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Vesuvian Topographies: The Eruption of the Past in *Journey to Italy*

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The 'journey' in *Journey to Italy* (*Viaggio in Italia*) has, as its fictional skeleton, seven days that Katherine and Alex Joyce (Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders) spend in Naples and its environs.

Day 1: Alex and Katherine drive the last stage of their journey from London to Naples to sell the house belonging to their recently deceased uncle Homer.¹ In Naples, they meet some friends by chance in their hotel.

Day 2: Alex and Katherine are taken to uncle Homer's house in the country outside Naples by Tony, his manager. They meet Tony's wife Natalia. After lunch, they talk on the terrace. Katherine mentions the connection with the area of a former admirer of hers, Charles Lewington. Alex reacts badly.

Day 3: Katherine visits the Museo Archeologico Nazionale. She and Alex have dinner together at the house.

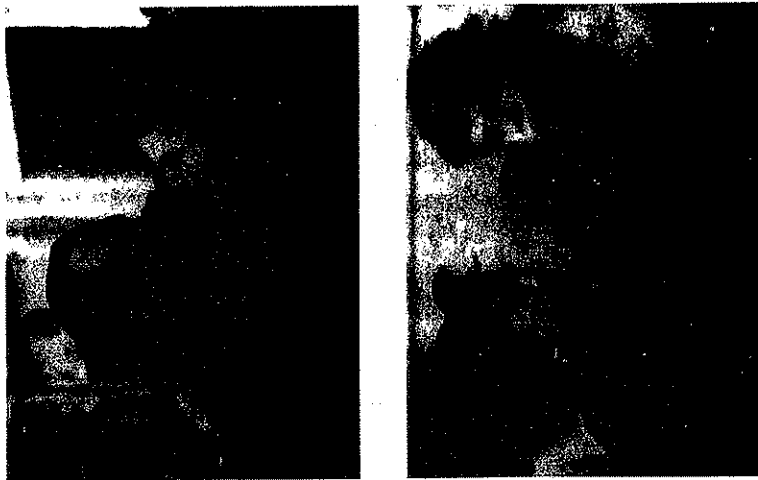
Day 4: After an evening party at the house of uncle Homer's friend, the Duke of Lipoli, Alex seems jealous and he and Katherine quarrel.

Day 5: Katherine visits Cumae (Alex has left a note to say he has gone to Capri).

On Capri, Alex pursues a flirtation with Marie, one of the group encountered on Day 1.

Day 6: Katherine visits the Phlegraean Fields. On Capri, Alex is rejected by Marie. Katherine talks to Natalia who tells her 'you have understood nothing about Naples'. Alex returns to Naples and is accosted by a prostitute. They go for a drive (note that dur-





... and the ends.

ing this sequence Alex is driving the Bentley: this is at odds with continuity). Alex returns to the house. Katherine pretends to sleep. They hardly speak.

Day 7: Natalia takes Katherine to the Fontanelle cemetery. On her return to the house, Alex and Katherine quarrel. They decide to divorce. Tony takes Alex and Katherine to visit the excavations at Pompeii. Katherine is upset. Driving back to Naples, they encounter a religious procession and get out of the car to watch. The crowd suddenly surges forward with the cry 'miracolo', sweeping Katherine with it. Alex struggles to reach her and, reunited, they acknowledge their love for each other. The film then finds its own ending.

Narrative lines, geographical space

In spite of the chaos that seemed to reign during its shooting, *Journey to Italy* has a clearly mapped narrative structure. The movement of Katherine and Alex's initial journey halts when they arrive in Naples and then, three days later, forks into divergent directions. On the last day, their paths reconverge leading towards the final 'halt' of reconciliation and 'the end'. The fictional journey opens up other dimensions. The journey has a metaphorical level to it as the space of transformative experience. Reaching back to the earliest forms of storytelling, the road along which the hero travels reflects his

progress on other, metaphysical levels. Away from the safety of home and everyday life, he (and sometimes, she) has to struggle with monsters either literal or figurative in search of self-knowledge. Katherine and Alex's journey in Italy thus has both literal and metaphoric levels and Rossellini can graft the journey structure of self-discovery and closure on to this particular fictional trajectory. But Alex and Katherine's fictional journey is also, perhaps primarily, designed to take the film into a specific place, a real geography and geology that underpins the story like a map. Fiction leads to reality, in this Rossellini movie, rather than realism. *Journey to Italy* uses its fictional protagonists' tourism to draw the resonance of place into the plot and to give historical geography a presence on the screen. And these realities ultimately revolve around the presence of Vesuvius, and the cultures it had fostered throughout the ages.

But first of all, through Alex's character, Rossellini introduces a reflection on attitudes to time that emerge out of geographical difference, between northern and southern culture and *mores* (implicitly also between North and South Italy). The ordered clock time of the North bumps uneasily into the more leisured time of the South. It is the empty time, the forced waiting while a buyer is found for the house, that irritates Alex and precipitates his trip to Capri. Alex is infuriated by the invasion of *dolce far niente* into daily life, because he is also drawn to it, and this also, paradoxically, drives him to join his bohemian, pleasure-loving friends on Capri. It is as though the northern male were both more subjected to timetable and more vulnerable to its collapse. For Alex, there is something demasculinising about leisure, as though it threatened the coming of 'woman's time'. Through Katherine's sightseeing, Rossellini leads the film into Neapolitan culture and geology and opens up the story's present to the presence of the past. Then, on the last morning, the two strands come together. Alex and Katherine's decision to divorce is precipitated by her failure to bring the Bentley back 'on time'. Their quarrel is interrupted by another dimension of time, a journey back into the past. Their host, Tony, absolutely insists that they go with him to witness the excavation of a site at Pompeii in which bodies have been found preserved in the lava.

