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# WHO AM I? ACTING STYLE IN THE ART OF ANNA MAGNANI

## **Anna Magnani and the genealogy of Italian neorealism**

Between the two medium-length films that comprise *L'amore* (1948), Roberto Rossellini inserted the following inscription: "this film is dedicated to the art of Anna Magnani." The actress, star of *Rome, Open City* (*Roma città aperta*, 1945), was involved with the director both artistically and romantically from 1946 to 1949, a transition period that ended when in 1950<sup>1</sup> Rossellini embarked upon the project with Ingrid Bergman that was to mark the birth of cinematic modernism: *Stromboli, Land of God* (*Stromboli, terra di Dio*). The story of two artistic eras linked to two different actresses brings to mind what Serge Daney said about relationships between actors and directors in *La rampe*: actors are the essence of dialogue between filmmakers. "The actor's body pervades the cinema until it becomes its real history" (DANEY, 1996: 201).

Despite Anna Magnani's suitability for the human amalgam of neorealist

depictions, often played by non-professional actors, *Rome, Open City* was not, of course, the actress's first contact with the cinema, or with neorealism and its ideologues. Visconti had wanted her for the main part in *Obsession* (*Ossessione*, 1943), a project she had to turn down as she was about to have a baby. Italian directors of the 1930s, such as Goffredo Alessandrini, who was married to the actress at the time, knew her for her unorthodox style, for the awkwardness of directing her in supporting roles and for the difficulty of photographing an irregular face that did not take well to the dim light of drawing room dramas. The effect of the actress's depiction in scenes of so-called *Telefoni Bianchi* films such as *Full Speed* (*Tempo Massimo*, Mario Mattoli, 1934) and *Thirty Seconds of Love* (*30 secondi d'amore*, Mario Bonnard, 1936) is awkward and constrained. In a sense, the naturalism of her depiction anticipates the decline of the classical phase of Italian cinema and the possibilities of the aesthetic that would prevail upon the



*L'amore* (Roberto Rossellini, 1948)

rise of neorealism. Her roles alongside Aldo Fabrizi in the early 1940s in popular comedies such as *The Peddler and the Lady* (Campo de' Fiori, Mario Bonnard, 1943) and *The Last Wagon*, (L'ultima carrozzella, Mario Mattoli, 1943) are paradigmatic, as they are notable for the mimesis of the comedians of popular Roman theatre of the time with the archetypal Roman streets. The talent of Fabrizi and Magnani in comic roles with realist touches make these pictures veritable precursors to the neorealist performing style. Anna

Magnani's years of training in popular theatre would have vested her style with a great capacity for representing the collective identity through the realistic gestural style of the supporting character. The climax of Rossellini's film alone demonstrates clearly enough that the *popolana* Pina is a supporting character who emerges from the neorealist human chorus, from the crowd of non-professional actors, to captivate us with her exaggerated gestural style. Pina's rebellion, her struggle against the soldier's arms that hold her back, her

cry against injustice and her fatal pursuit of the truck taking away her man adopt postulates of performance to canonise the idea of humanism depicted in *Rome, Open City* as a cinematic manifesto of Italian neorealism.

