perfectly aware of your taste. What a strange way to go on!

Come, let's abandon this playful tone. Yes, I am a particular admirer of Rossellini's most recent film (at least the most recent one we have seen). Why is that? Ah, here things become immediately more difficult; I can't speak of enthusiasm, emotion, joy to you: it's a language that you do not accept as proof; you understand it, I hope (or if not, may God set you on the right path).

Another move. Let's change the tone just to make you happy. Mastery, freedom, these are words that you can understand; this is actually the film in which Rossellini best asserts his mastery, and as with every art form, with the freest use of his means; I'll come back to that. I have better things to say now, and which should be more relevant to you: if there is a modern cinema, this is it. But you still need proof.

1. I don't consider Rossellini the most modern filmmaker without reason; it's not even about reason. I consider it impossible to watch *Journey to Italy* without understanding, as clear as day, that this film opens a breach, and that cinema as a whole must overcome it on pain of death (yes, for there is no longer any hope of salvation for our pitiful French cinema other than a decent transfusion of this young blood). This is, as you see, but a personal feeling. And I would like to immediately pre-empt any confusion: there are indeed other works, other authors who are certainly no less great than this one; but, how can I explain this, less *exemplary*: I mean that, having arrived at this juncture in their careers, their creations seem to close in on themselves, what they do is valid for itself and its purpose. This is certainly art's destination, when it no longer has to answer to anyone but itself and, blind fumbling and research over, it discourages disciples and isolates maestros: their domain dies with them, as do the laws and the methods that they used. You will recognise here Renoir, Hawks, Lang and in some way Hitchcock; *Le Carrosse d'Or* can inspire confused imitations, but it could not inspire a school; the first are only possible by presumption and ignorance, and the true secrets are so well hidden inside matryoshka dolls that doubtless it would take as many years as Renoir's career has lasted to unravel them. They are mixed in with the changes and progress of 30 years of an exceptionally curious and demanding creative intelligence. The work of youth, or young adulthood, keeps, in its dash, its jumps, the image of the bustle of daily life. There is another current running through it, this one linked to time and difficult to shake off. But the secret of *Le Carrosse* is in its creation, and its problems, its trials, the gambles it takes to fulfil a goal and confer autonomy and the sophistication of a world that is yet to be discovered. We could use the example of an unpleasant yet necessary job that, once done, removes all traces of its existence. What can painters or musicians take away from the last works of Poussin or Picasso, Mozart or Strawinsky if not a healthy sense of desperation? *At this pure point*, we are allowed to think that Rossellini too will be able to ascend (and get used to it) in five or ten years; he's not there yet, luckily, dare we say; there is still time to follow him, until eternity changes him in his turn;<sup>10</sup> whilst the man of action still lives within the artist.

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<sup>10</sup> Allusion to the verse which opens *Le tombeau d'Edgar Poe* by Mallarmé: «Tel qu'en Lui-même enfin l'éternité le change». [TN].

*Italy* a name which seemed unrelated became lodged in my mind: Matisse. Every image, every movement confirmed to me the secret kinship between the painter and the filmmaker. [...] First, you just need to observe: throughout the whole of the first part, note the taste for open white spaces, just distinguished by a clear line, by an almost decorative detail; if the house is new it looks completely modern, this is of course because Rossellini is mainly interested in all things modern, the most recent clothing shapes; and also because of the visual pleasure it gives. This can be surprising from a *realist* (and even a neorealist); but why, for God's sake? Matisse is also a realist, last time I checked: the economy of an agile subject, the attraction of a white page with just one stroke, the virgin page open to the invention of the stroke itself. They all seem like a more committed sort of realism than the exaggerations, the grimacing faces, the faux-Russian "art Pompier" insincerity of *Miracle in Milan* (*Miracolo a Milano*). All of this, far from serving the filmmaker's purpose, gives him a new, current style which strikes a chord with our more recent and vivid sensitivity; it touches the modern man, and is already documenting the period with such precise stories; this is all already about the honest man of 1953 or 1954; he is already the subject.

[...]