The visit to Pompeii is the last of the various smaller, branching, journeys into the past that the couple take inside the wider journey of the film. It is the only one they take together. At the Pompeii excavation, all other reflections on time are abruptly derailed by the actual presence, not just of the past, but of death. It is, furthermore, an image of death which is specific to the geography of the area. When Vesuvius erupted in AD 79, some of its victims were buried by the lava. Over time, the bodies disintegrated, leaving behind a void which preserved their shape as in the contours of a mould.² Through a 'lost wax' process, as a sculptor casts a statue, the figures could be retrieved in image. If an empty space was suspected in the excavation, which might signal the presence of a body, it would be carefully filled with liquid plaster. When hardened, the mould would be uncovered and the imprint of the figures revealed. It was the final stage of the process, the slow uncovering of the figures of a couple, that Alex and Katherine have been invited to witness. The sight of death preserved triggers Katherine's crisis and later her cry, during their long walk through the ruined streets and buildings of Pompeii: 'life's so short'.

'The ontology of the photographic image'

In a semiotic vocabulary, these retrieved Pompeii figures belong to the category of indexical signs which, unlike a realistic depiction, are formed by an imprint of the original.



Journey to Italy (1954): the appearance of life ...

Although there are other examples of Rossellini's interest in the most concrete, material manifestations of the past throughout *Journey*, the Pompeii episode is particularly relevant to its aesthetics. The indexical image has a direct bearing on the aesthetics and poetics of photography and film. Film, too, is an imprint. But while the images of the people of Pompeii were preserved at the moment of death, film is able to preserve the appearance of life. For Rossellini, in *Journey*, the inscription of the human figure onto celluloid is one more layer, one more trace, of the past fossilised in time. This is a step beyond realism, the accurate reconstruction, that is, of events for the cinema in their appropriate settings. Rossellini was, by this point in his career, more concerned to search for the continued presence of the past into the present and its translation into the reality of the celluloid image and thus into the future. But this final detour into the past, to a confrontation with the image of death itself, also affects the narrative trajectory of Alex and Katherine Joyce. Raymond Bellour describes both the narrative moment and its aesthetic implications:

a distraught couple arrives in front of an excavation site in Pompeii from which, after an injection of plaster, there emerges the form of a couple clasped in an embrace, as a picture appears in a developer. Thus, a photograph is formed from the real itself.³

The plaster figures extend the indexical image beyond its material temporal dimension into its relation to death. *Journey to Italy* sets up a relation between materialism and the supernatural: the physical trace of the human figure meets the mystery of death, the point where religion and superstition become indeterminably entwined with human belief systems.

Journeys to Italy

Just before *Europe '51*, Rossellini had contributed an episode, *L'Envie* (*L'invidial'Envy*), based on the short story *La Chartre* by Colette, to the collaborative project *Les Sept Péchés capitaux*. Another Colette story, *Duo*, had been the project which had brought George Sanders to Italy from Hollywood to play opposite Ingrid Bergman. Once he failed to acquire the rights to this story of a marriage in crisis, Rossellini had quickly to find another film appropriate for Sanders. The story of Katherine and Alex's marriage in



... and the moment of death preserved.

Journey to Italy bears some, if only residual, traces of the Colette project. Certainly, *Journey* takes from *Duo* the sense of marriage as extreme intimacy of habit and familiarity of feeling, juxtaposed with the opacity of one human being for another. Such a complete lack of mutual understanding may only erupt at a moment of crisis when the rhythms of daily exchange, which keep the marriage moving along its normal lines, are disrupted.

Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders had already appeared on the screen together in 1941. In *Journey*, in 1953, they have to play an essentially English couple, whose insularity and complacency differ only in forms of expression. There are ironies here. Bergman and Sanders had both led unsettled, peripatetic lives. Bergman had uprooted herself twice, moving from Sweden to Hollywood and then from Hollywood to Italy. Playing an upper-class English woman, she makes no effort to conceal her Swedish accent. On the other hand, Sanders's performance of Englishness, the basis of his Hollywood persona, was always, perhaps, a little too perfect. He had been born and brought up in Russia where his Scottish family had lived for generations. His departure for school in England at the age of 12 coincided with the Revolution. He never went back to his idyllic childhood home in St Petersburg and stayed in England only long enough to perfect its upper-class mannerisms before leaving for Hollywood.

Both Bergman and Sanders have described Rossellini's invitation as a salvation. Just as Ingrid Bergman needed to get away from Hollywood in 1949, so George Sanders welcomed the chance to leave in 1953. In 1948, Bergman had ended her affair with the photographer Robert Capa. They had met in 1945 in liberated Paris and had toured war-torn Europe together, but when Capa followed Bergman to Hollywood he found himself bored and inactive.⁴ It is possible to imagine that when Bergman saw *Rome Open City* and *Paisà* in New York and was inspired to write to Rossellini offering him her services, she envisaged a situation in which she would actually be able to collaborate with a great artist of war, realism and living human drama. She had also just endured the professional humiliation and financial loss incurred by her co-production *Joan of Arc*, a critical and box-office catastrophe, in which she had hoped to reproduce on screen her Broadway triumph in Maxwell Anderson's *Joan of Lorraine*. *Joan of Arc* was produced in collaboration with veteran Hollywood director (and Don Juan) Victor Fleming with whom she had had one of her very first Hollywood affairs. Not only was the attempt to

rekindle the personal and professional relationship with Fleming a disaster; Bergman's many affairs were finally taking their toll on her relationship with her husband Petter Lindström. Her life had definitely reached a crisis when she left Hollywood for Rome and fell in love with Rossellini.