From the moment she met Rossellini, Anna Magnani's career would remain profoundly linked to this aesthetic and to its most essential quests of depiction. The neorealist dramas in which the actress starred between *Rome, Open City* and her American period (1954-1959) reveal the impact that the character of Pina had made on the audiences of the time. *L'onorevole Angelina*, (Luigi Zampa, 1947) and *Woman Trouble* (Molti sogni per le strade, Mario Camerini, 1948) adhere to the same production pattern: screenplays by Zavattini constructed around a feisty maternal character who makes prodigious use of every gesture that the brief appearance of Pina in *Rome, Open City* had elided in the character of the *popolana*, while allowing the audience to project them onto the absence that the actress's depiction leaves in the film. The nostalgia for an anonymous revolutionary who dies unjustly while pregnant had a significant effect on her future performances, and thus the depiction of the struggling mother defined what would be Magnani's hobbyhorse and also that of the Italian cinema of the transition, the aim of which was to rebuild the mirror in which Italian society, crushed by the war, could recover its essential images. It is a film tradition in which, as Giovanna Grignaffini suggests in "Women in Italian Cinema, Stories of Rebirth"<sup>2</sup>, the idea of rebirth is closely associated with the representation of the female and the depiction of the maternal (BRUNETTA, 1996: 367). From the scene where her *popolana* asserts herself in the climax to *Rome, Open City* to the moment when the cry of *Mamma Roma* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1962) buries the neorealist monument in Pasolini, Italian cinema encoded the essential aesthetics of an entire era in a single physical and dramatic presence, in an acting style that effectively defined the

*The Rose Tattoo* (Daniel Mann, 1955)



cinema of her time, from Rossellini to Pasolini, from Visconti to Renoir and Fellini, establishing, as Daney suggests, that the history of cinema also concerns the gestural style of its actors.

### Key aspects of acting style

In 1946, before the premiere of *Rome, Open City* in New York City, a few months before the film burst onto the international scene at the Cannes Film Festival, the critic James Agee penned an awed tribute to the performers, highlighting the brilliance of “a magnificent woman called Anna Magnani”<sup>3</sup> (PISTAGNESI, 1988: 17). The illusion of truth generated by the film, as Ingrid Bergman herself would confirm years later in her memoirs (BERGMAN and BURGESS 1982: 7), was so great that it was hard to give the artifice a name; it was hard, in this case, to write the word *actress*. The case of Anna Magnani is paradigmatic because her approach to depiction suggests a blurring of the line between actor and mask, a reflection of the historical paradox of the performer, and because the parameters of her acting style take on an essential role in the dialogue between filmmakers. She is the only Italian actress to appear in the works of the five most prominent Italian directors of the time: Rossellini, Visconti, De Sica, Pasolini and Fellini, throughout which this approach to depiction undergoes a process of perpetuation (in the first generation of filmmakers) and monumentalisation (in the second). Although this pilgrimage embodied by the actress under the biggest directors of her era never went unnoticed, critics took it as the conclusion rather than the catalyst for analysis. Her status as muse of Italian cinema perpetuates the intuition acknowledged by Rossellini in the dedication in his prologue to modernism, but does not resolve it. What exactly was it about Anna Magnani that could bring out the aesthetic and dramatic essence of a subsequent film movement in a shrewd perception like that of the Roman director? Beyond her suitability for the neorealist depiction of the fe-



*Rome, Open City* (Roma città aperta, Roberto Rossellini, 1945)

male, to what extent might the actress's gestures contain the keys to the evolution of the language of cinema?

In “The Human Voice” (*Una voce umana*, 1948), Rossellini experiments with the formula of the medium-length film on the basis of Magnani's dramatic approach, demonstrating the capacities of a depiction with scarcely any staging support in one of the most neglected pieces of the filmmaker's work, yet one of the most eloquent in terms of the mark that Anna Magnani's style left on his filmography. The idea that unleashed Rossellini's creative process in the films he made with her, constructed around the director's fetishizing of the actress's presence, is that, first of all, the story is inscribed in the gestures of the performer, because it is these that have the capacity to absorb and project the essence of the film that contains them. And secondly, just as the body of the actress contained the aesthetic of the neorealist manifesto, in her tragic and confessional acting style Rossellini appears to test the bases of the new aesthetic that he would bring into play in his subsequent films and that other European directors would follow in filming the gestures of actresses who were also the women they loved at the time. As in *Ways of Love*, the modern camera would also scrutinise the femi-

nine passions in the bodies and faces of actress-lovers, giving rise to films that dissected marital conflict and the mysterious depths of the female soul. The dedication included in Rossellini's film would have, at this point, the documentary—and testimonial—value of confirming the importance of the actress at the time of filming, while predicting that the essence of the European aesthetic of the subsequent decades would be very much tied to the work of actors, and, in particular, actresses.

