Just How Brechtian is Rossellini?

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Audiences and critics have long noticed that the films of Roberto Rossellini are "different" from other commercial films. It was this "differentness," no doubt, that stood between Rossellini and a financially successful career. For one thing, his films (except those which he considered potboilers like *Generale della Rovere* [1959] and *Anima Nera* [1962], for example) are marked by an almost pathological need to reflect the external reality and truth of time and space, often at the expense of conventional dramatic interest. Another quirk was Rossellini's apparent disdain for the aesthetically pleasing, and his corresponding rejection of the role of artist so honored in Western culture. Calling himself a craftsman in his last years, he insisted on a blatantly didactic cinema which, through the clear presentation of facts and ideas, could help save mankind.

Even within his earlier fictional films, Rossellini had intentionally frustrated normal audience expectation by subtly "dedramatizing"many of his film plots. *Paisa* (1946) comes to mind in this regard, and the delicate ironies of its six different stories. It is, of course, precisely this narrative fragmentation which is the chief cause of the overall emotional levelling and the alienating of audience identification that are evident in the film. Nor are we ever permitted to identify fully with either the husband or the wife in the subtle Ingrid Bergman-era films like *Stromboli* (1949), *Viaggio in Italia* (1953), and *La Paura* (1954). The emotional and moral issues are far from clear-cut in these films, and their dramatic structures fully reflect this purposeful ambiguity.

Many more examples could be offered, but the point should be clear. What is not clear is the source of this unconventional, anti-commercial (non-)aesthetic, which attempts to transcend, however gingerly, the normal bounds of bourgeois realism and audience expectation. We must obviously look beyond the romantic "white telephone" studio films which predominated when Rossellini began his

career. Actually, much more likely sources are to be found in the theater. Luigi Pirandello, for example, Rossellini's countryman, was well-known for his bold experimentation in illusion-shattering, but his themes, and after a closer analysis even his techniques, could not be further from Rossellini's. The Frenchman Paul Claudel, whose opera *Jeanne au Bucher* Rossellini staged then adapted for the screen in the early fifties, was also known for his departures from traditional forms of illusionism, but the connection between the two men is obviously too slight and too late to account for any real influence.

It becomes obvious that Rossellini's brand of mild experimentation developed from no particular, readily identifiable sources or as part of a coherent aesthetic, but rather as distinct, makeshift responses to the specific formal demands of this idiosyncratic way of looking at the world. Nearly all his techniques can be traced back to his obsession with conveying things "as they are" or were, an obsession that was no doubt fueled by the association with his cinematic mentor at the naval ministry, Francesco DeRobertis, whose proto-neorealist *Uomini sul Fondo* (1940) had made a great impression on Rossellini. Yet this connection does nothing to explain Rossellini's formal, dramatic experimentation. Finally, I'm afraid, the bold individualism that led Rossellini to take artistic chances continually throughout his life also defeats in advance any attempt to clearly and definitively fix sources and influences.

Nevertheless there is another twentieth-century literary figure, again a man of the theater, with whom Rossellini is often compared, and that is Bertolt Brecht. As is well-known, this brilliant German playwright revolutionized the stage with his ideas of epic, non-Aristotelian theater and what he called Verfremdungseffekt, or estrangement,[1] which forced the audience to react intellectually to his characters' messages rather than to identify with their personal emotions. While there is no evidence of any direct influence, Rossellini and Brecht are remarkably similar in enough ways to make the comparison often valid. Yet, at the deepest level, their perceptions and ideas about art diverge radically, and critics who have assumed a close and consistent correlation are mistaken. I would like, therefore, as an aid toward clarifying and sharpening the terms of critical discourse concerning Rossellini, to sketch out a more exact picture of how these two men are related. One immediate caveat: both seemed to be fond of reversing and contradicting themselves at regular intervals, and Brecht scholars have spent more time trying to sort out his theories than they've spent on his plays. Hence, my remarks will of necessity be reductive, though I hope that at least in general outline they will be accurate.