By 1953, the Bergman-Rossellini marriage was known to be in difficulties (George Sanders described her as 'the tearful, but bravely smiling, Ingrid'). She was, however, extremely familiar with Rossellini's highly secretive and idiosyncratic way of working. Sanders was not. He arrived in Italy keen to work with the director of *Rome Open City* and *Paisà*. Although his career was going well – he had recently won an Oscar for *All About Eve* – he too felt that he was at a turning point in his life, anxious to escape from his five-year stint as Zsa Zsa Gabor's third husband ('there came a time when I felt I simply had to get away').⁵ But *Journey* was an unhappy and confusing experience for both its stars and their reactions have been exhaustively chronicled. Rossellini wanted both of them to be as confused and troubled during the process of production as their characters would be on the screen. In a perverse way, Rossellini has his cake and eats it in his relations with his stars. He needed their names, he truly appreciated the particular screen presence and performance they brought to his cinema. Personally, though, he was unwilling to risk his absolute control of every aspect of the film by allowing an actor to know the script and prepare a performance. And professionally he was looking for a spontaneity which, he felt, carefully prepared actors could not give. It also happened that neither Bergman nor Sanders was a natural improviser and both depended on the security of an established script and the stable direction that they were used to under the studio system.

Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders's off-screen situations are relevant to, or rather, are part of, the *Journey to Italy* aesthetic, on a fundamental level that goes beyond naturalistic characterisation or a director's megalomania. Just as Rossellini precipitates Alex and Katherine towards Naples and towards the crisis of their marriage, so he dispatched two Hollywood stars, both facing crises in their real-life marriages, into unknown professional territory. But with *Journey to Italy*, out of a minimal plotline and two bewildered actors, he managed to create, in the words of many critics, the first modern film. It is, to paraphrase Deleuze, as though Rossellini uses Bergman and Sanders, in their off-screen and on-screen crises, to enact the crisis of the action image. The straightforward, linear, horizontal movement of the car had landed them in a cinematic world in which plot and character would no longer be the only determinants of what happened on the screen. The diegetic space they have entered is porous, blurred at the edges and, temporally, is held in suspense. The two stars' performances, under Rossellini's non-direction, slide between their own screen *personae*: Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders, and Alex and Katherine Joyce. It is as though the actors were being forced, as experienced professionals, to undergo and then endure a loss of power, a decentralising of the traditional unity of star and story. Out of this, Rossellini could disrupt their journey and revel in the weakness of the plot's 'motor-linkages'.⁶ The presence of disorientated Hollywood stars in a European art film dramatises such a change in cinematic direction. Perhaps the only Hollywood stars who would have been prepared to participate in, and thus enable, this crisis in the narrative film would be these two semi-Europeans, both at crisis points in their own lives, both uncertain where their private and professional futures were leading.

In fact, the collapse of the *Duo* project allowed Rossellini to make a film about Naples. It is the history and geography of his chosen location that skews the film from its proper storyline and breaks open the cracks leading to a new kind of cinema. Ingrid Bergman, in her 1974 interview with Robin Wood, describes Rossellini's desire to use film as a teaching tool, but her actual words imply something more:

In *Journey to Italy* it was to show Pompeii. He adored Pompeii. He knew everything about it. He was only looking for a story into which he could put Pompeii and the museums and Naples and all that Naples stands for which he was always fascinated with because the people of Naples are different from the people in Rome or Milano. He wanted to show all those grottoes with the relics and the bones and the museums and the laziness of all the statues. Hercules is always leaning on something instead of fighting something.⁷

Rossellini and the Bay of Naples

Almost like a refrain running throughout the film, Rossellini punctuates *Journey* with sweeping panning shots which take in the expanse of the Bay.⁸ The first shot of this kind opens the second phase of the Joyces' journey, from their Naples hotel to uncle Homer's house. This shot is, as it were, semi-diegetic. Although relevant for locating the story, it is more like a small piece of directorial enunciation.⁹ The second pan is an explicit mapping of the whole area from uncle Homer's terrace. Tony shows Alex and Katherine the expanse of the Bay. The camera follows his indications:

There's the Vesuvius. Ever since the eruption of 1944 there has been a period of calm, but the temperature is beginning to rise a little though. That point there, behind the hill, that first hill, is Pompeii. Then Castellammare, Torre Annunziata. Resina's over there, and Naples. There's Ischia, the Isle of Capri and that large strip down there is the Sorrento peninsula.

Throughout *Journey*, Vesuvius dominates the landscape, the geography of the area but also its history. The volcanic terrain created Naples's natural port, attracted settlers to its fertile soil and holidaymakers to its waters and climate, bringing wealth and culture to the area. Due to these outstanding natural conditions, the Greek colony of Parthenope and Neapolis, with its foundations at Cumae dating back to about 750 BC, became the most flourishing economic and intellectual community outside Greece. Later, Roman intellectuals were drawn to the Greek culture that continued to flourish in the city. The Roman Emperors Tiberius, Nero and Caligula built themselves luxurious villas on Capri and Ischia. The Roman rich, attracted to the sea bathing and the volcanic hot springs and mineral waters, turned the Bay area into the first European holiday resort during the first century AD. Then, in AD 79 came the eruption that destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum and the volcano revealed its dark and destructive power. It was because of the perpetual fear of Vesuvius that a vast array of cults and superstitions were always rife in its environs. This tradition, already characteristic of the daily life of Pompeii, continued in the semi-pagan, semi-Catholic religion, with its ritual processions and statues of saints, that particularly appealed to Rossellini. If he could bring vividly together, towards

the end of *Journey*, two kinds of image that were important for his cinema, the material and the supernatural, it was due to Vesuvius. The two figures excavated in Pompeii, killed by the volcano and then preserved in its lava, represent the indexical image and the real of cinema. And then, at the end, the statue of the Madonna, which ultimately only signifies the human mind's imaginative powers, its propensity both to need and to enjoy belief in the supernatural and the magic powers of the cinema.