### Self-reference and *jeu d'acteur*

It is well-known that in 1949 the arrival in Rome of a telegram from Ingrid Bergman put an end to the creative and romantic relationship between Anna Magnani and Rossellini. It was an intense break-up that would be marked by the filming of *Volcano* (William Dieterle, 1950), a film made in parallel with *Stromboli*, based on an original idea that Roberto Rossellini had agreed on with the Italian production house Panaria Films before Bergman's arrival, and whose only claim to fame would lie in its value as a testimony of Magnani's atonement.

This testimonial value began to gather momentum in the actress's works. In 1952 she made two films practically simultaneously: *Bellissima* (Luchino

Visconti) and *The Golden Coach* (*Le carrosse d'or*, Jean Renoir, 1953). The filmmakers of both these films tested the limits between reality and representation by making the boundary between theatre and life the focus of stories built around Anna Magnani's character. In Renoir's film, Camilla/Colombina is an eighteenth century actress overcome by the on-stage identity of Colombina, a bipolar character lost between her actress's awareness and the limits of her mask. In Visconti's, Maddalena is the character in a Roman farce who lives

symptoms of a performative approach that was very much Magnani's: the pain of the actress suffering from the limits of her mask of fiction. "Why do I succeed on the stage and destroy everything in my life? Where is truth? Where does the theatre end and life begin?" Camilla puts into words the symptoms hinted at previously by Anna Magnani's characters in Rossellini's films. While in *Ways of Love* the actress galvanises the shot with the demonstration of her autonomy and solitude to the camera, in this case her

subject of the film was Anna Magnani: through her I wanted to draw a portrait of a woman" (PISTAGNESI, 1988: 116). Visconti identifies the subjectivity of the maternal gaze as the central concept of the film. Through the technique of the sequence shot, the use of direct sound and an openness to improvisation as a dramatic approach<sup>4</sup>, the editing gradually leaves aside the elements external to the mother-daughter relationship to focus on the way in which Maddalena's face projects the beauty of a little girl who is not, as the film claims, "the prettiest girl in Rome", but rather a child whose real charm consists in that maternal subjectivity operated in the *jeu d'acteur*, built on the photogenic nature of the actress's gaze and projected to the viewer through a conscious inscription on the image by Visconti. Above all, *Bellissima* documents a performing approach, and the only thing that remains of the neorealist aesthetic is the actress's capacity to penetrate the essence of its principles. In this case, the image of motherhood as a trophy of an essential Italian-ness, rescued at a time in which the memory of the essential images of Roman society, with the wave of the *Risorgimento* already under way, was beginning to fade. Pasolini would recover this approach by filming, in the gaze of Mamma Roma, the pain of separation from Ettore and the premonition of the tragic denouement. The entire film is built upon the tragedy of loss, on the gaze of a mother who tries in vain to recover the gaze of the son she abandoned in childhood. In Pasolini's work, the autonomy of the actress acquires a higher level in the shot, and the drama is underpinned by the absence of the reverse shot of Ettore, by the maternal gaze that is never reciprocated and by the impossibility of the final embrace. It is no accident that *Mamma Roma* is the film with the most close-ups of the actress's entire career after Rossellini, to such an extent that the cinematographer, Tonino delli Colli, was instructed by Pasolini to keep the actress's hands, which were usually raised to the level of her chest



