

# FILM CRITICISM

---

The Construction and Reception of Anna Magnani in Italy and the English-Speaking World, 1945-1988

Author(s): Tony Mitchell

Source: *Film Criticism*, Fall, 1989, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Fall, 1989), pp. 2-21

Published by: Allegheny College

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44077576>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Allegheny College is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Film Criticism*

JSTOR

# The Construction and Reception of Anna Magnani in Italy and the English-Speaking World, 1945-1988

Tony Mitchell

The Italian novelist Alberto Moravia claimed at the time of Anna Magnani's death in 1973 that she had "intersected her own meteoric trajectory with the orbit of the mysterious and controversial comet called history." In Moravia's opinion, Magnani would be remembered almost exclusively for her performance in Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (*Open City*), where "her visceral vitality, her existential impulsiveness and her passionate abandon found themselves at the centre of two clear and precise experiences, which were perfectly focussed both historically and aesthetically: the Liberation and neorealism." He dismisses her career prior to *Roma città aperta* as "a long prelude of variety and films for mass consumption" and dispenses with the films after 1945 of this "awkward, affectionate, uncultured and neorotic woman" in one sentence, pausing only to cite Visconti's *Bellissima* as "one of her best performances" (270-71).

This kind of wilful neglect of an actress who, when she won an Oscar in 1956 for her role in *The Rose Tattoo*, was referred to as "the world's greatest actress" (*Time* 19 Dec. 1955), is almost universal. The last critical article about her work that appeared in English was by Richard Whitehall in *Films and Filming* in 1961; after her death only two obituaries appeared in English-

language film magazines: the obscure *Cinema '73* and the now defunct *Film Library Quarterly*, which printed a short poem by John Irwin<sup>1</sup> (46). The obituaries in *Variety* and the *New York Times* were both riddled with basic factual errors about her films and her career (*Variety* 3 Oct. 1973; *NYT* 27 Dec. 1973).

Magnani is usually given less than a page in biographies of the celebrated actors and directors she worked with (most of them only in one film): Marlon Brando, Burt Lancaster, Anthony Quinn, Visconti, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Jean Renoir, Tennessee Williams, and Rossellini. Only Peter Brunette's recent book on Rossellini has attempted to assess her work in *Roma citta aperta* and *Amore (The Ways of Love)* in the light of recent feminist film theory, while in Italy only three biographies of her have appeared, all since 1981, and only one of these, Patrizia Carrano's fictionalized *La Magnani* applies any feminist critiques. Yet Magnani is still widely regarded in popular mythology as a unique figure in Italian cinema for the series of grittily realistic and unglamourized roles in which she portrayed the Italian archetypes of the *popolana* (woman of the people), the partisan heroine, the "amante" or mistress, the chanteuse, the prostitute, the Italo-American migrant, and, most importantly, the "mamma" who became a symbol of the city where she was born and died, Rome.

Of the nearly fifty films she made in her lifetime, perhaps five have survived in film studies: *Roma citta aperta*, *Amore*, *Bellissima*, *The Rose Tattoo*, and *Mamma Roma*. Moravia is right in saying Magnani is chiefly remembered for her role in *Roma citta aperta*; one could even narrow this down to a one-minute sequence in the film that epitomizes Italian neo-realist cinema. In it Magnani's character Pina is shot down and killed by German soldiers while running after the truck in which her husband-to-be, the partisan Francesco, is being taken to Gestapo headquarters. The sequence has most of the hallmarks of neo-realism: an exterior street setting, a rough, spontaneous, documentary immediacy, and a focus on the actions and emotions of ordinary working-class people. These features were partly the result of economic hardships: the film was made in 1945, when the German troops had scarcely left Rome, the film studios were still closed, Rossellini had to buy his film stock from street photographers, and there was no time or facilities to look at rushes.