Probably the most obvious similarity between the two is their belief that the primary purpose of art should be didactic or educational and that it should not appeal merely to the spectator's aesthetic sense or to his thirst for emotional stimulation. This aim is present in Rossellini's earliest work and did not begin with the historical films of his last period, where it is simply more obvious. His early short films have a strong documentary flavor to them, and the first features like *La Nave Bianca* (1941), *L'Uomo della Croce* (1943), *Open City* and *Paisa* are as much concerned with introducing the viewer to lesser-known aspects of the real world as they are with moving him in

conventional dramatic ways toward the perception of a theme. Yet Rossellini's view is more complex than it initially appears, because in a later interview he maintains that

> I am against education. Education carries with it the idea of leading, directing, conditioning, when we should be moving in a much freer way toward looking for truth. The important thing is to inform, the important thing is to instruct, but it's not important to educate.
>
> ...
>
> One of the traits of the society in which we live is that things are done to educate people, to guide them toward a goal. But on the contrary people should find by themselves the way they must go. One either does or does not believe in democracy, that's the whole thing.[2]

Both men were fascinated by the advance of science in the twentieth century and encouraged its widest possible dissemination. For Brecht, of course, the term "scientific" was generally synonymous with "Marxist," but several Brecht scholars have demonstrated that, like Rossellini, he was equally taken with the onward rush of new technology and not at all fearful of its supposed dehumanizing effect upon men. Rossellini was also a "Marxist" of sorts, though never as intensely committed as Brecht. The earlier, humanist philosopher Marx was more appealing to Rossellini and, in fact, he was about to begin filming the life of the young Marx when he died in 1977. Some Brechtians also maintain that the playwright was actually more interested in Marx as young humanist than as mature economist and that he may never have studied *Das Kapital* very thoroughly, so the two may be closer than it first appears. Nevertheless, Rossellini makes, especially late in his life, a clear distinction between Marx the man and Marxism the political system. In his book, *Un Esprit Libre* (1977), in which he details his plan for a system of integral education, Marx the pedagogue holds a prominent and revered place. At the same time, Rossellini portrays the Italian communist party in an unfavorable light in his 1974 film *Italy: Year One*, and in a 1975 interview with *Ecran*, he calls Marxism an "enterprise of castration" and rather uncharacteristically insists that "we are made as much of dreams as of reality and to favor one or the other part is to castrate."[3]

Where the two men are much closer is in their reverence for facts and external reality as such. As critic John Fuegi has said of Brecht:

> Facts are not to be "dramatized" or "theatricalized," they are to be allowed to speak for themselves, to address the audience directly to narrate their own complex history and fate without an artist standing between them and the public and polishing these "raw" materials beyond recognition.[4]

André Bazin has similarly said that "Rossellini directs facts," and that his art

> consists in knowing what has to be done to confer on the facts what is at once their most substantial and their most elegant shape—not the most graceful, but the sharpest in outline, the most direct, or the most trenchant.[5]

These facts must also be conveyed objectively and both the playwright and the filmmaker believed that the artist should not interpose his own feelings or attitudes but should let the purveyed reality speak for itself directly to the audience. However, while Brecht maintained that "The writer's task is to assemble his material as objectively as possible and without preconceived notions of the likely outcome, [6] in practice this was seldom the case. The early Rossellini also paid lip service to objectivity, but in *Open City*, for example, there are clear-cut villains and heroes, quiet and unassuming though the latter may be. His real insistence on "objectivity" can be seen in the later historical reconstructions made for television. During this period, he insisted repeatedly that he was decidedly not portraying the Rossellini version of the historical event, but what "really happened." While we might smile at the apparent epistemological naivete he displays here, it is clear elsewhere that what he means is that he wants to portray the event in the way which most closely corresponds to the surviving historical records, rather than in the most heavily dramatic way as, say, would be the case with the American television "documentary" series of the fifties, *You Are There*.[7]

Where the two men most clearly diverge on this question is their respective attitudes towards the artist's traditional license in bourgeois art to create an imagined world of his own. Brecht's condemnation is obvious:

> Today the bourgeois novel still depicts "a world," the more or less private, but in any case personal outlook of its "creator". What we find out about the real world is just as much as we find out about the author responsible for the unreal one; in other words we find out something about the author and nothing about the world.[8]

