

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## Roberto Rossellini (1906-1977)

### LIFE

Roberto Rossellini was born in Rome, the first child of a successful architect and builder, who (not coincidentally) built the first cinema house in Italy. Along with his younger brother Renzo (who later wrote well-known film scores) and two younger sisters, Roberto enjoyed a comfortable bourgeois childhood, shaped by a society that was more 19<sup>th</sup> than 20<sup>th</sup> century. He became quickly immersed in films, spending hours at his father's cinema, and worked as an assistant to directors before he made his first film, a documentary in 1937. He was friends with Vittorio Mussolini, son of the dictator, which led to his collaboration on fascist propaganda films. That, however, did not prevent him from secretly shooting footage for his famous war trilogy (1945-1947) with a very different political message.

That trio of films (*Rome, Open City; Paisan; Germany, Year Zero*) made his reputation in Italy and around the world as a leading light in the neo-realist movement. The next phase in his career (sometimes called his 'modern' period) was dominated by his relationship with Ingrid Bergman, who starred in *Stromboli, Fear and Journey to Italy*. Moving on from neo-realism, these films influenced the French New Wave and other directors, such as the Italian Michelangelo Antonioni.

His marriage with Bergman ended in a divorce in 1957, which coincided with Rossellini's withdrawal from European film-making. During the next several years, he travelled to India, where he made an extensive documentary series for Italian television. When he returned to Italy, he embarked on another monumental project for television to document the lives of great men in history. Rossellini believed that these films served an important educational purpose, but film critics and audiences were not always impressed.

Today, Rossellini is sometimes better known as the 'one who married Bergman' than as the director of the war trilogy. And although his films are not as favourably viewed as those of his Italian near-contemporaries (De Sica and Visconti), he had a lasting impact on cinematic history by influencing directors who followed him. Taken as a whole, Rossellini's oeuvre is uneven in quality, but the best moments in his best films are memorable for their revelations of the depths of human experience. One might even say they contain a mysticism that reveals layers beneath the surface reality of life.

Rossellini was married four times. First, in 1934 to Assia Noris, an actress, and then to Marcella de Marchis, a fashion designer, from 1936-1950, whose son, Renzo Rossellini, became a successful screenwriter and film producer. Next, in 1950, the director married Ingrid Bergman, although she divorced him seven years later; among their three children, Isabella became an actress and briefly the wife of director David Lynch. His fourth and final wife was Sonali Das Gupta in 1957, although they separated in 1973.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

Among Rossellini's most significant awards are Best Feature Film for *Rome, Open City* at Cannes; Best Film for *Journey to Italy* by Cahiers du Cinema; and Grand Prix for *Germany, Year Zero* at Locarno. At Venice, he also won Best Feature film for *Paisan*, the Golden Lion for *General Della Rovere* and an International Award for *Europa '51*.

## FILMOGRAPHY (completed feature films for the big screen only)

*The White Ship (La nave bianca)* 1941  
*A Pilot Returns (Un pilota ritorna)* 1942  
*The Man with the Cross (L'uomo della croce)* 1943  
*Rome, Open City (Roma, città aperta)* 1945  
*Paisan (Paisà)* 1946  
*Germany Year Zero (Germania, anno zero)* 1947  
*Love (L'amore)* 1947-1948  
*The Machine that Kills Bad People (La macchina ammazzacattivi)* 1948  
*Stromboli (Stromboli, terra di Dio)* 1949  
*The Flowers of St. Francis (Francesco, giullare di Dio)* 1950  
*Europe '51 (Europa '51; aka The Greatest Love)* 1952  
*Where is Freedom? (Dov'è la libertà?)* 1952  
*Journey to Italy (Viaggio in Italia)* 1953  
*Fear (La paura)* 1954  
*General Della Rovere (Il generale della rovere)* 1959  
*Escape by Night (Era notte a Roma; Les Évadés de la nuit)* 1960  
*Viva l'Italia! (aka Garibaldi)* 1960  
*The Betrayer (Vanina Vanini)* 1961  
*Black soul (Anima nera)* 1962

## THEMES

### LOVE

**Introduction** Psychological issues in Rossellini's films are often concentrated in the relationship between the central characters. An obvious example is love in the film with that title, while others include the damaged marriage in *Journey to Italy* and the variety of odd friendships in *Paisan*. Of course, nearly every one of his films has a key relationship, but only in a few is that bond the central theme.