The film's scriptwriter, Sergio Amidei, has stated how he got the idea for the sequence from a fight Magnani had with her boyfriend, the actor Massimo Serato, which culminated in Serato driving off in a truck and Magnani running after him shouting abuse (Governi 112). It was not the last time experiences from Magnani's life went directly into her films. According to Patrizia Carrano, Amidei also wanted to sling a rope across the street and trip her up so she would fall more realistically and convincingly (98). Rossellini has expressed his admiration at the way in which Magnani, afraid she would hurt herself, still managed to fall with complete abandon and injured herself in the process (Vermocken 1979). Magnani's own account of the scene, which was done in two takes, one from in front and one from behind,

highlights the realism and spontaneity of her performance:

I didn't know what I was facing. The moment I went out into the street I felt my heart tighten. The soldiers were real Germans Roberto had got out of a concentration camp that morning. Their weapons were their own--the slung machine guns, the hand grenades in their boots. Their faces were unmistakable. The crowd had been gathered from the street, a real Roman crowd. The people looked pale and scared, looking wide-eyed at the SS, who had meant death or deportation to many of them until a few days before. I ran after the truck like mad, weeping as if my life were being taken away from me. And when Roberto had the men shoot their machine guns, I fell as if I'd been killed. ... I thought I had been hit by mistake (Barzini 57).

The French critic Jean Desternes was sufficiently struck by the realism of this sequence to state that Pina and her son Marcello "really are that woman and that child, giving proof to their existence: they are there and that's how it is" (qtd. in Brunette: 46). But as Peter Brunette has suggested, the realism is an emotional realism; behind the jagged documentary immediacy and historical urgency of *Roma città aperta* there is a good deal of conventional melodrama (43). The partisans, particularly the film's protagonist, the anti-fascist priest, don Pietro (Aldo Fabrizi), is a stereotyped, heroic figure, while the Germans, particularly the lesbian Ingrid who seduces the informer Marina with cocaine and a fur coat, are almost caricatures of stock villains: sexual deviance becomes an index for evil in the moral scale of the film, which manages to combine Christian and Marxist perspectives. The anger and sense of outrage that motivated the film perhaps makes this stereotyping less problematic, while its melodrama easily falls within the parameters of popular entertainment; nevertheless, it is only Magnani's character Pina, a widow with a young son, Marcello, don Pietro's altar boy, who breaks these neat good and evil divisions. She is pregnant by Francesco, and is about to marry him the day after she is killed. Hence her death separates her from moral respectability, and the religious, iconic shot of don Pietro cradling her body in his arms is undercut by the quasi-sexual abandon with which she falls to the ground, revealing her stockings and underwear, and with which her son flings himself upon her dead body. Her death is both a sacrilege and a sacrifice, separating her from Francesco and from her moral redemption in marriage to him, and also leaving her son an orphan. It also contains a tragic irony, since in a later sequence the truck carrying Francesco is ambushed by partisans and he is liberated.

Pina is Magnani's, and the Italian cinema's, first portrayal of a *popolana*, a woman of the people, and it became an emblem for more than a decade of neo-realism. As Franco Zeffirelli has pointed out, neo-realism could be seen primarily an actor's cinema: "the element that was perhaps undervalued at the time was that *Rome, Open City* succeeded because immensely experienced performers like Magnani and Aldo Fabrizi, who played the priest, were suddenly allowed honest dramatic roles, an oppor-

tunity they seized with gusto. It was only later that I realized just how much this was an actor's cinema, and not, as was thought at the time, a director's" (76). This judgment was also expressed by Rossellini himself, who pointed out that neorealism had been foreshadowed by the popular dialect comedies on both stage and screen in which Magnani and Fabrizi had performed before the war, and which relied heavily on "the spontaneous creation of the actors" (qtd. in Foldini and Fofi, 1935-1959 2). Mira Liehm has pointed out that the plot for *Roma, città aperta* was based on the patterns of the riviste (variety shows) from which Magnani, Fabrizi, Amidei and Fellini all came: a bad woman causes the hero's tragedy, there is a good priest with the comic traits of the "fatso" (Fabrizi), and the character of the "mamma" (Magnani) who suffers and dies for love, while the gestapo are stereotypes of eternal damnation (64).

The Marxist film director and critic Carlo Lizzani exclaimed on seeing *Roma città aperta*: "At last I have seen an Italian film! By this I mean a film which tells a story about us, about the experiences of our country, about facts which concern us" (20). Magnani was a prime example of what Lizzani felt postwar Italian cinema needed: "not stars, but people of the streets" (20). His opinion was reinforced by the critic Silvano Castellani, who wrote that "Magnani is a force--an actress of sensitivity and intelligence, and don't talk to me about vulgarity. Magnani will be cast, studied and criticized for her use of Roman dialect, and it will be seen that this actress's plebeian virulence derives from the purest popular tradition, and thus the noblest" (37).