A fascinating document is reproduced in Tag Gallagher's recent biography of Rossellini.⁹ On four and a half pages of notebook, Rossellini wrote an outline of *Journey to Italy* for his production manager. Rather than a summary of plot events, it is a list of the film's main locations, concentrating particularly on the tourist sites, indicating how important these locations were for his conception of the film. Three locations on the list are not in the final film; the most important of these is the Cappella di San Gennaro, in Naples cathedral. Since the fourteenth century, San Gennaro (Saint Januarius) has been the Neapolitan antidote to Vesuvius. Three times a year his blood miraculously liquefies, defending Naples from all kinds of harm, but most particularly from the volcano. There is a kind of poetic symmetry in the way that the reanimation of the saint's blood should keep the volcano in quiescence, or, if the worst comes to the worst, at least ward off invasion by the flow of molten lava. Discussing his fascination with Neapolitan popular culture in a *Cahiers du Cinéma* interview in 1954, Rossellini mentions San Gennaro, saying:

Besides, you must remember that Naples is the only place in the world where a miracle takes place on a fixed date, September 19th, the miracle of San Gennaro. And San Gennaro look out! If the miracle doesn't happen, he gets into trouble. And all kinds of dreadful things start to happen!¹⁰

Alex's journey

Both Alex and Katherine's divergent journeys are the product of tourism or, at least, the 'liminal' space of a holiday. Alex's expedition to Capri confirms his sensual side, his readiness to pursue sexual adventure, while Rossellini tends to depict Katherine as a caricature English lady tourist, cluttered with camera, umbrella, dark glasses and *Blue Guide*. Alex's visit to Capri in search of 'fun' reflects the island's ancient associations with pleasure. It was also Rossellini's own preferred holiday place and the home, for many years, of his mistress, Roswitha Schmidt. Alex's pursuit of Marie in Capri's relaxed bohemian setting is unsuccessful and, according to Tag Gallagher, Rossellini felt this section of the film suffered from the lack of sexual rapport between Sanders and Marie Mauban.¹¹

Alex's next, near-sexual, encounter, takes place in Naples itself. The figure of the young prostitute who accosts Alex outside the Excelsior Hotel takes the film into another story of sexuality. But, in contrast to the bourgeois, pleasure-loving atmosphere of Capri, this story is dark and sad and invokes the city's sufferings during the Allied occupation of 1944. Rossellini had visited Naples during the war and also during the appalling days of 1944 when the whole population was faced with starvation and many did starve. The American army, its institutional corruption and its GIs, provided the only available means of survival and Naples was almost immediately overwhelmed in pros-

titution, the black market and systematic theft. The Naples episode of *Païsa*, an encounter between the GI and the child who steals his boots, shows the desperate state of the city and celebrates the culture and language of its street boys, whose traditional amoral ingenuity had now become a matter of life or death. The Rome episode of *Païsa*, which traces the transformation of an ordinary young woman into a prostitute, could better refer to the notorious fate of the women of Naples. *Journey* was shot in 1953, only eight years after the Allies' traumatic occupation. Alex's encounter with the desperate young woman obliquely reinscribes the relations between the foreign armies and the women of Naples. Her command of English forges a link to the Allied occupation.

Katherine's journeys

Katherine's sightseeing expeditions literally lead the film to the heart of the ancient history and the geography of the Bay of Naples. Although she is an instinctive tourist, she is also inspired by the lines 'Temple of the Spirit' written by Charles Lewington, her former admirer, when he landed in the area as a soldier in 1944. Her three principal sightseeing trips take place on successive days (ignoring the actual proximity of the Phlegraean Fields to Cumae). Their order follows a series of archaeological strata: Katherine moves from the classical Greek and Roman statues of the museum, back in time to the extremely ancient site of the Cumaean Sibyl, to the geological formations, the volcanic substructure, which made the area both so appealing and so deadly to ancient civilisations.

Each expedition is preceded by a 'montage' sequence of people and scenes in the streets of Naples, which have an autonomous life. Although intercut with Katherine's (supposed) point of view and her voice-over, each has a sketchy internal structure. Themes of interest to Rossellini lie behind Katherine's condescending curiosity and touch aspects of life that he found both difficult and interesting. The first montage includes a juxtaposition between the Church and politics. After shots of workers mix with shots of priests and nuns, the camera picks out a priest walking past an election poster for the PCI, placing the two opposites within the same frame. The second montage which shows an elaborate, typically Neapolitan, funeral procession is followed by a series of shots of pregnant women, bringing together the oppositions: birth and death, womb and coffin, the first home and the last. The final montage juxtaposes courting couples, men and women in love, with shots of babies in prams. This particular irrec- oncilable – love and sex on the one hand and family responsibility on the other – was one Rossellini quite often mentioned in relation to his own life.