Rossellini, on the other hand, in his essay "La ricerca di stile e di linguaggio e il rinnovamento del contenuto," shows very clearly that his "objectivity" can only be actualized, finally, through a thoroughly illusionistic cinema:

> We know that it is the *craft* of every artist--whether painter, sculptor, novelist, filmmaker, etc.--to have the capacity to transfer the listener, the reader, from his own world to that which he, with his art, is capable of evoking or creating. Then when this represented world is like the one of he who reads, listens, or watches, then the artist, to be such, must have the

> capacity to confer on this world a clarity, a transparence, an obviousness such as to make it appear in all its meaning.[9]

As we shall see in a moment, it is this urge toward the creation of a more convincing illusion, which marks all neorealist films, which most profoundly separates Rossellini from Brecht.

But there are areas yet to be mentioned where they are quite close indeed, and one of these is their mutual concern to clearly express the historical realities which surround individuals, a process Brecht called "historicization." For both of them, the specific character portrayed on the screen or on the stage was far less important than the overall situation that he or she was a part of. As has often been noticed, even the titles of Rossellini's films betray his overriding interest in the precise location of his characters in time and space: *La nave bianca (The White Ship); Rome, Open City; Paisa* (each of whose individual sequences begins with a dynamic map of Italy and a situation-explaining voiceover); *Germany, Year Zero; Europa 51; Viaggio in Italia; India 58; Italy: Year One;* and so on. His characters, like Brecht's, are seldom motivated by their own idiosyncratic personalities; instead, they constantly interact with their situation and surroundings and it is from this interaction that further action proceeds, rather than from the demands of character alone.[10]

Both would have agreed that there was no such thing as a fixed "human nature" which could finally account for all human behavior. In Brecht's Marxist vision, of course, man is capable of infinite adaptation in the face of changing historical realities and there is nothing that he cannot finally do or become. For Rossellini, this idea of man's infinite adaptability came, in the last decade of his life, before all else. He became an avid proselytizer for the notion that film, and art in general, should aid man in adapting to the new scientific and technological reality of our era, rather than forever complaining about its supposed pernicious effects.

It is thus matter, facts, external reality which finally count the most in art. The next question is how this art is to act upon the audience, and here too Rossellini and Brecht start from similar positions, though, again, Brecth ultimately goes much further. The playwright was very clear about where he stood, at least in his earlier theoretical writings:

> I aim at an extremely classical, could, highly intellectual style of performance. I'm not writing for the scum who want to have the cockles of their hearts warmed. . . .The one tribute we can pay the audience is to treat it as thoroughly intelligent. . . . I appeal to the reason . . . . I give the incidents baldly so that the audience can think for itself.[11]

Elsewhere he insisted that "feelings are private and limited. Against that the reason is fairly comprehensive and to be relied on."[12]

The purpose of engaging intellectually rather than emotionally, of course, is to maximize his individual freedom. If the audience is encouraged to live emotionally through the character, it can be manipulated at will, even to the point of suspending its critical facul-

ties altogether, and accepting any nonsense as truth. Brecht felt very strongly about freeing the spectator from the manipulations inherent in bourgeois theater, and his elaboration of the *V-effekt* is the cornerstone of his aesthetic. In exactly the same way, viewer freedom is one of the central features of the Bazinian realist aesthetic, which owed so much to the example of Rossellini.

But Rossellini's views about the need for emotion in the aesthetic experience are complex and often self-contradictory. For one thing, he never engaged in the more blatant distancing effects which appealed to Brecht. While Brecht put his characters in white face in *Edward II* and on stilts in *A Man's a Man,* used strong light and didn't bother to hide its source, allowed the audience to see the stage hands, and in general insisted on continually breaking the illusion of the drama, Rossellini's experiments in this regard are much more tenuous and timid. He does manage to keep the viewer distanced by means of the long takes, mostly in medium and long shot, which he employed throughout his career, and by his persistent refusal to give in to the temptations of the emotional close up. When he does zoom in on a character with his Pancinor (the director-controlled zoom device he invented and used in his later films), it is almost always slowly, probing to reveal a hidden truth, rather than to help the viewer identify with the character. Similarly, in some of his greatest films with Ingrid Bergman, like *Viaggio in Italia, Stromboli,* and *La Paura,* as mentioned earlier, he blocks our desire for identification with the husband or wife character at every step. As soon as one character has acted reprehensibly, and we are ready to cast our empathetic lot permanently with his or her spouse, Rossellini realigns the moral scales and we are left once again studying a situation rather than taking sides.[13]

