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| Rossellini, Roberto (1906 – 1977) |
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| Roberto Rossellini(Roberto Gastone Zeffiro Rossellini, Rome, 8 May 1906 – 3 June 1977) was an Italian film director, screenwriter and producer. His early work appeared at the height of Fascism—two shorts, now lost, on the subject of nature: *Daphne* (1936) and *Prélude à l'aprés-midi d'un faune* (1938)*.* At the beginning of the 1940s, he released his first feature films exalting the virtues of World War II combatants: *La nave bianca* (1941), on a group of Italian sailors on a hospital ship, *Un pilota ritorna* (1942), on the war between Italy and Greece, and *L’uomo della croce* (1943), about military chaplains on the Russian front. With these three films, which are often referred to as the ‘Fascist trilogy’, Rossellini’s work is considered to be highly controversial for his use of certain Fascist ideological themes that he would definitively abandon in the war’s aftermath. This trilogy already crosses realism and documentary filming with social aesthetics, humanist concerns, and a sharp observation of everyday life. These traits will characterize Rossellini’s postwar *neorealism* and will never completely disappear from the different phases of his future work. |
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This trilogy already crosses realism and documentary filming with social aesthetics, humanist concerns, and a sharp observation of everyday life. These traits will characterize Rossellini’s postwar *neorealism* and will never completely disappear from the different phases of his future work.  In fact, with the trilogy *Roma città aperta* (1945), *Paisà* (1946), and *Germania anno zero* (1948), Rossellini is acknowledged as the founding father of *neorealism,* understanding realism as nothing but the artistic form of truth, and cinema as a means to ‘show’, not to explain, and thus to conduct a social inquiry. The first two of these social films evoke the war of liberation from fascist and Nazi oppressors, while *Germania* deals with the traumatic aftermath to World War II and the fall of the Third Reich. Towards the end of the decade, Rossellini turns away from the experience of war and works on two comedies: *L’amore* (1948), dedicated to Anna Magnani, who also acts in the movie, and *La macchina ammazzacattivi* (1952), a Brechtian reflection on evil.  In 1948, the already famous Swedish actress Ingrid Bergman, after seeing *Roma città aperta* and *Paisà*, writes to Rossellini proposing to collaborate. This letter signals the beginning of one of the most popular and controversial love stories in the history of cinema, and, at the same time, Rossellini’s engagement with a cinema of intimacy where social analysis encounters spiritual exploration. Rossellini’s new phase, which spans the first half of the 1950s, is concerned with the personal anxiety, crisis of communication, and loss of traditional values produced by Fascism and the war. *Stromboli, terra di Dio* (1950), filmed on the slopes of the Italian volcano that gives the movie its title, is the first work with Bergman, followed by *Europa '51* (1952), *Siamo Donne* (1953), *Viaggio in Italia* (1953), *La paura* (1954), and *Giovanna d'Arco al rogo* (1954). *Stromboli* and *Viaggio in Italia* drew the attention of future French New Wave’s filmmakers—then critics—François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, and Éric Rohmer, who considered Rossellini one of the first modern auteurs. As a result of such admiration, Godard invited Rossellini to work on the screenplay of *Les Carabiniers* (*The carabineers*, 1963).  In 1957 Jawaharlal Nehru, then Prime Minister, invited Rossellini to film a documentary in India. The journey triggers his break-up with Bergman and his subsequent marriage with Sonali Das Gupta, a screenwriter for the film. It also gives rise to an exotic detour in his career, represented by *L’India vista da Rossellini* and *India Matru Bhumi*, a title that combines fiction and documentary. In these years Rossellini looks for new perspectives and returns to the theme of the war with *Il generale della Rovere* (1959), winner of the *Golden Lion* at Venice, and *Era notte a Roma* (1960). In the 60s, with *Viva l’Italia* (1960) depicting Garibaldi’s epic campaign in 19th century Sicily during the *Risorgimento,* Rossellini begins what is considered to be his didactic and educational phase, concerned with the history of Western civilization. In 1961, he releases *Vanina Vanini,* an adaptation of the homonymous tale by Stendhal, and in 1966 *La presa del potere da parte de Luigi XIV*. At the beginning of the 70s, Rossellini makes a number of films for television, which he praises for its pedagogical potentiality against pernicious mass society. These movies treat the lives of historical figures such as *Socrate* (1971), *Agostino d’Ippona* (1972), *L’età di Cosimo dei Medici* (1972), *Cartesio* (1973), and *Il messia* (1975), on the figure of Christ. Rossellini dies of a heart attack in 1977 returning from the Cannes Film Festival.   **Filmography**  *Daphne* (1936)  *Prélude à l'Aprés-midi d'un Faune* [*Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*] (1938)*.*  *La Nave Bianca* [*The White Ship*] (1941)  *Un Pilota ritorna* [*A Pilot Returns*] 1942)  *Desiderio* [*Desire*] (1943, released in 1946)  *L'Uomo dalla Croce* [*The Men of the Cross*] (1943)  *Roma Città Aperta* [*Rome, Open City*] (1945)  *Paisà* [*Paisan*] (1946)  *Germania Anno Zero* [*Germany, Year Zero*] (1948)  *L'Amore: Due Storie d’Amore* [*Love: Two love Stories*] (1947-48)  *La Macchina Ammazzacattivi* [*The Machine that Kills Bad People*] (1948 released in 1952)  *Stromboli Terra di Dio* [*Stromboli Land of God*] (1949)  *Francesco, Giullare di Dio* [*Francis, God’s Jester*] (1950)  *Dov'è la Libertà ... ?* [*Where is Liberty?*] (1952, released in1954)  *Europa '51* [*Europe ‘51*, also known as *The greatest love*] (1952)  *Amori di Mezzo Secolo* [episode *Napoli ’43*] (1953)  *Siamo Donne* [episode *The Chicken*] (1953)  *Viaggio in Italia* [*Journey to Italy*] (1953)  *Giovanna d'Arco al Rogo* [*Joan of Arc at the Stake*] (1954)  *La Paura* [*Fear*] (1954)  *L’India Vista da Rossellini* [*India as Seen by Rossellini*] (1957-58)  *India: Matri Bhumi* [*India Mother Land*] (1957-59)  *Il Generale Della Rovere* [*General Della Rovere*] (1959)  *Era Notte a Roma* [*It Was Night in Rome*, also known in English as either *Escape by Night* or *Blackout in Rome*] (1960)  *Viva l'Italia!* [*Long Live Italy*] 1960)  *Benito Mussolini* (1961)  *Vanina Vanini* [*The Betrayer*] (1961)  *Anima nera* [*Black Soul*](1962)  *Illibatezza*, episode in *Ro.Go.Pa.G.*, [*Chastity*] (1962 released in 1963)  *La Presa del Potere da Parte di Luigi XIV* [*The Rise of Louis XIV*] (1966)  *Socrate* (*Socrates*, 1970)  *Blaise Pascal* (1971)  *Agostino d'Ippona* [*Augustine of Hippo*] (1972)  *L'Età di Cosimo de Medici* [*The Age of The Medici*] (1972)  *Cartesio* [*Descartes*] (1973)  *Anno Uno* [*Year one*] (1974)  *Il Messia* [*The Messiah*] (1975) |
| Further reading:  (Aprà) (Bondanella)  (Brunette)  (Forgacs)  (Gallagher)  (Wagstaff) |