**Love** This is a story about the power of love, in particular its power to destroy a woman who has lost her man (whether husband or lover, we don't know). From the opening shot of her pained face to the final shot of her hysterical, repeated cry ('I love you!'), the woman falls apart before our eyes. Throughout the conversation, she tells the man that she is calm, and at times she appears composed, but those moments are swept away by alternating torrents of profound grief and desperate hope. The power of her love is measured by the depth of her despair when that love is taken from her. She loves him so deeply that even now, when he is leaving her to marry another woman, she does not want to hurt him. She apologises for any misunderstanding, for any slight criticism he might detect in her words. She calls him 'sweet' for calling her back and tries to put on a brave front so that he will not feel guilty. Slowly, as the conversation progresses, she seems to disintegrate, to become more shrill, more pathetic and more unstable until the final moment when she collapses in grief because the sound she heard outside is not his footstep. Only then does she fully accept that he has left her, and she has nothing left to live for. We know that she considered taking too many sleeping pills, and now we fear that's what she'll do.

**Journey to Italy** This film presents the story of a marriage on the rocks that is saved by a miracle. Katherine and Alex have endured eight years of a loveless union, with no affinity, affection or children. The two are diametric opposites, the romantic woman with the workaholic male, though the scales of sympathy are heavily tipped toward poor Katherine. The journey to Italy to sell a house is an excuse, on her part, to rekindle their romance, but it only exposes and then enlarges the emotional gap between them. Cut off from their daily routines at home, in which they seemed 'perfectly happy,' they now have to confront each as individuals. They find that they are strangers and, worse, that they don't even like each other. They separate physically when he goes to Capri to flirt with women, while she buries her anxiety in the museums of Naples. The film unveils the breakdown of a marriage with precision, noting each little raised eyebrow or caustic remark that adds to a volcanic eruption that comes at the end when they declare that they want a divorce. There is no single reason, no infidelity (though Alex contemplated cheating on her), no revelation and no skeletons in the closet. That would

have made the disintegration of their relationship more dramatic and more typical of other films about marital breakdown. Instead, Rossellini, the neo-realist, shows us how a series of ordinary moments and undramatic events can slowly accumulate and result in a sensational conclusion. Married life, the film reminds us, is often boring and frustrating; couples drift apart without knowing it, until it's too late. Only a miracle saved this banal marriage (and the film) from ending with pain.

**Paisan** Despite the wide range of stories in these six episodes, most focus on friendship. Some of these are predictable, such as men fighting on the same side, whether American, Italian or British. Or among men of the same profession, such as the chaplains and the monks. But the examples in the first two episodes stand out as unlikely pairings, especially because the language and culture gaps are so wide. Carmela and Joe are thrown together for the worst of reasons. She wants to use the Americans to get back to her family, and they want to use her as a guide. Neither trusts the other. But when Joe and Carmela are left together in the deserted castle, something miraculous happens. With little words and gestures, they come to understand something of the other, even if it is vague and fragmentary. Their disjointed conversation (if you can call it that) is framed by a view of the sea, a setting appropriate to a love story. When their language lesson reaches the point of a mutual understanding of their names, they shake hands. And when Joe dies, Carmela picks up his rifle to seek revenge. It is a beautiful and moving short story about friends. A similar emotion is evoked at the end of the next episode, in which another Joe, a black American soldier, gets similarly stuck with a little kid in the port of Naples. Joe is in his own world, filled with nostalgia, anger and regret. The kid is just a nuisance, until he visits his neighbourhood and sees the kind of life the boy has. Now, the big man and the little boy share something special.

## GENDER

**Introduction** Women play central roles in several Rossellini films, but the specific theme of gender (including gender inequality and gender stereotypes) is prominent in only two. *Rome, Open City* has been controversial because the female characters are either the conventional maternal martyr or the femme fatale. Gender stereotypes also feature in *Fear*, but a stronger theme is the misogyny suffered by the wife.