*La carroza de oro* (*Le carrosse d'or*, Jean Renoir, 1953)

with Magnani's own ability to break through the tragicomic mask to reveal the very heart of the artifice, a performative essence with a depth that operates beyond the limits of the diegesis, often spilling over them. Camilla suffers the burden of a character who is not allowed to have what she desires: the life of an ordinary woman. Maddalena has all the gestures of the *popolana*, but she chases the dream of fiction in front of the mirror and in her determination to turn her daughter into an actress. These films reflect Magnani's distancing from neorealism, as in the 1950s she was broadening her repertoire and began being cast in specific dramatic roles. The characters of Maddalena and Camilla/Colombina share a common essence, and their features exhibit the

character has almost no interaction at all; that is, in the character's moments of truth, no reverse shots are necessary to support or reinforce her position in the composition. In other words, the character is not explained through the reaction of supporting characters, but instead is a core element of the image, an image in itself, an autonomous and solitary element that invites observation, and in which the camera seeks a reflection of what is happening in the world depicted in the film. In the case of Visconti, the operation is very clear; the director, who had also moved on from neorealism, was particularly concerned with capturing, in the actress's gestures, the mannerist self-depiction which, by force of repetition, her neorealist mask had become: "The real

and face, out of frame<sup>5</sup>. The Bolognese director, an auteur with clearly pictorial concerns, sought in Magnani's expression a highly poetic allegory of Mary, placing all of the dramatic weight of the film in the same gaze and the same gestures of distress that had foreshadowed modernism in Rossellini's films. Pasolini confirms Magnani's autonomy in the shot, a constant which in many cases has the effect of underscoring the solitude of the actress's characters in the story. The unhappiness of her women, often misunderstood by their *partenaires*, other times alone in front of the camera, possess something of the melancholy that her contemporaries identified in their portrayal of an actress of legendary independence, who never played the role of wife or mother according to the social customs of her time. In the work of Renoir, Visconti and Pasolini, the directors' discourse documents the idea of the acting performance—or style—by focusing on what Rossellini called *the art of Anna Magnani*, the compendium of principles, and also ideas, that the actress held with respect to her own craft.

### Style of depiction and aesthetic approach

Along with the Roman mother, the actress and the prostitute were two other constants of Anna Magnani's depictions. *Mamma Roma* is the last great character in a process of depiction which had gradually been integrated into Italian cinema over two decades, and which might well constitute the peak of Magnani's baroque style for its capacity to embody duality, opposition, through the photogenic nature of the vital links that was always a part of the aesthetic aim of neorealism. The baroque as a symptom of the decline of the classical is present in all her portrayals, and proof of this is the metonymic power invoked by her presence with the passage of time: it is not so much her films that are remembered as the specific characters she depicted. Any viewer who attempts to evoke the image of the actress comes up with a

similar icon: a woman in her forties, in the contrasting black and white of post-war Italy. Of medium build, typical of the Mediterranean female body of her time, she wears a dark dress that covers her figure down to the knees, leaving the whiteness of her face and cleavage exposed, with arms and hands of a masculine sturdiness. Her figure is slight but strongly anchored, and her austere attire hides neither the voluptuousness of her feminine curves nor the marks of time left upon them; however, exclusive attention to her figure

through her command of the gestural and expressive composition, also commands the time in which the gestures are inscribed on the image. In the modulations of her face (in long shots often filmed in a single sequence, with a certain reminiscence of Magnani's theatrical background) and the blatant control of her hands (which a body unfamiliar with the art of declamation or oratory would be incapable of using in a non-instrumentally random way) are a record of an actress, a fictitious intention that lives beyond its organic integra-



*Mamma Roma* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1962)

is diverted to what were the great canvases of the Magnani expression: her face and hands. The first wears a tragic look, without makeup, which does not conceal the signs of the passage of time in the shadows of a face crowned by a wild-looking mane of black hair, one of the actress's greatest features. Her hands, shaped by years of strict piano practice in her adolescence, possess a great capacity for measured movement and often create postures through contact with other parts of her body such as her face, neck, chest, stomach or waist. This snapshot uncovers two important facts: that this body is an accomplice, which helps remind the viewer of the times and that both are survivors of the horrors of the twentieth century; and that it is the body of an actress who,

tion into the *italianità* of an all-embracing Roman personality. An analytical reading of this information reveals the essential effect of Magnani's *instinctive* approach to performance: the fusion of the most archaic of the dramatic art with its newest innovations. The physical expansion and theatricality of the gestures take their inspiration from pantomime, from the *commedia dell'arte* to popular Italian post-war theatre, but the almost wild spontaneity of her gestures and movements anticipate the mixed emotions that would characterise cinema following the 1950s, with the rise of the "Method" of the American Actors Studio.