Yet it is obvious that Rossellini is much less extreme in his attitude toward emotion than the *early* Brecht, at least, and in places, he seems ambivalent. In a 1962 interview with *Cahiers,* for example, he says that the valuable thing about art is that it "is capable of making you understand something through emotion that you are absolutely incapable of understanding through the intellect."[14] In his 1966 article, "La ricerca di stile e di linguaggio. . .", he admits a preference for Tolstoy's definition of art because the Russian novelist specified " that an emotional impulse is necessary for every artistic experience."[15]

It is difficult to know precisely what he means by "emotion" here. Perhaps his sense of it is as complex as Brecht's, who, as early as 1927, in the midst of all his fulminations against appealing to the spectators' emotions, said that:

> The essential point of the epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason. Instead of sharing an experience tha spectator must come to grip with things. At the same time it would be quite wrong to try and deny emotion to this kind of theatre. It would be much the same thing as trying to deny emotion to modern science.[16]

Brecht presumably means the thrill of discovery, the pleasure of making intellectual connections and coming to new understanding. Rossellini would undoubtedly have seconded the playwright here, but it is equally certain that he never tried to expunge *all* conventional emotional reaction and identification with the characters.[17]

The chief reason, of course, is that Rossellini was never after the same sort of anti-illusionist effect that Brecht was. This is especially clear in terms of their handling of actors and what they expected of them; it is here that we can begin to see how really far apart they are. For Brecht, the actor should not try to make the character understandable, but should convey instead exactly what is taking place. "What I mean is: if I choose to see Richard III I don't want to feel myself to be Richard III, but to glimpse this phenomenon in all its strangeness and incomprehensibility."[18] On stage, the actor must therefore also be a narrator, for as in Greek Drama, it is the situation which is important, not the character. To this end, Brecht encouraged his actors to preface their speeches with narrative devices like "he said" to further distance them emotionally from the spectators.[19] At other times, they exchange parts or go out for drinks to the theater bar, anything to keep the spectator from surrendering himself body and soul to the illusion.

Rossellini's view, while much more conventional of course, faintly resembles Brecht's in his penchant for choosing unknown actors,especially for his historical films. His view was that"to put across what I want to say, it's especially important not to use a well-known personality. What counts is not the actor who is playing Descartes well or poorly, but Descartes."[20] He does not say so, but it is clear that for the duration of the film, the spectator is nonetheless supposed to take the actor for Descartes, even though he will not be asked to identify with him emotionally, but rather to regard the whole situation intellectually as a recreated tableau of "what really happened" during this or that event important in the history of Western civilization. A well-known actor would simply not be as believable in the role. A greater illusionism is also the reason behind his notorious propensity for not allowing actors to study their parts beforehand, something that greatly upset George Sanders during the filming of *Viaggio in Italia.* Rossellini admitted that he routinely gave out scraps of dialogue at the last minute because he didn't "want the actor—or actress— to get used to them." "The director can also dominate the actor," he said,"by repeating seldom and by filming quickly, without too many takes. You must count on the 'freshness' of the actors. . . ."[21] Presumably this freshness is desired, once again, in order to make the characters more believable.

The ultimately illusionistic base of neorealism is especially clear in Rossellini's interesting remarks concerning his handling of non-professional actors. His usual procedure, it seems, was to choose a person in the street according to his physical build (rather than following the slavish, David Belasco-like ultra-realism of insisting that an unemployed worker play an unemployed worker), study his gestures and then, when he got paralyzed in front of the cameras because he was trying to "act," the director's job was "to put him back into his true nature, to reconstitute him, to reteach him his normal gestures."[22] However, Rossellini is being simplistic here, for

he neglects to mention other aspects of the "actor's" training, including such illusionist tricks as not looking at the camera or blocking it in crowd scenes, not speaking out of turn and trampling another character's dialogue, etc.