**Rome, Open City** This film appears to present a heroine, but a closer look suggests that the female characters as a whole reinforce gender stereotypes. For example, the two key women in the story, Pina and Marina, are pitted against each other as polar opposites. Pina is the heroine, the pious woman and pregnant widow, who is loyal to the cause and to her fiancé, Francesco. She takes part in a bread riot, she is concerned about her son, Marcello, and she is deeply in love with Francesco. Most important, she dies in an attempt to prevent him being taken away by the Germans. In contrast to her as the female martyr, Marina is the femme fatale. She is weak, superficial and unstable. Interested in drugs and luxury, she betrays the cause and gives information that leads to the arrest and, later, the deaths of Giorgio and Don Pietro. A third woman is Ingrid, the evil traitor who is also a lesbian. Unlike Marina, she is a strong person and does not have the excuse of poverty to explain away her behaviour. Instead, she is a calculating opportunist, whose commitment to the 'master race' ideology is firm. What these portraits of female characters show is that a woman cannot be both independent and virtuous. Pina is controlled by her love and her role as a mother; Marina wants to be independent but is too weak to shake off her addictions; Ingrid, the mannish non-woman, is simply too vicious to earn our sympathy. In the end, these women are either powerless mothers who die, weak addicts who betray or powerful women who are not feminine. Perhaps the film's attitude toward women, reflecting society's view, is best expressed by little Marcello. As he goes to bed one night, his sister complains she he never takes her with him on his sabotage missions. He says he can't because she's a girl. 'Can't women be heroes?' the sister asks. 'Sure,' Marcello says, 'but women always mean more trouble.'

**Fear** The theme of gender is present in this story, though not prominently. For example, there are a few obvious instances of gender stereotyping, such as the gifts given by the parents to their children. The boy gets an air rifle and the girl gets a doll. She wants a rifle, too, but is told by her father that 'little girls shouldn't play with rifles.' Irene, on the other hand, is not a typical passive woman. It is noteworthy that the family car is always driven by Irene and not her scientist husband. Also, she is the one who runs the factory, having done so in his absence during the war. Albert, however, is uncomfortable with this role reversal and suggests that she could step down from her managerial role and become more of a mother. But a more sinister element of the misogyny is the psychological abuse that Irene suffers at the hands of her husband. Once the revelation is made that he is behind the blackmail plot, we see that Irene is being tested like a lab rat. Her reactions are observed by the

dispassionate scientist in order to determine just how much emotional stress she can take before she confesses to her crime. Albert subjected his daughter to the same kind of test during the incident of the missing air rifle. He bullied her until she cracked. This theme of experimenting with Irene's mental health is made explicit in the final scene, when she goes into the laboratory and stares at the rats and rabbits in their cages. She identifies with them because she is one of them.

## RELIGION

**Introduction** Although religion is something that we might not readily associated with Rossellini's films, it is a strong theme in his work. The role of the church in the resistance movement is highlighted in *Rome, Open City*, while the phenomenon of a miracle is central to two films: *The Machine that Kills Bad People* and *Love*, story 2.

**The Machine that Kills Bad People** Beneath its playful surface, this film contains serious content, some of it satirical, and some of it without comedy at all. The most obvious theme is that of religion and morality. Harking back to 'The Miracle' (the second story in Rossellini's *Love*), another saint makes an appearance early on in this film. St Andrea appears in the form of an old man to our hero, the crusading and credulous photographer, Celestino. Using the saint's gift of a magical camera, Celestino begins to sprinkle divine justice over the town. The problem is, the saint is an imposter. He's not Andrea; he's the devil. Before that revelation at the end, however, local people react to the strange events in their town by declaring them to be miracles when they are positive (for example, a good catch of fish, approval of public funds) and attributing them to the 'evil eye' when they are negative (mostly deaths). The priest plays it straight during a discussion about morality when he says it's all down to 'intentions' and that 'God will look into men's hearts'. A more nuanced view is expressed by the doctor when he says that it's hard 'to tell good from bad these days because they're all mixed up'. Celestino, fired by a sense of righteousness, has no doubts that he knows who is good and who is bad. However, it turns out that the three poor people who inherit Donna Amalia's will are evil thieves. Celestino has good intentions, but the results of his actions are not always morally defensible. That seems to be the message conveyed by the final words, spoken by the narrator, who says, 'Do good, but not too much...Don't be too hasty to judge others.' In other words, religious fervour is dangerous.