The free combination of opposites—the mysticism of *Mamma Roma* and the carnality of the prostitute—



forms part of the outline of her portrayal of the female. She possesses the dark qualities employed by the American canon for its depiction of the *femme fatale*: her flowing mane of hair, her penetrating gaze and her conscious physicality. She does not have the youth, beauty or grace of Edgar Morin's female star (1972: 46), but she does have an overwhelming physical presence resulting from her cinematic version of theatrical beauty inherited from earlier style of European actress: the mystical, warm theatricality of Eleonora Duse or the physical contortion of Francesca Bertini, two great Italian interpreters of the feminine sentiment. But the influences on her visual style can be found in earlier European actresses not only from the south, but also from the Nordic countries. Anna Magnani's photogenic qualities are evident in the luminous chiaroscuro style of Pola Negri, and the narrative capacity of her face was the expressive gift that Béla Balász attributed to Asta Nielsen's mimetic style of imitating the expressions of those around her by wearing her own expression as well as that of the other (AUMONT, 1992: 91). Her training in popular theatre gave her a stage actor's intuition and she knew how to make her mask the canvas for an identity shared with the ordinary audiences of her time, a popular theatre quality that the actress was able to integrate into mid-century cinema, in films in which she sometimes performed alone and other times shared with anonymous actors, with children in actors' roles, with professionals ranging from Aldo Fabrizi to Totò and even with stars like Marlon Brando and Burt Lancaster. What made Anna Magnani unique was the fact that she was an actress totally removed from the "star system" production model, who came to embody the paradox of the comedian by going down in history confused with her own mask, and through the legend of an occasional actress taken from the streets to become the face and the body of neorealism.

### Gesture and dramatic approach

Within the essence of her gestural style, constant contact with her own body gives her depiction a totally different expression from that which the viewer might have acquired from a cinematic education based classical Hollywood cinema. As discussed above, her depiction involved a highly unique tendency of placing her hands on her body. Viewers are likely to remember her touching her neck, stomach, forehead or chest. If we were to trace imaginary lines over the body or to recover anatomical portraits by Renaissance painters, we would see that Magnani's recurring points of contact coincide with the basic points of the body, the places where the vital organs lie and where, according to Medieval medicine, the passions originate: the stomach, the belly, the heart and the neck. Anna Magnani portrays her body as a living organism, showing not only the effect of the passions on the expression, but also how those passions originate. The eccentricity of such apparently theatrical gestures went unnoticed in a style always conceived to be a paradigm of naturalism; nevertheless, they prompted the viewer's gaze to identify in them the sensation of a living body, the physical awareness of an actress whom the critics of the time viewed as volcanic. It is an anarchic, quixotic sense of gesture that coexists with the iconic capacity of *Mamma Roma*, who employs ancestral gestures and sheds ancient tears drawn from the carnality of the prostitute. Among her repertoire of recurring gestures, those of bringing her hands together in prayer, placing a hand near her belly and expressions of impending tragedy allude to an iconography of the Virgin Mary that is omnipresent in the actress's work, which, throughout her career, from Pina to *Mamma Roma*, is marked by the visual motif of the Pietà. However, in her visual renderings of blushing or anxiety, raising her hand to her face or breast, we see the image of the penitent Magdalene as painted by Georges de la Tour, Titian or Artemi-