It is clear that Rossellini did not follow the technical extravagances of Brecht because he never felt a real need to call illusionism or his very medium into question, as did Brecht and his cinematic protege, Godard. Rossellini talks about getting back to reality, about making films which will instruct and liberate man through the use of his reason, but he never really interrogates his own role in all of this. As Martin Walsh has shown in his excellent article, "Re-evaluating Rossellini," the director can even go so far as to expose the manipulation of spectacle that lies bhind Louis XIV's taking of power in *La Prise De Pouvoir Par Louis XIV* without really bringing up the question of *his own* manipulation of spectacle and *his* relationship to the viewer which so closely parallels that of Louis to his courtiers.[23] For him, the ultimate goal was the same as Henry James's in the novel: the total disappearance of the artist from the work. And whatever its intention, Brecht's *V-effekt,* by constantly reminding the spectator that he is watching a play or a film, cannot help but remind him of the challenging presence of the artist.

In this regard, therefore, Rossellini appears to be as illusionist as any run-of-the-mill Hollywood director to whom it would never occur to be anything else. In fact, most of Rossellini's techniques can readily be seen as efforts to hide Technique, to disguise his own presence. He avoids montage, for example, and concentrates instead on the long take precisely to avoid the "artistic" re-ordering of reality that is inherent in montage. He also uses the slow zoom of the Pancinor to preserve the unity of the long take when a much closer shot is needed.

What Rossellini never understood is that an observer of any given reality *always* alters that reality in the very act of observation, no matter what his intentions might be. So, while Godard, for example, insists on an all-encompassing self-consciousness and continual disruption of the narrative in order to further the audience's *rational* examination of the film experience itself, Rossellini still has us believing in the reality of the projected images on the screen. Throughout his career he insisted on the necessity of providing a new content for films, but paid little attention to the notion that a truly new content demands a new form. In many ways, his view is like that of Lukacs and those who favored socialist realism against the "formalist" experiments of Brecht and the leftist abstract painters like Stuart Davis. Rossellini appears simply to have been uninterested in formal (as distinct from technical) questions, at least on the theoretical level. He maintained, for example, that there was no formal or psychological difference between films made for the big screen and films made for television, though here his practice—perhaps unwittingly—belies his theory, for his TV films display the primacy of word over image and the minimization of the long shot that have come to characterize the electronic medium.

Nevertheless, Rossellini did make gestures toward a self-aware cinema that should be mentioned. Martin Walsh intelligently pointed out, for example, that the director

> is not afraid in *Louis XIV* to flatten the screen out into Vermeer and Rembrandt canvases....In so doing, he draws attention to the *painterly* consciousness of his frame, thereby reducing its degree of "naive" realism and suggesting the point of origin for our contemporary revisualization of a 17th century milieu.

His correct conclusion, however, is that "the 'anti-naturalist' asides (painterly quotes, the actors' restrained vocal delivery) are not sufficient to counter the fundamentally illusionist form of *Louis XIV*."[24] Though Walsh was apparently able to see only *Louis XIV* among Rossellini's later films, the same thing can be said about the other historical films since identical formal devices appear again and again.

In closing, I would like to mention one other Rossellini short which only a few critics have noticed, and in which Rossellini *does* seem to be pointing a comic, self-aware finger at what he is doing. The film is *Illibatezza* (*Purity*), one of the sketches made in 1962 for the composite film *Rogopag*. The heroine of the sketch is a beautiful, chaste airline stewardess who films all of her activities, wherever she goes, so that she can share her life with her boyfriend back home. She is avidly pursued by a middle-aged American traveler because along with being gorgeous, she is a motherly girl-next-door. Superficially, the film is a humorous, typically early-sixties pop-psychological look at the modern male's need to return symbolically to the womb, but much of it concerns the various characters's reactions to the filmic image and how it relates to reality. The final scene shows the drunken American, left only with the film footage he took of his ideal woman, hilariously trying to capture this fleeting celluloid image on his wall and hold it close to his chest. The fact that this was Rossellini's last commercial film (at least he thought so—and it was for the next 12 years) is pertinent here, for he is clearly expressing his disillusionment with the cinema as entertainment or even as artistic medium, and for the first time is allowing himself to be unabashedly, if briefly, self-reflexive. Rossellini seems by this point to have finally recognized the yawning, irremediable disparity between reality and film, the latter at least in the thoroughly commercial guise that he had to contend with.