**Love (story 2)** Nanni's story illustrates the enduring question about the similarities between deep religious faith and madness. How do we distinguish hallucinations from genuine religious visions? The lines between madness and religious imagination had been blurred, as in the life of the English poet William Blake, for centuries. But, in today's world, or even in post-war Italy, if a homeless man claimed to be the son of god, who would believe him? More than likely, he would end up in a mental institution. In the cinematic story, appropriately titled *The Miracle*, Rossellini explores these questions through the pious Nanni. Of course, we see that the wandering man is not Saint Joseph, though he is made to resemble him. The point is that Nanni believes that he is her saint, her beautiful saint, who has come to her aid in the past. The story tries not to judge Nanni, but rather to pose a question about the power of miracles. For example, when she asks two monks if they have seen miracles, one says everyday and the other says never. Then there is the second miracle, of her pregnancy. Again, the film is deliberately vague about whether or not she had sex with her Saint Joseph; one can argue it either way. Her pregnancy is real enough, but when she claims it's a gift from god, like a virgin birth, the local people mock her pretence of spiritual power. They are, presumably, devout Catholics themselves, but perhaps they fear a woman who has spiritual powers. Like the village idiot, they castigate her as 'the devil' and drive her away. Is Nanni a madwoman, unhinged and unreliable? Or is she a visionary, a person whose deep faith enables her to see what others cannot? Rossellini leaves the question hanging in the air. What is not in doubt is that the two miracles make her happy.

**Rome, Open City** The role of the church in this film is woven into its political message, but it exists as a theme in its own right, too. Although the little boy Marcello, who is part of the resistance, expresses the opinion that the church 'is a waste of time these days,' for the most part religion is seen as a positive force in fighting the occupiers. That force is personified in the figure of Don Pietro, who is an active supporter and also a voice for Christian teachings. He speaks of the need for mercy, courage, endurance, sacrifice and self-reflection. When Pina, a pious woman, complains that she can't take the war any longer, he counsels her (and, by extension, others) to reflect on their individual lives and pray for forgiveness for their sins. At the point of death, Don Pietro himself asks God to forgive his executioners for 'they know not what they do.' His faith is contrasted with the atheism of the SS commander. During his interrogation of the priest, the German man is bothered by Don Pietro's religious comments about mercy and God's will. At one point, he orders him 'not to preach.'

When Don Pietro refuses to cooperate and halt Giorgio's torture, the German shows him the mutilated body of his friend. Then he mocks the priest's faith, saying, 'Is this your Christian charity? Your love for your brother in Christ?' Later, the SS man admits that he was rattled by the priest, whose belief in Christ is as firm as his own atheist ideology. Finally, the influence of religion on the story is illustrated by the scene in which Giorgio is tortured to death. When the camera closes in on his bowed and bloodied face, it has a deliberate resemblance to the crucified Christ. It cannot be lost on the Italian cinema-goers of that era that Christ was also a political rebel who died for his cause.

## CULTURE

**Introduction** The importance of culture in shaping people's lives is a theme found in three Rossellini films. The six episodes of *Paisan* are tied together by their common element of cross-cultural interaction, often resulting in misunderstanding. Another kind of miscommunication, this time between lovers, is found in *Love (Story 1)*, while the ability to understand a foreign culture is at the heart of *Journey to Italy*.