12. Nothing could be less literary or story-like; Rossellini does not like telling stories and even less demonstrating; he does not need to use the dishonest tool of reasoning: *Dialectics* is like a girl who is seduced by an over-abundance of thoughts, and she gives in to all the specious and deceptive arguments; and the *dialectics* are rogues. His heroes produce nothing, they act; Francis of Assisi did not consider sanity as an appealing thought. If Rossellini happens to want to defend an idea, he has no other way of convincing us, but to act himself – to create, to film. The thesis of *The Greatest Love*, absurd in each new scene, unsettles us five minutes later, and each sequence is above all the mystery of the incarnation of this thought; we refuse to follow the development of the theme of the intrigue, only giving in in the face of Bergman's tears, in the face of the *proof* of her actions and her suffering. In each scene the filmmaker completed the theoretical, multiplying it by the larger unknown. But there are no longer any obstacles: Rossellini is no longer demonstrating, he is showing.

[...]

15. [...] I wanted to say far more to you. Just one more thing will suffice: the surprising new way of acting, as if extinguished, ever more smothered by a more important demand, each gesture, movement, all the sparkle must cede to this intimate constraint which makes them dwindle and run away in the same hurried humility, as if hastening to reach the finish and put an end to it. This way of emptying the actors must make them rebel often, but there is a time to listen and a time to silence them. If you want my opinion, I think that this is the acting of tomorrow's cinema. And yet, how we loved American comedy, and so many small films whose fascination was almost completely in the continuous invention of movements and attitudes, the actor's spontaneous remarks, the graceful faces, the folds in the eyelids of a bright and attractive actress. That one of the aims of cinema is this delicious search for a gesture, was true yesterday, was still the case two minutes ago, but perhaps is no longer true after this film. In this film there is an absence of research which yields the best results, the abandoned movement is more beautiful than any leap, the inspired breakdown is more perfect than the most perturbing performance from any diva. This tired pace, this profound way of gesturing as if the body no longer relishes them, but traps them and keeps them inside, this is the only style of acting that we can appreciate for long; after this bitter taste, all the pleasantries are now dull and without memory.

[...]

16. The arrival of *Journey to Italy* has suddenly made all other films look 10 years older; nothing is as ruthless as youth, this irrefutable intrusion of modern cinema, in which we can finally recognise what we've confusedly been awaiting. Miserable souls should not be distressed as *this* is what strikes them or bothers them, this is right for today, this is what the truth is, in 1955. This is our cinema, we, who are getting ready to make films ourselves (I've warned you, and perhaps soon); I've already touched on the beginning of an idea that intrigued you: is there such a thing as a Rossellini school? What would its principles be? I don't know if there is a school, but I know what we need: above all we need a consensus on the meaning of the word *realism*, which is not a simplistic script writing technique, nor a directing style, but a state of mind: *that a straight line is the fastest journey from one point to another* [...]. Second point: enough with the sceptics, the clear-headed, the circumspect; irony and sarcasm have had their day. Now is the time for loving cinema enough to stop enjoying what today passes for cinema, and for wanting to inspire a more demanding style. You can see that all this does not constitute a programme, but it could be enough to give you the courage to act.

(Jacques Rivette, Lettre sur Rossellini, «Cahiers du cinéma», n. 46, 1955, pp. 14-24 it. tr. Lettera su Rossellini, in Giovanna Grignaffini (editor) *La pelle e l'anima*, Florence, S.E.S, 1984, pp.109-119)

## **Rossellini speaks of *Journey to Italy***

Eleven years after the release of *Journey to Italy*, Rossellini shares his experience, relating it to his cinema. He was interviewed by Adriano Aprà and Maurizio Ponzi. Below is an excerpt from the interview which appeared in *Filmcritica* in 1965.

### **Interview with Roberto Rossellini**

(by Adriano Aprà and Maurizio Ponzi)

*How do you feel today about Journey to Italy, a film that is very talked about but about which you have said very little?*

I've almost never talked about it, because what is there to say? One cannot exactly defend oneself, and I would have been doing just that, because it was attacked so much... On the other hand what I do is a craft where one has to take as many risks as possible, don't you agree?