Italian critics had little difficulty placing Magnani in the tradition of the popular dialect theatre, variety, and revue that she had come from, but to the English speaking world she was a completely new phenomenon. In 1964 she was voted best foreign actress of the year by the American National Board of Review, and a number of the minor films she had been made both before and after the war was released in America, getting largely disappointed responses. But at first it was the emotional power and disarming directness of *Roma città aperta*'s style that American critics responded to rather than Magnani's performance. Bosley Crowther in the *New York Times* wrote that, "The heroes in 'Open City' are not conscious of being such. Nor are the artists who conceived them. They are simple people doing what they think is right." To Crowther, the film's outstanding performance came from Aldo Fabrizi as the priest, while Magnani merely brought "humility and sincerity to the role of the woman who is killed" (*NYT* 26 Feb. 1946). The *Variety* critic was less chastened by the film, seeing it as appealing to "the think trade who patronize the arty houses," but questioning whether the fact that "principal sympathetic femme character speaks only of her pregnancy, although she's not wed" would get past the censors (23 Feb. 1946).<sup>2</sup>

Writing in 1962, Parker Tyler was less guarded in retrospect about Magnani in *Roma città aperta*:

she photographs 'heroically' from whatever angle ... she has a quality none of the great glamour queens can claim: a basic womanhood that exists beyond conventional beauty of face and figure, no matter what kind of beauty be the standard. Her elegance is, in fact, without standard and of no social identity. As a result she seems the quintessence of the feminine even when not suggesting bed and its delights, though at will she can suggest these, too. While here she is her rougher, ungainlier self, Magnani taught us how overwhelming her sort of dignity can be: it is the generic Woman seen apart from the pagan and post-pagan ideals in art. This makes her, I should say, *Open City's* rarest achievement by far (42).

This idealization of Magnani as an earthy object of desire, a "generic woman" in contrast to the classical notions of high art, is interesting to compare with a statement Visconti made about her: "she was more pagan than Christian, she was vigorous and primitive and noisy" (qtd. in Tonetti: 49). Despite her strong popular appeal, Magnani was to be continually apostrophized by male critics in terms of high culture, usually between the poles of madonna and whore, a fact that separates her from the essentially popular sexual idealization of Rudolph Valentino Gaylyn Studlar has analysed so succinctly (18-35). Unlike Valentino, she was also not stigmatized as "other" in America and the English-speaking world since most male critics were at pains to demonstrate their presumed familiarity with Italian culture. In Italy, directors like Visconti and Pasolini responded to her *popolana* image and tried to incorporate it into the concerns of "high" art, as did Renoir in France. In a poem he wrote about her performance in *Roma citta aperta*, Pasolini expresses this contradiction. Magnani takes on a quasi-religious, mystical power that silences any attempt to express her in poetry:

Magnani's cry is now almost an emblem  
Under her absolute mess of hair  
Echoing along the panning shots of desperation  
And in her silent vibrant eyes  
The sense of tragedy converges  
Dissolves and transfigures the present  
And obliterates the song of poets.

It took the pragmatic English critic Richard Whitehall, who sees Magnani in terms of a Sean O'Casey heroine, to suggest that her performance as Pina had an intelligence which also had a material, political dimension: "a performance of range and power shaped entirely by the social and economic circumstances of the character" (15).

In the 16 films Magnani made prior to *Roma citta aperta* she was generally cast as a singer or in supporting roles. *Teresa Venerdì*, the comedy by Vittorio de Sica in which she played a small role in 1941 as the doctor-protagonist's mistress, a nightclub singer, is generally regarded as her most important pre-war film appearance. The film was released in