**Paisan** The thread that unifies these six episodes is the theme of cross-cultural interaction. There are many different kinds of interaction shown in the film, ranging from romantic and strategic to theological and opportunistic. American soldiers mix with Italians from all walks of life, soldiers, prostitutes, street urchins and closeted monks. They also form alliances with British soldiers, while retaining their hatred of the Germans. The sequence of six episodes follows a progression from misunderstanding to understanding. In the first three episodes, for example, the interactions lead to misunderstanding because of the language barrier; still, the characters manage to gain a little comprehension through their shared humanity, assisted by photographs, songs, gestures and phrasebooks. And in each case, a profound understanding emerges that changes at least one person. In episode 1, Carmela, who was angry and distrustful, senses that Joe is a good person and tries to avenge his death. In episode 2, another Joe has no clue as to who Pasquale, except that he's a thief. But when he sees the poverty of his neighbourhood, he reappraises his own poor financial situation back home. In episode 3, Francesca is inspired to leave her life of prostitution when she accidentally meets the man whom she fell in love with six months earlier. In episodes 4, 5 and 6, Americans actually speak Italian, although their stories do not end in happiness. By the end of the sequence (episode 6), the tragedy is not that the two groups don't understand each other, but that they are separated by others: the POWs are shown respect while the partisans are executed. Taken as a whole, the film is a subtle exploration of the interaction between Americans and Italians on a micro-level, where suspicion is overcome by a common humanity. As the Italian title of the film (*paisa*) suggests, they are all comrades.

**Love (Story 1)** This story also contains a theme of communication, a topic theme that Rossellini explored in an early film (*Paisan*). The story is titled 'The Human Voice' because it is a voice that stands between the abandoned woman and suicide. The conversation by telephone is the only contact she has with her ex-husband/lover, and, in fact, with the outside world. It is what keeps her sane. 'Just keep talking to me,' she says. 'I want to hear the sound of your voice...If you hang up, I'll die.' Again, later, she says, 'If you didn't call back, I'd go out of my mind.' Her distress is increased when the line cuts out and she can no longer hear his voice. And when the line is restored, we hear the relief in her voice. The vital role of communication is also dramatised by the instances of miscommunication. Often she says that he has misunderstood what she meant and that she isn't blaming him. In the end, though, even her telephone can't save her. She has very little left. He is leaving her. She wants him to take their dog. His suitcases are packed and ready to go. He is about to burn her letters. All she has is the telephone, and his voice on the other end. Freud's 'talking therapy' had become popular in Italy, as elsewhere, by the late 1940s. Rossellini turned it into a harrowing cinematic experience.

**Journey to Italy** The title is important in calling attention to the fact that this is a journey to Italy, not to some dreary English seaside town. All the drama takes place in a country famed for its romance, art, history and religion, and under the shadow of the fiery and volatile Mt Vesuvius. From the beginning, Italy itself becomes part of the story. The place is noisy, there are too many insects, the wine is good, the food spicy and the people relaxed. Alex notes that it's a good country to sleep in and begins to relax himself. Katherine becomes more immersed in history and culture, through the museums and her drives into Naples, where she sees Madonna shrines and pregnant women. While workaholic Alex is bored, she is charmed by an Italian phrase (*dolce far niente*), which roughly means: 'how sweet it is to do nothing.' Three cultural experiences play a more direct role in the story. First, Katherine visits the catacombs with its thousands of disinterred skulls and where Natalie prays for a

child, which sets a train of thought in her about her own childlessness. Then comes their visit to Pompeii where they witness the discovery of two skeletons buried two thousand years ago. 'Perhaps husband and wife,' their archaeologist friend Burton says. Deeply affected, Katherine has Alex take her home, and he also admits to have been moved by the experience. Lastly, they get caught up in the religious devotion of a saint's procession. Briefly separated, they find each other and embrace. Skulls in the catacombs, skeletons in Pompeii and a religious festival—together they create an unexpected shift in their hearts and they are reunited.

## FALSENESS

**Introduction** Although we can identify elements of deception in several Rossellini films (such as *Fear* and *The Machine that Kills Bad People*), it is a theme only in one. *General Della Rovere*, in fact, is shot through with falseness, despite the fact that it is based on a real story.