sia Gentileschi. In her outpourings in sequence shots, in the passion and the pain of the characters she created in American films together with Tennessee Williams such as *The Rose Tattoo*, (Daniel Mann, 1954), we see the pathos of the pre-Christian dances and tragic heroines described by Aby Warburg together with Laocoön in his *Mnemosyne* atlas. The free combination of opposites is essential to the performing style of Magnani, a lover of both moderation and excess, of long pauses but also of a deliberately histrionic tendency towards outbursts, which the actress did not repress, and which vests her whole dramatic approach with a sense of human neurosis and imperfection which, rather than dragging her style down, actually perfect it. The clash between restraint and outburst is especially evident in her American roles, perhaps the most tortuous for an actress who did not hide her displeasure at finding herself working under a production model and in a world so different from the Italian. The modulation of crisis on the character's face in moments of doubt, fragility, passion or fear, reaches portentous heights of expression in the angst of characters like Gioia in *Wild is the Wind*, (George Cukor, 1957), Serafina delle Rose in *The Rose Tattoo* and Lady Torrance in *The Fugitive Kind*, (Sidney Lumet, 1959). In her American heroines, Magnani reveals the abyss that separated her performing style from the Hollywood system, giving her characters an aura of slight unreality and a testimonial register which, rather than inspiring rejection, aroused admiration in Hollywood, to the extent that it awarded Anna Magnani's iconoclastic virtuosity the first Oscar for an Italian actress in 1954. Despite her frequent collaboration with Paramount and with Harold B. Wallis, no US producer considered the possibility of moulding her into a star, precisely because she represented an utterly unique kind of actress, with an originality that Hollywood could do no more with than bear witness to its capture on celluloid.



*Fellini Roma* (Federico Fellini, 1972)

The fact that Anna Magnani maintained the same working principles in Hollywood that she observed in Italy gives a special value to the permanence of her style, which remained completely removed from the “star system”. As James Naremore suggests in his study of acting in cinema (1988: 102-112), and as reflected in Luc Moullet’s *Politique des acteurs*, the style of every great actor contains an ideology distilled from his own personality. In *I coetanei*, writer and friend Elsa de Giorgi describes Magnani’s character as an ideological principle that crossed from the screen into real life: “She clearly suffered the burden of living within petty bourgeois limits, and thus carried within the greatness of her character as a challenge to the conventional world to which she belonged” (1955: 62). Other contemporaries, such as the painters Carlo Levi and Giorgio Taber and the photographer Federico Patellani, immortalised her in all her genuineness. In the details of their beautiful portraits lies the seed of an anti-conventional femininity: utterly spontaneous and defiant postures, her legs deliberately separated, a hand holding a breast, her body surrendering to the sun in natural landscapes, surrounded by her entourage of dogs and in complicity with the wild environment. They are images of life directly connected to the idea of a

freedom of gesture that Anna Magnani stamped on the screen with her commitment to a depiction of femininity free of prejudices, and with the belief in a process of depiction stripped of the authority of the classical canon and its taboos. These documents monumentalise the intimate frankness of a woman for whom defying conformity formed part of an untimely essence, the great quality that Nietzsche attributed to the good contemporary, and to which one of the most important approaches to depiction in cinema must be attributed. The body that Italy took from reality to overcome a war returns in the gaze of its contemporary painters, chroniclers and photographers, in the depiction of a rebellious and vehement femininity whose expressive frankness anticipates, in its dramatic essence, the physical dimension of modernism.

### Epilogue: the untold story

Fellini was the last director to cast Anna Magnani in his films. He wanted her for the leading role in *Fellini-Roma*. It was 1972 and the actress had just finished a television project called *Tre Donne* (Alfredo Giannetti, 1971), which told the history of Italy through Anna Magnani and her habitual depictions: the mother or *popolana* (*Correva l'anno di grazia 1870*), the actress (*La Scian-tosa*), and the prostitute (*L'automobile*).