*What do you think is the meaning of the ending, in which many people, mistakenly, in our opinion, saw mysticism?*

Listen, it's difficult to remember these things 10 years on, it's all water under the bridge, one has to forget things that have happened. But the ending... I do remember, yes, it caused a lot of controversy, but it was, I think, quite a simple thing. There were two great big tall people and all these tiny people around them who were even shorter because they were kneeling down. That is the ending, I mean, this sudden and complete isolation. Now, people may say "but that's not clear", I remember what they said to me at the time, "there you needed a long shot so we could see..." But I didn't want a long shot... You see. They are things that are implicit. Everything we do in our lives, disgracefully, yes disgracefully, they're not always driven by common sense; I believe that we all are driven to act as much by our emotions as by our intelligence. Now, since our lives are random, to a certain degree – in the end life is beautiful and fascinating because of that – it's pointless going off and theorising. I was struck by this idea. In other words, where could a new rapprochement come from? From being completely removed from everyone. You feel terribly cut off when you find yourself in a crowd of people of another height, don't you? In every way. It feels as if you were naked. Well, it's logical for someone who is naked to hide themselves a bit.

*So it's a faux happy ending?*

Of course, the film is very bitter. Underneath it all. They take refuge in each other, like someone who has been caught naked and covers themselves up, or grabs a towel, or grabs whoever is nearby, to cover themselves, in a certain sense. This is what the ending was supposed to mean.

*And what it does mean.*

Perhaps I made the mistake of not making it "completely clear", with "witty remarks". But seeing as witty remarks aren't my thing... I think this is quite normal, in modern life: a large proportion of marriages are true business partnerships which, although they're not faceless incorporated companies, they are business partnerships. People get married because one of them can do a certain job and the other has a certain number of connections, so the wife plays a "public relations" role and the husband is the finance director, to use current job titles. There's more to life than this. And the couple in *Journey to Italy* was a couple exactly like that.

anything to say to each other. The holiday is what kills them, mainly the holiday; the fact of becoming owners of a beautiful villa, in one of the most beautiful places in the world is worth nothing, because they don't have anything left to say to each other. If they don't talk about stock prices, if they don't talk about the possibility of setting up this or the other deal, well, the relationship between them is truly over.

*In the film there is a discovery of secret feelings...*

Yes, but there's also Italy, which is a feeling too, a rather important one, that is, all the documented daily life that passes before Katherine's eyes as if it were nothing out of the ordinary... But it's a different kind of life, they belong to different ethnic groups, it's also an ethnographic meeting...

*Do you know that many people saw the miraculous ending as the dramatic crux of the film's action?*

But you hardly see it, yes, there is a miracle, but it's completely jumbled, hysterical... and yet... there's also a certain human element, of faith in the sense of good faith. I mean, what do these two characters want to be? They want to be two perfectly rational beings, and they want to be so because they're ordinary people, not geniuses, because they are as "normal" as you can get, but they are rational because their lives are based on things they want to believe in at all costs. [...]

*The ending of Stromboli was also criticised heavily.*

For exactly the same reasons as *Journey to Italy*. A woman who has been through war, through collaborationism, through the concentration camps, she shrewdly found all the answers and at a certain point found herself in a labyrinth. What does she do? She starts crying like a small child, and that's the only sane thing she could have done, the only possible, tiny reaction a human or living being could make, don't you think? What does a child do when it cries, what does it do if you stamp on its foot? "Oh God, ow, ow, ow", right? It doesn't scream any differently. Either for "mummy" or "God".

[...]

*Don't you think that Journey to Italy was a film about alienation ahead of its time?*

Yes, yes, of course it's a film about alienation. But here let me tell you that I don't like my films either, because when I started do to this sort of stuff it was, logically, a sort of search to get my bearings, and everyone searches, it becomes a way of life, the way of life of people who are complaining.