**General Della Rovere** Underlying the overt politics of the film is the intriguing theme of appearance versus reality. Who is the protagonist? He is a distinguished-looking, well-dressed, charming, middle-aged man named Emanuele Bardone, who is a gambler and a conman. However, he introduces himself to others as Col Grimaldi, now an engineer, though once an officer in the Italian cavalry. In truth, he was dismissed for debts and embezzlement and then convicted for various crimes from fraud to bigamy. Then this man impersonates General Della Rovere as part of a bargain to free him if he identifies a partisan leader held in prison. In effect, this is the story of a double imposter (Bardone who is both Grimaldi and Della Rovere) who is charged with the task of identifying another man. Such deception, lying and spying is unavoidable in a country occupied by a foreign power, when one loyalty is laid on top of another. But the film emphasises this ambiguity in both plot detail and characters. First, there is the prominence of the ring, a fake ring that Bardone has given to his girlfriend. For the opening third of the story, he tries to sell it, claiming it is 'rare' and 'oriental' and a 'sapphire,' when, in fact, it is practically worthless. Second, there is Bardone himself, who is a fantasist, a man who believes in his own lies. He even appears to be convinced that the ring is genuine. His most significant example of self-deception, however, is his successful impersonation of the general. When he dies at the end, we are left wondering if he might have really become the hero he so desperately would have liked to be.

## CHARACTERS

### Contents

*Open or closed to new experiences*

*Agreeable or Disagreeable in social Relations*

*Conscientious or Unconscientious*

*Rational or Emotional in their psychological world*

#### 1. Open

a) Edmund (*Germany, Year Zero*) Edmund, the young boy in the Kohler family, is a sweet child with the face of a troubled adult. He is the emotional centre of the story, although his motives and feelings are often vague. At times, he seems lost, like the city and the country he lives in. His loss of innocence is emblematic of a wider collapse, and even corruption, of the society around him.

b) Martin (*Paisan, episode 5*) Martin is a burly, gregarious American military chaplain. As a Catholic, he feels at home with the monks in the monastery where he and his associates are guests. He offers them gifts of tinned good and cigarettes, and he admires their kitchen garden. He is also a thoughtful man, who tries to explain to the monks that Jews and Protestants are not 'lost souls.' As he says, they just follow a different faith.

c) Garibaldi (*Viva L'Italia*) Garibaldi is a gregarious, cheerful man, with a rich mane of hair and thick beard. He is thoughtful and courageous in equal measure. A man of the people, he never speaks down to his men. While not highly educated, as a passionate freedom fighter, he is given to poetic statements about tyranny and justice. In dealing with his enemies, he is never angry or vengeful, believing that hate and envy are useless emotions. His men and those whom he liberated from foreign rule treat him almost like a god.

d) Rosa (*Viva L'Italia*) Rosa is a young woman, who lives in Calabria, southern Italy. She is the daughter of a leading man in the local conspiracy to overthrow the government. In her only

significant scene, she says nothing but her action paves the way for Garibaldi's invasion of the mainland, which is the crucial event in the film.

## 2. Closed

a) Celestino (*The Machine that Kills Bad People*) Celestino is our flawed hero. He is kind but naïve in his understanding of good and evil, a simplistic view that results in his moralistic crusade through the town. He has good instincts—to support the poor and fight the rich—but he learns that life is more complicated than dividing up the world in that fashion. In the end, he is chastened by the devil disguised as the saint.

## 3. Agreeable

a) Nanni (*Love*) Nanni is a poor woman, in the second story ('The Miracle'), who herds goats and only has a place to sleep because the monastery takes pity on her. She is a marginalised person and appears simple-minded, but she doesn't need others because she has a deeply satisfying emotional bond with Saint Joseph. Her religious faith is both a source of mockery by others and of strength for herself.

b) Carmela (*Paisan*, episode 1) Carmela is a young Sicilian girl, probably in her mid-teens, who agrees to lead the American soldiers on a hunt for the Germans. She is independent and somewhat surly but softens and shows bravery and loyalty in the end.

c) Francesca (*Paisan*, episode 3) Francesca is an attractive young woman in Rome, who makes money through prostitution. But, only six months earlier, she was a sweet, demure girl welcoming the Allies into liberated Rome. She is ashamed of her moral decline, especially when she meets the American soldier she fell in love with earlier. She attempts to resurrect that earlier romance but is bitterly disappointed.

d) Harriet (*Paisan*, part 4) Harriet is an American nurse serving with the Red Cross outside Florence. Some time earlier, she lived for two years in the city and met a painter for whom she still carries a flame. She is a spirited and determined person, brave and resolute, and also a little reckless. Her determination overcomes obstacles, but in the end she is left in despair.

e) Francesco (*Rome, Open City*) Francesco is a tall, handsome man. Unlike his fiancé, he is not religious, though he is tender toward her and her son. His commitment to the cause of resistance is unconditional and his confidence in its righteousness is unwavering. Of the major characters, only he survives until the end, though we do not know what happens to him afterward.

f) Old man (*The Machine that Kills Bad People*) The (unnamed) old man is a complicated and fascinating character. Part old man, part fake saint and part failed devil, he has the wisdom of experience and is able to counsel Celestino to curb his righteous campaign. He gains our sympathy in the end as a poor devil who has lost his job, but, even then, we are not quite sure what to make of him.