Nevertheless, this final scene of *Illibatezza* is notable chiefly because it is so uncharacteristic of Rossellini's work. Neither it nor the later modest nods toward self-reflexivity in the historical films can alter the fact that Rossellini is an illusionist through and through. It follows, then, that despite the current dilution of the term to encompass the slightest departures from nineteenth-century narrative modes, Rossellini cannot finally be called "Brechtian" in any meaningful sense.

NOTES

[1]The proper translation of this term has occasioned a great deal of debate. I, like many Brecht scholars, prefer not to use the most common version, "alienation," because this word has a different and very specific meaning in Marxist economics. The German for the

English word "alienation," in fact, is "*Ent*fremdung." The problem with "estrangement," besides its awkwardness, is that it fails to convey the related notion of emotionally distancing the spectator from the actors. The term "distancing" is equally faulty, however, because it does not capture the Brechtian idea of "making the familiar strange."

[2]"Entretien avec Roberto Rossellini," ***Cahiers du cinema,*** no. 133 (July, 1962), p. 5.

[3]No. 34 (March, 1975), p. 17.

[4]***The Essential Brecht*** (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1972), pp. 15-16.

[5]***What Is Cinema?*** Vol. II (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 100-101.

[6]Quoted in Claude Hill, ***Bertolt Brecht*** (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), p. 150.

[7]In an interview accorded *Cinema 74* (nos. 190-191), p. 142, Rossellini said that "I don't interpret. I don't transmit any message. I avoid expressing theories and forcing meanings. I reconstruct documents, I offer information which leaves to the spectator the entire responsibility for his own judgement." (Quoted in Pascal Kane, "L'effet d'etrangete," ***Cahiers du cinema,*** nos. 254-255 [Dec. 1974-Jan. 1975], p. 79).

[8]"The Film, the Novel and Epic Theatre," in ***Brecht on Theatre,*** ed. John Willett (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964), p. 48.

[9]"La ricerca di stile e di linguaggio e il rinnovamento del contenuto," ***Filmcritica,*** no. 167 (May-June, 1966), p. 262.

[10]Brecht was fascinated by what he saw, rather simplistically, as an inherent feature of the film medium:

> To the playwright what is interesting [about film] is its attitude to the person performing the action. It gives life to its people, whom it classes purely according to function, simply using available types that occur in given situations and are able to adopt given attitudes in them. Character is never used as a source of motivation; these people's inner life is never the principal cause of the action and seldom its principal result; the individual is seen from outside.

(***Brecht on Theatre,*** p. 48).

[11]"Conversation with Bert Brecht," ***Brecht on Theatre,*** p. 14.

[12]*Ibid.*, p. 15. Later in life, in "A Short Organum for the Theatre," Brecht recognized that entertainment, emotional appeal, and aesthetic pleasure were not to be totally discounted, for he came to see the theatre as the place where the dynamism and flow of life could and should be celebrated. He maintained that he now wanted "to recant our intention to emigrate from the realms of pleasure and announce...our intention of settling in those realms. Let us treat the theatre as a place of entertainment, as a true aesthetics should, and let us find out what sort of entertainment appeals to us." (Quoted in Ronald Gray, ***Brecht the Dramatist*** [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976], p. 86). In the same essay he says that the theatre "needs no other passport than fun, but this it has got to have....Not even instruction can be demanded of it....The theatre must in fact remain something entirely superfluous, though this indeed means that it is the superfluous for which we live. Nothing needs less justification than pleasure" (in ***Brecht on Theatre,*** pp. 180-181). But this in no way means that Brecht was ready to indulge the "cheap and vulgar emotion" he had always derided. In fact, his definition of entertainment and pleasure is inextricably bound up with the exercise of the mind and the perception of scientific truth, and in this he is very close to Rossellini indeed.