Museo Archeologico Nazionale

Rossellini only filmed the statues in the Museo Archeologico. Perhaps because it was the first sequence he shot, taking what seemed to his waiting stars a disproportionate week over the filming, it dominates the film rather than the giant Farnese statues dominate the museum.¹² It was one of the few times in the film that Rossellini used a crane, which was necessary not only to film in proportion to the size of the statues but also to give the sequence its distinctive style. Although Ingrid Bergman looks at the statues in wonder, she does not provide the sequence with a viewing position or a point of view. The camera movements acquire an autonomy that is enhanced by the first appearance of Renzo Rossellini's music. Stylistically, the sequence builds up gradually, starting with

small panning movements across and around the statues. The director was clearly fascinated by these objects, and the autonomous self-sufficient world of the fiction seems to collapse under their weight. That is to say, the combination of camera with music and editing that gives the sequence its aesthetic unity overwhelms Katherine and her fictional subjectivity. The camera is liberated from its subordination to her movements. As Katherine and the guide reach the Farnese Hercules, the camera moves higher with sweeping movements, defying gravity as it transcends the limitations of the human eye and its earth-bound perspective. Throughout the sequence, the music, with its eerie, other-worldly quality, is mixed in ironic juxtaposition to the guide's patter, in which his heavy clichés are interposed with guidebook-style, but important, information about the statues and their origins.

Rossellini begins the sequence with a dissolve that brings Katherine into the museum as it were through the huge stone base of a pillar. Movement emerges out of stasis, setting the scene for the rest of the sequence. It is as though Rossellini imagined bringing life to those blocks of stone and that his camera could provide the magic means of doing so. Some of the statues are poised in mid-gesture: the discus thrower with his eyes looking straight into and challenging the camera, the drunken poet, caught at the moment he falls backwards into a stupor. It is as though the gaze of the Medusa, or some other malign magician, had turned living movement into stone. The aesthetic of classical Greek sculpture, later copied by the Romans, aspired to create the illusion that living movement had been frozen at a given moment. This illusion was, of course, to be ultimately transformed into reality by photography. For André Bazin, the photograph's ability to capture and freeze a moment is indicative of transcendence of time and of death itself. In *Journey*, however, the camera brings the cinema's movement to the statues and attempts to revitalise their stillness, reaching a crescendo with the gigantic Farnese Bull group. Here, movement stilled finds an even more complex relation with camera mobility. The brothers, Zethus and Amphion, struggle to hold the huge bull on which Dirce, who lies at their feet, will be tied. This violent scene of brute force and dramatic violence is completed by the presence of a little dog barking at its edge. The sculptor seems to have tried to give the impression that he had caught the action and then, at that split second, left it forever in suspended animation. The museum sequence revolves around a variety of reflections on movement and stillness, the relation between the animate and the inanimate, the living and the dead, that importantly not only recur in *Journey to Italy* but are intrinsic to Rossellini's conception of cinema in general.

Towards the beginning of the sequence, the guide takes Katherine to a series of busts of the Roman Emperors, not caught in action, but calm methodical portraits of actual men. Here the significance is in their relation between a 'now' and a 'then' which Katherine tries to collapse when she describes the statues to Alex. She says:

To think that these men lived thousands of years ago and you feel they're just like the men of today. It's amazing. It is as if Nero or Caracalla, Caesar [sic] or Tiberius, would suddenly tell you what they felt and you could understand exactly what they were like.

Katherine has left out the guide's dramatic stories of the Emperors' cruelty, so that history blurs and her point underlines, once again, the legacy left by the past and its visible materialisation in the present that so interested Rossellini.

Cumae

Katherine's visit to Cumae presents a sharp contrast to the museum sequence. The statues belong to a comparatively short and historically coherent period of ancient history. Cumae's history is layered with different epochs, different cultures, different religions and mythologies. The oldest of the Greek settlements, with massive walls, supposedly in Minoan style, the site of the Sibyl's cave, Cumae stretches back into prehistory. After the decline of Rome, the site had been used as catacombs by the Christians and a fortress by the Saracens. In contrast to the museum, the sequence is organised around Katherine's emotion and her subjective responses to the scene. The guide, bracketing the long history of the site, says: 'After abandoning Troy, Aeneas landed here on this very beach. In the last war, the British troops landed here.' The subsequent shot shows Katherine's reaction as it dawns on her that Charles Lewington might have been camped in that very spot. The ghostliness already associated with Charles then finds a kind of uncanny presence as the guide demonstrates the echo that resounds through the huge passage. Rossellini holds the shot of Katherine and the guide walking, with light and shadow falling across their path, with the echoes resounding around them, until they reach a chamber of Christian remains. The music then changes the feeling of the scene, linking it back to the museum and its uncanniness. The lines of Charles's poem begin to run through Katherine's head. Her reverie is abruptly disrupted by the guide who draws her attention to two marks in the wall where, he claims, the Saracens chained their prisoners. 'This is how they would have tied a beautiful woman like you.'

Although its uncanniness is, by and large, refracted through Katherine's thoughts and Charles's ghostly presence, Cumae brings with it an accumulation of resonance, trace and relic. It is also a place of mystery, or rather of 'the mysteries', the secrets of the religion, whether of the oracle or of early Christianity, that their devotees believed in. The echo, which takes on a life of its own as it reverberates, belongs to that aura of dematerialised mystery. At the same time, it is also a material link with the past, in continuity with all the previous echoes, stretching back across the centuries to when, as the guide explains, it was much louder because the walls were covered in bronze. And, bringing the atmosphere of the scene out of its other-worldliness, Rossellini uses the marks on the wall as a material sign of the presence of the past, its indexical inscription.