## 4. Disagreeable

a) Alex (*Journey to Italy*) Alex is a dour business man, who nearly always wears an expression of disapproval, of Italy and of his wife. He is querulous, sarcastic and downright hostile to Katherine. A workaholic, Alex finds Italy a curious mixture of noise, boredom and insects, and he can't stop thinking about the business deals back home in London. Cold, distant and complacent, he has an epiphany at the end and finds a hidden source of compassion.

## 5. Conscientious

a) Eva (*Germany, Year Zero*) Pretty and young, Eva is the rock of the family. She has a boyfriend still held as a POW; her father is dying; her older brother is a coward; and Edmund is too young to help the family out of poverty. She is the one with fortitude, who stands in the ration queues and manages to put a little food on the table. In the absence of a mother, she takes on the maternal role, scolding her brothers and keeping house. Without her, we feel, the family would have fallen apart sooner than it does.

b) Burton (*Journey to Italy*) Mr Burton is not a major character, but he does play an important role in the drama. An Englishman who married an Italian and lives in Naples, Burton is an affable

person, full of warm thoughts and memories, presenting a contrast with the irascible Alex. Burton is also an archaeologist who works at Pompeii, just outside Naples.

c) Dale (*Paisan*, part 6) Dale is the leader of a small American OSS unit operating behind German lines in the Po River delta. He is a leader with compassion, who is concerned with the welfare of his men. When he gives orders, he speaks calmly, as if he's making a suggestion. He treats his men and his partisan allies with equal dignity. He is battle-hardened but retains his humanity.

d) Giorgio (*Rome, Open City*) Giorgio is a severe man. He is a committed resistance fighter and a difficult man to love. He rarely smiles and usually wears a sceptical look on his weary face. Even at the end, when he is tortured, and that face is battered beyond recognition, he seems to be scowling at the world. Not much of a lover, he is an inspirational and courageous member of the resistance movement.

e) Don Pietro (*Rome, Open City*) The character of Don Pietro is based on an historical priest who supported the partisans in Rome and was executed for his resistance to German occupation. The character in the film is exactly that kind of man, deeply religious but also deeply sympathetic to the suffering of others. He justifies his political actions by saying that he helps those in need, but there is no doubt that he shares the ideals of the anti-fascist movement. Throughout the film, in which he is the real star, he shows forbearance, charity and bravery. A remarkable man.

f) Bandi (*Viva L'Italia*) Bandi, a young and handsome man, is an officer in one of the royalist armies who defects to Garibaldi's movement. Although he has a speaking part in only two or three scenes, he is one of the men upon whom Garibaldi relies for advice. The historical Giuseppe Bandi wrote a famous memoir of the war, which is the main textual basis for Rossellini's film.

g) Menotti (*Viva L'Italia*) Menotti is Garibaldi's son. Only twenty years old at the time of the events in the film, he is nevertheless an important character because he has special access to the leader. And although he has a speaking part in only one scene, it is critical to the story as a whole and sheds lights not only on his character but on his father's, as well.

## 6. Unconscientious

a) Joanna (*Fear*) Joanna, who is slightly younger than Irene, appears to be devious, vindictive and cruel. Having lost out to Irene for Erich's affections, she wants revenge. She is devious and can be menacing in her demands. However, as we learn later, she also has a compassionate side. Her character is complicated by the fact that she is herself putting on an act.

b) Bardone (*General Della Rovere*) Emanuele Bardone is an aging, petty swindler, who finances his gambling addiction by selling fake jewels and bilking money from the families of men held by the Gestapo. He is thoroughly deceitful, from first to last, although this does not mean that he lacks empathy for the suffering of his fellow citizens or that he cannot rise to heroic heights as he does in the end. By choosing to focus the story on this man, with his tangled web of motives, the director emphasises the ambiguous attitude of many Italians toward the war.