[13]The ***Cahiers du cinema*** critics interviewing Rossellini in 1954 pointed out the absence of "cinematic effects" in these same films:

> Q: You don't underline the important moments, you always remain not only objective but unmoved; one has the impression that everything is on the same level, deliberately.
> A. I try always to remain unmoved; I find that that which is astonishing, extraordinary and moving in men is precisely the fact that the grand gestures and facts are produced in the same ways, with the same resonance as the normal little facts of life.... (no. 37, July 1954, pp. 2-3).

[14]No. 133 (July, 1962), p. 12.

[15]p. 260.

[16]***Brecht on Theatre,*** p. 23. Rossellini, in fact, in the next line after the one quoted above from the 1962 ***Cahiers*** interview, refers rather opaquely to the possibility of creating a "lyric primacy around science" ["Vous pouvez creer le primat lyrique autour de la science].

[17]***Open City***, for example, is thoroughly conventional in its dramatic and emotional structure when one gets beyond the grainy filmstock and the nonprofessional supporting cast. (But this of course is one of his earliest films, and in spite of being his most famous, is among the two or three least characteristic of his work.) Peter

Demetz, in summarizing Brecht's theory in his introduction to ***Brecht: A Collection of Critical Essays*** (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), states that "empathy and illusion are poisonous because they make a man, a rational being, lose his critical abilities, and because they cloud his brain with wishful thinking and dreams of harmony founded on political ignorance" (p. 4). With very little effort, Demetz's statement can be seen as a precise description of the ultimate effect of ***Open City***: because we are so tied up emotionally with Manfredi, the Christ-like Communist martyr, and Don Pietro, the partisan priest, we are led to indulge, along with Rossellini, the wishful and hopelessly naive thought that the Communist Party and the Church might cooperate after the war to build a new Italy.

Perhaps Rossellini's most important, yet most ambiguous formulation of his view of the aesthetic uses of emotion is found in an interview he gave Victoria Schultz in 1971 To her question "How do you fit in emotion with the distance you try to establish?" he replied:

> All the emotions come either from the screen or from you. What I try to do is to be very honest and so inside yourself you develop an emotion, there is nothing wrong with that. But I don't want to convey my emotions and I don't want to capture through emotions. It is a very subtle point, but very important. It would be easy to make people cry. I could have done it with the end of ***Socrates.*** To remain detached is very hard.

Later in the same interview, his view ***appears,*** at least, much more straightforward:

> Art is the power to condensate in one thing something that can give the view of wider horizon and help understand even through emotions. I think art is that. It means you are fully involved. If you are involved with your brain and also with your heart then only are you fully involved.

(***Film Culture,*** no. 52 [Spring 1971], pp. 4, 29).

[18]***Brecht on Theatre,*** p. 27.

[19]Interestingly, Rossellini also once spoke of his actors as narrators, but in a much more philosophical sense:

> I have tried to express the soul, the light inside of these men, their reality which is an absolutely intimate reality, unique and tied to an individual with all the meaning of the things around him. For these things around him have meaning since there is someone who sees them,

> or at least this meaning becomes unique by the fact that someone sees them: the hero of each episode who is at the same time the narrator. (*Faux-Raccord,* no. 1, November, 1969).

[20]*Ecran,* no. 34 (March, 1975), p. 17.

[21]*Cahiers du cinema,* no. 34 (July 1954), pp. 11-12.

[22]"Dix ans de cinema," part 1, *Cahiers du cinema,* no. 50 (August-September 1955), p.9.

[23]*Jump Cut,* no. 15, pp. 13-15.

[24]*Ibid.,* p. 14. For a differing point-of-view which does insist on the Brechtian elements in the later films, see John Hughes, "Recent Rossellini," *Film Comment,* X, 4 (July-August, 1974), 16-21.