America ten years later under the title *Doctor, Beware*, and the *New York Times* critic summed up the brevity of Magnani's role: "Miss Magnani trots on the screen briefly, smolders like Mount Vesuvius in exactly three scenes, and that is that" (30 April 1951). This was probably the first example of the use of this volcanic image to describe a Magnani performance, a simile that mistakenly sees her as a Neapolitan rather than a Roman stereotype; it was certainly not the last.<sup>3</sup> The film shows Magnani in a comic role as "the other woman," a vampy mistress who is volatile, forthright, and temperamental, and is clearly based on Magnani's own persona as a popular nightclub singer. She received a few words of praise from Italian critics for this cameo part: Dino Falconi saw her as "shaping the part of a vulgar and posing singer with capricious caricature" (*Popolo d'Italia* 26 Dec. 1941), while Guido Bezzola, in the only monograph that appeared on Magnani in her lifetime, in 1957, is fulsome in retrospect: "she has a vivacity, an acumen and a profound sense of penetration, balancing her performance between a profound, unrestrained and intuitive vulgarity, and the permanent desire—a subtle veneer which is continually cracked—to appear an elegantly dressed 'signora' when not in the theatre, with fox furs and improbable hats" (20). *Teresa Venerdì* appeared in the epoch of the frivolous, "white telephone" social comedies of the Italian cinema, although de Sica was to become one of the major figures of neorealism. He later regarded the film as Magnani's "first success": "Her dramatic strength flowed from a purely popular source" (qtd. in Governi: 68).

Clearly Magnani's attributes were more suited to *popolana* roles, but it was not until six films and two years after *Roma città aperta* that she was cast as another neorealist woman of the people. Luigi Zampa's *L'onorevole Angelina* marks Magnani's first and only credit as a co-screenwriter, although she insisted on making changes to a number of other scripts she worked on. It also marks her first collaboration with the most prominent woman screenwriter of postwar Italian cinema, Suso Cecchi d'Amico, who wrote most of Visconti's films, worked with many of the major Italian film directors, and became one of Magnani's closest friends. Magnani expressed her desire in the film, which used a number of non-professional performers from the *sottoproletarii* (sub-proletariat), to portray authentic characters "in which audiences can believe. Well constructed characters without artificial aberrations or fake qualities. Real characters, which means characters taken from life ... in whose emotions and adventures people can recognize themselves and identify with, and to whom I can dedicate myself with sincerity, enthusiasm and love" (qtd. in Hochkofler: 84). Her identification with working class women was sentimental rather than marxist; she apparently had little sympathy with the Italian Communist party, and this is reflected in the film (Cianfarra 32).

*Angelina*, as the film became known in the English speaking world, was based on actual events involving a woman in Citta Giardino, one of the working class *borgate* (slums) built by the fascists in Rome. Angelina leads the local women in a revolt against the rationing of pasta and in an occupation



of a vacant block of flats when their housing estate is flooded. She is imprisoned, and when she is bailed out by the owner of the apartment block, the local people want her to stand for election as their M.P. But she refuses, in a burst of heart-rending humility, saying she is only “a poor person like you who has to struggle to make ends meet,” and sacrifices what would clearly be a distinguished political career as a representative of sub-proletarian women to her duty to her police official husband and her five children. Whereas Rossellini was able to cleverly disguise his marxist sympathies behind catholic piety in *Roma città aperta*, the contradictions of the two positions are glaringly exposed in Zampa’s film. Nonetheless, as Italo Calvino has pointed out, Zampa was a highly popular director, and his concessions to patriarchal tastes no doubt contributed to this:

Zampa is a director who is always interesting for his ability to provide concrete images for the humors and pessimistic moralism of the average Italian ... he is a director who speaks from the point of view of his audience, not following them passively, but interpreting and to some extent guiding their opinions with a moral intent that is slightly skeptical, slightly romantic, and hence realistic (83).

*Angelina* was the only financially successful film Magnani ever made in Italy, a fact that was later cited by Pasolini’s producer Alfredo Bini in an attempt to dissuade the director from using Magnani in *Mamma Roma*, which proved to be a financial failure (Faldini and Folfi, 1960-1969 236).

*Angelina* is built almost entirely around Magnani’s performance, and she is hardly ever off screen, a fact most critics noted with admiration. By this time, Pietro Bianchi in *Il Tempo* was able to describe her as “the most famous of our ‘stars’ ” (13 Sept. 1947), while the critic of the Communist Party newspaper *L’Unita* acknowledged that the film was “entirely built around the brilliance of Magnani’s at times broad and overflowing comic abilities” (13 Sept. 1947). Arturo Lanocita rightly cautioned that “without Magnani’s performance, the inconsistency and crudeness of this film’s simplistic philosophy, which is more than a little demagogic, would be exposed more glaringly (qtd. in Hochkofler 85).