c) Karl-Heinz (*Germany, Year Zero*) Karl-Heinz, the older brother in the family, is a character of weakness and self-pity. He suffered terribly during the war, in which he fought to the end, making him a target for the Allied authorities. He dare not register for a ration card or work permit for fear that they will imprison him. And so, he hides at home while his family half starves. He is called a coward by his sister and by his father, and only at the very end, when it is too late, does he show any courage.

d) Marina (*Rome, Open City*) Marina is a young woman who works as a showgirl, and an occasional prostitute, and has a drug habit. She grew up the hard way and had to look after herself. Rather than make her self-reliant, though, she turned out to be weak and superficial. The Germans, through the evil Ingrid, prey on her weakness and she succumbs although she has pangs of conscience at the end.

## 7. Emotional

a) Irene (*Fear*) Irene is a capable woman who runs a large factory while married with two children. She is a loving mother, but she cheated on her husband while he was a prisoner after the war, and now she lives with that shame and guilt. She has a strong will, but she is unable to cope



with the fear that her husband will find out about her infidelity.

b) Katherine (*Journey to Italy*) Katherine is the weaker one in the conflict, a wife whose husband belittles and blames her. She has a distracted air, partly caused by her marital trouble, and partly by her romantic temperament. Although lost and lonely, she does fight back in the marital slanging matches and gets a few good punches in. Mostly, though, she is both hurt and angered by her husband's behaviour. 'You don't realise how mean you can be sometimes. It's more than anyone could stand,' she tells him. That is Katherine, outspoken yet forgiving at the same time.

c) Unnamed woman (*Love*) The woman in the first story ('The Human Voice') is middle-class and perhaps in her thirties. She lives alone, except for a dog that she shared with her partner. She is suffering badly from the news that her lover/husband is leaving her for another woman. She oscillates between a pretence of calm acceptance and suicidal instability. As a coping mechanism, she tries to deceive herself and also to blame herself for the break-up.

d) Joe (*Paisan*, episode 2) Joe is a black American military policeman in Naples. For most of his episode, he is drunk and belligerent. He is also lonely, depressed and dreams about a homecoming from the war that he knows will never happen. At the end, he gains some insight into the lives of Italians and, as a result, his own life.

e) Pina (*Rome, Open City*) Pina, the nominal heroine of the story, is a middle-aged woman who used to work in a factory until the Germans arrived. Now, she is widowed with a young boy and has lost her looks. But she is a sympathetic character, deeply in love with her fiancé, a worried mother, a pious Catholic and a loyal supporter of the resistance.

f) Joe (*The Machine that Kills Bad People*) Joe is the embodiment of an American go-getter. He is an optimistic, enthusiastic, bubbly businessman who sees opportunities everywhere. He even smokes the emblematic long cigar. Again, like the other characters in this semi-farce, he is an exaggeration of a type yet still realistic enough to be convincing.

#### 8. Rational

a) Albert (*Fear*) Albert is a scientist who works on experiments to develop antidotes for paralysis during neuro-surgery. He spent some years in a POW camp after the war, he appears to be much older than his wife and he is conservative in his social (and possibly political) views. In some ways, he is a more complex character than Irene. For one thing, and like Joanna, the other actor in his clever blackmail plot, Albert is not what he appears to be. He is loving and considerate to his wife, but there is also a streak of sadism in him, reminiscent perhaps of a Nazi past.

b) Col Müller (*General Della Rovere*) Col Müller is a soft-spoken Gestapo officer. Charming, polite and reluctant to resort to torture, he fits the profile of the 'good Nazi'. From the beginning, he makes friends with Bardone and jokes with him. He is dignified in his interview with the real Mrs Della Rovere and even, feels a tinge of remorse, when he orders executions at the end of the story. In some ways, he is portrayed as Bardone's German alter ego: apolitical, convivial and wanting to avoid confrontation. But war is war, and like Bardone, he must do his duty.



(Rossellini with cameras on set)



(Rossellini and Bergman with Renzo and their three young children)