The identification of the Roman *tragedienne* with the symbol of Italy was by this time universally agreed. Magnani turned down the starring role in Fellini’s film but accepted a cameo role in which, at the end of the film, the director’s camera catches her by surprise as she is going into her house:

“This lady, who is just getting home, is a Roman actress, Anna Magnani, who might well be the symbol of the city itself.”

The actress challenges the narrator with a tough question, the same one that Jesus asked the apostles before accepting them as followers in the Gospel of Matthew:

“Who am I?”

Fellini’s voice responds with the popular consensus in measured poetry, with a shower of epithets that every Roman attributed to the nocturnal image of Anna Magnani: the motherliness of a feminine and welcoming Rome, and the wildness of its pagan underbelly; the sweet face of the provider and the brutal face of the Capitoline Wolf. This impassioned biographical sketch evokes the language used in her obituaries, in press reviews and in the encyclopaedia entries that record the intense film career of the actress, her inimitable and much-missed boldness on celluloid in the 1940s and 1950s. In a certain way, the director’s admiration confronts the actress with the ghost of her own posterity and, perhaps for this reason, the greatest power of Fellini’s snapshot is that of the camera capturing Magnani’s rejection of the second question, which is never asked and never answered:

“Can I ask you a question?”

“No.”

Just as Antigone denied Creon the pleasure of shaming her for thinking differently and going against the authority of the polis, the actress denies the director the possession of her aura.

“I don’t trust you. Goodbye. Good night!”

The sudden death of Anna Magnani in 1973, at the age of sixty-five, made this scene her last, and her disappearance behind her front door, her escape

from the shot, will remain forever as a testament to the actress, a denial that is a rejection of the posterity created from the hyperbolic admiration of the phenomenon that embodies an icon, of the idealised identification of the actress's mask with the spatial-temporal reality in which her depictions had been constructed, in constant dialogue with the audience of her time. The silence resulting from her absence in the shot invites us to consider that the essence of actors continues to lie in their power to etch themselves on our memories, a mystery never told or shared, arising from an unknown essence that goes beyond the legend, from the intimacy and the mystery of a process that is yet to be revealed. The importance of Anna Magnani in the cinema of her time is related to this invisible footprint, never decoded yet still present. "The art of Anna Magnani" that would have been revealed to Rossellini is this body which, arising from the acting style, pervades the cinema and bears witness to a true yet "untold" (DANEY, 1996: 201) story. Without it, we would not have been able to explain the place, the time or the evolution of a cinematic movement that bears the name of all the directors that subscribed to it, and whose gazes converged upon perhaps the only common point of the body, the gestures and the personality of a single actress.

## Notes

\* The pictures that illustrate this article have been provided voluntarily by the author of the text; it is her responsibility to localize and to ask for the copyright to the owner. (Edition note.)

- 1 According to the study by Alain Bergala in *El cine revelado*, the keys to modern poetics are established by Rossellini in *Stromboli*, *Land of God* and *Journey to Italy* (Viaggio in Italia, 1959).
- 2 In the original: "Il femminile nel cinema italiano, racconti di rinascita."
- 3 James Agee authored the first international critique of *Roma, Open City* under the title "Open City", which was published in the journal *The Nation* on 23 May 1946. The comment cited was quoted by Stephen Har-

vey in the volume dedicated to Anna Magnani in 1988 and edited by Patrizia Pistagnesi.

- 4 Visconti declared the importance of this guideline of (non)direction in the documentary *Io sono Anna Magnani* by Chris Vermorken (1979), distributed by Interama Video, 1984. "You had to be able to treat Anna in a particular way, because she wasn't like other actresses. Above all you had to know how to do something that no other director has remembered to mention. You had to learn to accept her proposals. Anna was an inexhaustible source of ideas."
- 5 "Anna Magnani moved her hands a lot, she gesticulated a lot with them, and this annoyed Pasolini so he always asked me for close-ups." Tonino delli Colli in the extras of the Spanish edition on DVD of *Bellísima* by Visconti (Wella Visión. M-50746-2008).

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