The Phlegraean Fields

Katherine's third journey takes her to the Phlegraean Fields, where she witnesses the live volcanic activity of the 'little Vesuvius' and the 'mystery' of ionisation. Here the film reaches the area's geological substructure, that seethes under the ground occasionally reaching the surface, as in these sulphur pits or in the actual eruptions of Vesuvius. The sequence is organised visually in two contrasting ways. On the one hand, there is Katherine's delight in the natural phenomena she is witnessing. She photographs the smoking pits, experiments with the ionisation mystery, exclaiming as the whole area responds in unison to one lighted paper or cigarette. She recognises in the 'pocket Vesuvius' the ash and cinders that had buried Pompeii in AD 79. But, meanwhile, the camera finds its own independent relation with the movement of the smoke. As the volume of smoke increases, the camera follows as it drifts away until it fills the screen. There is a stark contrast between the camera's relation to the hard-edged, exquisitely worked bodies in the museum and this insubstantial flow without shape or form, beginning or end. As the



Journey to Italy (1954): movement in inanimate matter.



Inanimate matter in movement.

smoke drifts across the screen and the camera drifts with it, once again, even if on a less formally evolved level, the image moves away from its fictional frame of reference. Film turns into something beyond its usual subservience to iconic representation, dissolving into wispy grey tones. But, there is a thematic link back to the two previous expeditions. The volcanic activity and the smoke from the ionisation process have a flow and a movement which animates an inanimate material, the earth itself. Of course, this 'coming to life' of the earth brings death to man and the landscape of *Journey to Italy* is constantly haunted by the distant presence of Vesuvius.

Katherine leads the film slightly to one side of her own fictional story, standing back, as it were, to allow the cinema to find its own dialogue with the history and geography of the area. Then Rossellini's primary aesthetic preoccupation can be focused on the visible presence of the past, its material legacy in the images he was filming. The statues in the museum, although sanctified as art, although they have lost their original settings, are there 'now', images of the human body 'then'. Cumae, on the other hand, is topography. Selected as a sacred site in prehistory due to its intrinsic geomantic qualities, subsequently overlaid by layers of other histories which add to the power of the place itself, it exists across time. While the statues are like snapshots, moments of frozen time, Cumae is a palimpsest. As a place that has been sanctified by human belief in the supernatural, it leads logically to the sulphur pits, where a natural

phenomenon assumes the appearance of mystery. The theme that unifies the three sites, on a second level, is the relation between inanimate matter and its animation. From this perspective, all three relate to the mysteriousness of the cinema in which inanimate photogrammes come alive in projection, giving frozen moments of time a semblance of movement.

The Dead

When Alex and Katherine are sitting on the terrace after their first lunch in uncle Homer's house, their ways part for the first time. While Alex goes in search of mineral water and confronts the concepts of time and its organisation that separate north from south, Katherine daydreams and resurrects the ghost of Charles Lewington. The ensuing dialogue is loosely based on James Joyce's short story 'The Dead'. Katherine's story of the young poet echoes Greta's story of Michael Furey. Both women had been loved hopelessly by a young, sensitive and frail man, one a singer, the other a poet, who then died prematurely. In both cases, chance contributes to the way this young, doomed, long-dead lover returns in memory to disrupt the present. But once felt, his presence haunts both husbands. In 'The Dead', jealousy and irritation give way to an intimation of universal mortality; in *Journey*, Alex cannot escape from the jealousy and irritation which continue to haunt him, as Charles Lewington does, throughout the film. Although so little is known about the conception and development of the script which became *Journey to Italy*, the couple's name, Joyce, suggests a reference back to James Joyce's story.¹³ Charles Lewington haunts Katherine, Alex and the film itself. The lines of his poetry, which return like a refrain into Katherine's mind and for which she seems to be searching for a meaning, finally find their significance outside her consciousness in the image of death that pervades the film:

Temple of the Spirit. No longer bodies
But pure ascetic images.

Katherine had hoped to find these images in the sculptures at the museum. Rather, the resonance of Charles Lewington's words is found in the images of death which the movie finds towards its end, in the figures at Pompeii and the skeletons in the Fontanelle cemetery.

Katherine's last expedition is suggested to her by Natalia in their conversation on the afternoon of Day 6 and which they take on the morning of Day 7. Katherine makes her last drive through the streets of Naples. This time she has Natalia with her to comment on her observations and, once again, the focus is on the number of pregnant women in the street. These images of new life, however, lead to the dead, the heaps of skulls and the skeletons collected in the Fontanelle. This expedition is not suggested by the *Blue Guide* but by a native Neapolitan; it closely follows Rossellini's anecdote in his autobiography about the Neapolitan attitude to the dead. He describes the way that the influx of people into the city in the nineteenth century displaced the dead from the graveyards which were then deconsecrated and the bones thrown into the Roman catacombs. During the Second World War, the poor hid in the catacombs and began to adopt the skeletons:

Astonished by this practice, I asked what its origin was. They replied: 'We have lost so many sons on the other side of the sea. No one knows where they're buried, dispersed by the wind and the sand or burnt by the scorching sun. We have nothing, not a tomb, not a cross to pray over. We want to make up for this.'