*Okay, but neither Journey to Italy nor The Greatest Love, for example are complaints. And also, they were done ten years before...*

This is awful, I feel terribly responsible. Now the whole world has started down this path. How is the attitude of art in general justified today? Let's set cinema aside. Let's look at painting, an art which is so absolutely important. But, what's all this distortion? It's not just about breaking the mould; it's not just a revolutionary movement. It was, but slowly it became a trigger for people who refuse to see the world. This is the dramatic side. Now, the world should expect something from intellectuals, from artists in particular. If an artist doesn't function as a sort of compass, if he's not able to find the co-ordinates and say, "today, on this momentous occasion in history and space, this is where we are", well then, the use of the artist disappears. If an artist is an artist for his own sake, it might give us a great deal of pleasure, but from a social point of view it's of no interest whatsoever. So, there's no point going to see the work of an artist out of curiosity, thinking, "Let's see how odd that person is



well go and observe... if someone just wants to document, they can go to a clinic for that. Far more significant, strange or un-thought of revelations can be found and documented.

[...]

*How do you feel about improvisation?*

That's what we're always doing, if the ideas are solid, you can allow yourself the luxury of a bit of improvisation. Because when you start making something and something has to be striking, it needs to have that certain feeling of authenticity which, if it's premeditated, it can't have. That is where improvisation becomes powerful, but it must be the improvisation of a civilised man, not a savage.

[...]

*Was Journey to Italy an improvised film?*

In the evening we didn't know what we'd be doing the next morning. But then things grow as you go along, there is a certain logic to things that you can't calculate. You're there, you have the atmosphere, the actors and it forces them to follow a certain path, it almost drags the characters themselves. But in this, you don't need to be there, flipping a coin to see whether they should go left or right.

*What is your relationship with the actors?*

It depends on the personality. George Sanders was forever crying during the film. He moaned terribly and I said, "What are you so worried about, the worst thing that can happen is that you make a bad film, nothing worse than that will happen. So I don't think there's anything to cry and despair about. We've all done good and bad films and we'll make more bad ones. What can you do? There's no point pulling your hair out, no one's going to die." No, you really need to get on top of them, let's say it like it is. You can also use these tantrums; if you see in them, or in a certain attitude, a certain face, a certain expression something which can be a useful element, use it, why not? I absolutely don't believe in collaborative art, I can't believe in it. I don't pretend to be an artist but I've always dreamt of creating work of artistic value. You can't start making compromises, you have to achieve your goal at whatever cost, at the cost of arguments, fights, bad tempers, insults, coaxing, whatever it takes.

*What is Sanders's choice down to?*

He was such an obvious person, wasn't he? It was his bad temper that fought with the character of the film, more than his own character.

[...]