They adopted what were presumably skulls of young people because it was likely that they had sinned less. These skulls fulfilled the same role for them, in their relation to God, as satellites have now in intercontinental communication. They were satellites of love.¹⁴

Natalia tells Katherine about her brother who was killed in Greece and whom she mourns in the Fontanelle and then, once again joining death to new life, about her hope for a child. This sequence is disorientating for Katherine. For the first time in her journey, she is outside the tourist route, mingling with Neapolitans, disturbed by the skulls and skeletons piled high against the walls. She watches Natalia from a distance as she makes the strange gestures of the Catholic religion, but their childlessness also links the two women across their cultures. For Katherine, this strange experience at the Fontanelle leads directly to her quarrel with Alex, to Pompeii and the emotional crisis which she later tries, ineffectually, to explain to him.

In *Journey to Italy* reality intrudes into the fictional lives of its protagonists and their story. This reality is a materialisation of time itself, a constant reiteration of the past, as history, memory or relic, into the texture of the film. The dead play an important part in these returns. Not only do they haunt the passage between one life and another but they condense the passing of time with their insistent presence in the present. And just as Rossellini's reality is penetrated by irrationality, religion and mystery, so are the rational northern Europeans surrounded by the past and its ghosts. Alex and Katherine's journey in Italy has been precipitated by the death of Homer's death. In the elaborate sequence in which Tony and Natalia take Alex and Katherine on a guided tour of uncle Homer's house, they make his presence felt through his collection of objects, through the rooms he loved. At the Duke of Lipoli's party, Homer's friends not only joke about his death but talk easily about meeting him 'up there'. As the story of the skeletons adopted at the Fontanelle indicates, Rossellini is interested in the continued presence of the dead among the living.

Film

The film itself is the final layer in the process which extends the materiality of the index into its relation with time, the preservation of the past and the image of the living after death. Questions of cinema and questions of time begin to bounce off each other. From the present perspective, nearly fifty years later, the relation between cinema and history in *Journey* has acquired another dimension that seems to collapse the space between fiction and reality even further. With the coming of death and the passing of time, Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders, as well as the passers-by in the streets of Naples, are now themselves the dead. In *Journey to Italy* they are images fossilised on celluloid just as the figures in Pompeii were cast in plaster. The juxtapositions of life and death that pervade the film and the ghosts of the past that haunt it indicate that, for Rossellini, celluloid was yet another, more creative, more sophisticated, means of setting up a dialogue with a reality that was always in the process of becoming history. The images of Ingrid

Bergman and George Sanders preserved on film become, over time, more pure presence and less the record of performance. If the film had already blurred boundaries between George Sanders and Alex, Ingrid Bergman and Katherine, the actors' gestures and movements on the screen now seem to detach themselves from the artifice. Now Ingrid Bergman sits at the mirror brushing her hair, displacing Katherine. Now George Sanders plays the piano, displacing Alex.

The tension between the power of the fiction and its disruption by non-fiction in *Journey* reaches a crisis with the question of how the film ends. Rossellini gives his two Hollywood stars their aesthetically appropriate ending: the couple's reconciliation and their embrace, in a gesture to the conventions of narrative closure. These tensions condense in the crowded street of a small town when Alex and Katherine find their car's progress blocked by the press of people. Just as the film had opened with the visual equivalent of a play on the word 'drive', so narrative closure also finds a visualisation, a graphic form, in the car's gradual loss of speed, for the word 'stop'. There is an application of the brakes, a blocked passage. The linear structure of the narrative, searching for an appropriate form of closure, marks its own shift of gear, winding down towards the final stillness of 'the end'. In an inverse symmetry, the forward drive of the journey, which has twisted and turned with subordinate movements on its way, now comes to a complete halt.

But this ending, which satisfies the conventions of fiction and its structure's desire for stillness, does not fit with Rossellini's cinema. He then caps it with another ending that overrides the fiction. The camera turns away from the couple and their ending. A crane shot is carried forward, as it were, by the people now streaming along the street; and then the camera finds its own ending in this renewed flow of movement, not of narrative but of reality. The film then simply fades away, as the local brass band plays and people drift past. Life goes on. One ending halts; the other flows. One is a concentration focused on the stars' role in producing the fiction and its coherence, and the other is a distraction, the film's tendency to wander off in search of another kind of cinema. This is the 'continuance of time' that, for Jacques Rivette, is the essential element in Rossellini's mode of storytelling.

For there are films which begin and end, which have a beginning and an ending, which conduct their story from an initial premise until everything has been restored to peace and order, and there have been deaths, a marriage or a revelation; there is Hawks,

Hitchcock, Murnau, Ray, Griffith. And there are films quite unlike this, which recede into time like rivers to the sea; and which offer us only the most banal of closing images: rivers flowing, crowds, armies, shadows passing, curtains falling in perpetuity, a girl dancing till the end of time; there is Renoir and Rossellini.¹⁵

Ending

In 1998, Chris Petit made *Negative Images*, a videotape of his journey to meet the American critic and artist Manny Farber. Petit describes Farber's ability to see through the surface of a film ('he saw stuff you didn't') to find moments of inconsequence, or arbitrary gestures ('not the main item ... the movie's about something else'). These are 'defining moments which then stick in the mind long after the rest of the movie has been

forgotten'. Appropriately, *Journey to Italy* figures in the tape, in Manny Farber's observations and Chris Petit's thoughts. First of all, Farber describes the scene in which Alex and Katherine are just sitting down to dinner (Day 3). Their attention is drawn to the window by the sound of a quarrel outside. Natalia shouts up in explanation: 'They are getting married in a week and already they are fighting. It's jealousy'. Apart from the displacement of Alex and Katherine's problems to the fiancés, the scene simply registers the presence of life outside the main line of the story. It has no material bearing on the plot. Perhaps this is the kind of moment that David Rodowick refers to as an 'aleatory stroll' when describing the importance of Rossellini's cinema for the Deleuzian transition from movement image to time image.¹⁶ The scene has an extra, striking, beauty. Katherine is poaching eggs at the dining-room table when the sound of the quarrel takes her and Alex to the window. She suddenly turns away from the window with a start when she remembers the eggs. Alex then closes the window and follows her. Although the shot is clearly not constructed in real time, the constraints of real time, the time the eggs take to cook, is written into its formal pattern and, of course, Katherine's fictional train of thought.

Later, the tape slows down the sequence of Alex and Katherine driving through the crowd in the streets of Maiori. While Ingrid Bergman's intricate changes of expression are in the foreground, outside the car, three of the children running alongside it are suddenly made visible in detail, rather than lost in the swift movement of twenty-four frames per second. The ability to slow down film and make the incidental and the arbitrary visible, Chris Petit implies, has an equivalence to Rossellini's ability to include the incidental and the arbitrary as a counter-current to the narrative drive of his film. And as film gains a new transparency with new technologies, Manny Farber's special ability to see through the surface of the cinema can now be spread more widely. Chris Petit uses *Journey to Italy* to carry his most elegiac thoughts on the cinema. Rather than resurrecting *Journey's* contribution, in its own time, to the transformation of cinema, Petit uses it to think about the cinema and death, which are, after all, ideas that are central to Rossellini. In his voice-over, across the driving sequence, Petit says:

Cinema, whose flickering dreams always carried with them a sense of departure, increasingly becomes a long list of the dead. And now as the century ends, it's fashionable to talk of the death of the cinema as though this were pre-empting the forces of wider technological revolution.

The sequence ends with the death of the movie's stars, George Sanders (1906–72) and Ingrid Bergman (1915–82). 'Cinema becomes increasingly about what is past. It becomes a mausoleum as much as a palace of dreams.' This is a fitting final reflection on the complex interweaving of the continuous presence of the past in the present and the appearance of life after death in Rossellini's *Journey to Italy*.

Notes

- 1 There is some ambiguity about whose uncle Homer is, probably due to the film's production circumstances (no fixed script, improvisation etc.).
- 2 The method was devised by Giuseppe Fiorelli, archaeologist and former supporter of

the carbonari movement for a united Italy, who was put in charge of the excavations in the 1860s by Victor Emmanuel II.

- 3 Raymond Bellour, 'The Film Stilled', *Camera Obscura*, no. 24, September 1990, p. 110.
- 4 The Bergman–Capa relationship is said to have inspired that between Jeff (James Stewart) and Lisa (Grace Kelly) in Hitchcock's *Rear Window*: see Gaby Wood, 'Robert Capa', *The Observer*, 31 May 1998.
- 5 George Sanders, *Memoirs of a Professional Cad* (New York: Putnam, 1960), p. 120.
- 6 Jacques Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 18.
- 7 Robin Wood, 'Ingrid Bergman on Roberto Rossellini', *Film Comment*, no. 10, July–August 1974, p. 14.
- 8 'Attention to panoramas, exterior views and landscape is traditionally an important component of the visual culture of Naples ... This is reflected in its artistic tradition: landscapes and 'vedute' ['views'] predominate in Neapolitan art from painting to photography.' Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 210.
- 9 'Tag Gallagher, *The Adventures of Roberto Rossellini: His Life and Films* (New York: Da Capo, 1998), pp. 398–9.
- 10 Maurice Schérer [Eric Rohmer] and François Truffaut, 'Entretien avec Roberto Rossellini', *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 37, July 1954, p. 10; the interview is translated in full in Roberto Rossellini, *My Method*, edited by Adriano Aprà (New York: Marsilio, 1992), pp. 47–57 and partially (excluding this passage) in Jim Hillier (ed.), *Cahiers du Cinéma*, vol. 1, *The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 209–12.
- 11 Gallagher, *Adventures*, p. 402.
- 12 These giant sculptures had been originally made to stand in the Baths of Caracalla in Rome as spectacular decorative features. They were brought to Naples by Charles, founder of the Bourbon dynasty, in the eighteenth century.
- 13 The sudden disruption of a relationship between husband and wife by a slight detail which provokes the husband's jealousy is common to 'The Dead' and Colette's *Duo*. For discussion of the relation between Joyce's story and *Journey to Italy* see: Luciana Bohme, 'A Variation on a Theme by Joyce', *Film Criticism*, vol. 3 no. 2, Winter 1979; James Naremore, 'The Return of the Living Dead', *Journal of Literary Studies*, Spring 1991; and G. Elisa Bussi, 'From The Dead to *Viaggio in Italia*. Joyce's Story into Rossellini's Picture?' in G. Elisa Bussi and Laura Salmon Kovarski (eds), *Letteratura e Cinema. La Trasposizione* (Cooperativa Libreria Universitaria Edizione: Bologna, 1996).
- 14 Roberto Rossellini, *Quasi un'autobiografia*, edited by Stefano Roncoroni (Milan: Mondadori, 1987), p. 63.
- 15 Jacques Rivette, 'Letter on Rossellini', in Hillier, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, vol. 1, p. 194 (originally in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 46, April 1955, pp. 14–24).
- 16 '[A]ccording to Deleuze, the appearance of neo-realism represents a crisis in the cinema of action and movement. Especially in Rossellini's films, such as *Germania anno zero* (1947), *Stromboli* (1949) or *Viaggio in Italia* (1953) narrative situations appear where reality is represented as lacunary and dispersive. Linear actions dissolve into the form of aleatory strolls.' D.N. Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 13.