## Roberto Rossellini

Roberto Rossellini was born in Rome on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 1906, son of Angelo Giuseppe Rossellini, owner of a construction company (who built the Cinema Corso in Rome) and Elettra Bellan. After him, his brother Renzo was born, who was to become a composer of music for cinema and of operas and his sister, Marcella, with whom Roberto always had a deeply affectionate and close relationship. He studied up to high school level, where he forged his first close friendships. Amongst his friends were some now famous names such as Marcello Pagliero, later chosen by Roberto to act the part of the engineer Manfredi in *Rome, Open City* and who then became the co-director for the film *Desire*, Giovanni Mosca, writer and journalist, Giorgio Amendola, politician, and Franco Riganti, who was to become a production director during the Fascist era. It is also thanks to him that Roberto managed to assert himself as an assistant director and script writer during the Fascism period. However, the Rossellini's debut on the cinema scene came about in a much more casual way. When his father passed away, the future director found himself facing a very difficult and precarious financial family situation, and the necessity to find work became increasingly pressing. Thanks to some connections in the fields of cinema and theatre, he managed to find occasional jobs as a foley artist and for a time, he tried his hand at almost all jobs involved in creating films. Thus, he started to earn his first money and a certain amount of experience in the field. In the meantime, in 1936, he married Marcella De Marchis, a set and costume designer, with whom he collaborated at length even after the end of their marriage. From this marriage two children Romano (who died at a very young age) and Renzo were born. Accounts do vary, but it seems that in 1936 Roberto filmed one of his first short films *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* (*Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*), followed by *A Fantasy of the Deep* (*Fantasia Sottomarina*), *The Overbearing Turkey* (*Il tacchino prepotente*), *Lively Teresa* (*La vispa Teresa*) and *The Brook of Ripasottile* (*Il ruscello di Ripasottile*). In 1938, he collaborated on the script of *Luciano Serra, Pilot* (*Luciano Serra Pilota*) by Goffredo Alessandrini and in 1941 he made his debut behind the camera for *The White Ship* (*La nave bianca*), the initial part of a trilogy about war, which was later complete with *A Pilot Returns* (*Un pilota ritorna*) (1942) and *The Man With the Cross* (*L'uomo dalla croce*) (1943). In 1943, it was the turn of *Desire* (*Desiderio*), a film which Rossellini directed with Marcello Pagliero, and which, due to difficulties encountered, did not see the light until 1946. However it was, *Rome, Open City*, a film which came out in the autumn of 1945, which made Rossellini famous around the world, and that represented the real turning point for him. Anna Magnani also owed her future fame and career to that film. This film marked the birth of neorealism in cinema, a phenomenon which influenced all post war Italian cinema. Gaps in the cinema industry, and limited technical possibilities of that particular historical moment allowed Rossellini to take a totally independent path, which, almost spontaneously, contributed to the creation of episodes of film, inspired by incidents which had really taken place during the German occupation. Despite the criticism with which the Roman screening of *Rome, Open City* was met on 24<sup>th</sup> September 1945, it quickly shot to first place in the cinema season of that year, managing to take 162 million Italian lire (450m USD approximately). Almost all Italian critics at that time were positive about it, although in Paris and in the United States the film was even more successful: in 1946 it won the *Palme d'Or* award at the Cannes Film Festival and the Americans started to talk about "the Italian school," a way of creating cinema and conveying reality that Hollywood was not able to compete with. The film, which won the Oscar that year for best director, also won the New York Film Critics award as best foreign film, the National Board of Review Awards for best actress (Anna Magnani), and the New York Film Critics as best foreign film, while in Italy, it won the Silver Ribbon prize (joint with Alessandro Blasetti and Vittorio De Sica) for best script and best female acting. Also in 1946, Rossellini continued his new artistic direction with *Paisan*, a film which once again dealt with the liberation of Italy after the fall of Fascism, and which, together with *Germany Year Zero*, (1948) constituted the so-called "neorealist trilogy." Even more so than *Rome, Open City*, *Paisan* was considered by Italian and foreign critics as Rossellini's real masterpiece.

This film also won him a nomination for an Oscar for best director, a Silver Ribbon award and a National Board of Review award. In autumn of the same year, when his relationship with his wife was already over, Rossellini began a troubled relationship with Anna Magnani, who was also the lead actress in the film which came next, *Amore*, an interesting cinema experiment made up of two episodes, *The Human Voice (La voce umana)* and *The miracle (Il miracolo)*. The relationship with the Roman actress came to an end a few years later, when, to replace the national "Nannarella," came the Swedish star Ingrid Bergman arriving straight from Hollywood. They began a professional collaboration - Rossellini wanted her as a character in *Stromboli* - and almost immediately, they began an overwhelming love story together, which led to marriage and to the birth of their three children Robertino, Isabella, and Isotta, and was the start of a long artistic collaboration between the two. After *Stromboli*, Rossellini and Ingrid Bergman filmed various films together, such as *The Greatest Love, Journey to Italy*, and *Joan of Arc at the Stake*.

The relationship between the two artists continued for a few years until Rossellini, pushed by the irrepressible desire to constantly look for new means of creating cinema, decided to go to India. This journey put an end to a relationship which was already seriously compromised. From the Indian experience, the director came back with a new partner, Sonali Senroy Das Gupta, whose youngest son, Gil, he adopted. She was to become the mother of his youngest daughter Raffaella. Before completely devoting himself to television, Rossellini directed a few other important films such as *General Della Rovere (Il Generale Della Rovere)*, *Escape by Night (Era notte a Roma)* and *Viva l'Italia! (Viva l'Italia)*. He died in Rome on 3rd June, 1977.

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