Magnani received the Silver Ribbon for best actress at the 1947 Venice film festival for *Angelina*, which was also well received in America. To Bosley Crowther, the film’s outcome is clearly a just one, and any marxist notions of *coralita* (community) are destroyed by Magnani’s foregrounded performance: “Miss Magnani presents a most impressive and awesome spectacle as a dynamic, coarse-tongued female whose impulses far outrun her head. Even among a mob of other clamoring, gesticulating dames, she towers like a giant among pygmies--and that’s something in a wild Italian film ... Altogether, Miss Magnani gives quite a one-woman show (NYT 6 Apr. 1947). The latent xenophobia of these comments is matched only by a high-cultured condescension that makes the *Variety* review sound positively revolutionary: “These oppressed people revolt against their exploiters under the leadership of the housewife Anna Magnani, a modern day Joan of



Arc. Documentary styled picture in its indictment of the corrupt resulting in surefire b.o. at the art houses where it should reap strong word-of-mouth" (6 Apr. 1948). The solid, sentimental Christian-democratic family values that lie at the heart of the film clearly appealed to the English Italophile Randall Jarratt, who regarded Zampa as "the only Italian director other than Rossellini who can get (or perhaps permit) a first-class performance from Anna Magnani and who can construct a frame which can stand up to such a portrait." Jarrett continues: "Anna Magnani plays the part as no one else in any country could do; she constructs a character that is intensely human, a memorable portrait of a woman of the people, crude, shrill, with a flow of invective in the choicest Romanesque and a heart of gold where her family is concerned" (83).

In the year *Angelina* was released the American critic James Agee expressed the opinion that Magnani was "the nearest thing to an absolute I have seen in films since the early Garbo movies" (qtd. in Whitehall: 17), an opinion later reiterated by Tennessee Williams. The following year Magnani made her second and last film with Rossellini, the two part *Amore*, which consisted of Cocteau's *The Human Voice* (*La voce umana*) and the Fellini short *Il miracolo*, which was added mainly to provide a ninety minute package. The title credits of the film include Rossellini's dedication of the film in "homage to the great art of Anna Magnani," and *Amore* was constructed solely around Magnani's performances in a far more self-conscious way than *Angelina*. To Peter Brunette, it is this self-conscious construction of the Cocteau film that redeems it from being merely the excruciating exercise in "the misogyny of victimisation" (88) suggested by Rossellini's claim that it was "an opportunity to use the cinecamera like a microscope, all the more so since the specimen being examined was Anna Magnani" (Hochkofler 95). It is worth recalling that Cocteau's play, which the film follows very closely and on which Cocteau collaborated, was originally entitled *The Telephone as an Instrument of Torture*.

Magnani's performance in *The Human Voice*, in which she is on screen constantly for more than 40 minutes, is regarded by many male critics as her greatest. Her persona of the discarded mistress, a tragic variation on her comic role in *Teresa venerdì*, makes her an eternal victim, without a history, as the claustrophobic setting gives no evidence of time or place. Her role is also uncharacteristically middle class, and she seems ill-at-ease, unable to draw on the rich vein of working class dialect expressions that are her stock in trade. She is filmed primarily from above, stalked by the camera almost in the manner of a Hitchcock film. Even Randall Jarratt, who regarded Magnani's performance as "one of the greatest pieces of film acting yet seen" and was full of praise for Rossellini's "unobtrusive" direction and his "understanding, support and sympathy," concedes that Magnani's performance is "so harrowing as to be almost unbearable" (67-68). Peter Brunette has pointed out that the lover's voice is never more than an unintelligible buzz, and there is a sense in which Rossellini positioned behind a camera that is continually framing Magnani from above on the bed,

embodies the lover on the other end of the telephone. The way the film's situation anticipated Magnani's own life is also worth noting; two years later Rossellini was to leave Magnani for Ingrid Bergman in what became a public scandal dramatized blow-by-blow by the international mass media. Another notable feature is that the dog Magnani addresses at one point in the film was her own dog, and she calls it by its actual name. Brunette has suggested that the film "sets up an ontological identity between the actress and the character she is playing, intermittently collapsing the two categories while it deconstructs its own surface realism by means of the preexisting reality of Magnani herself ... Magnani's acting ... stands the process of realistic representation on its head" (90-91). This description could be applied equally to numerous other roles played by Magnani in which she recreates felt emotions and lived experiences, but in *The Human Voice* emotion, passion, and intuition seem to prevail over technique. Magnani herself provides confirmation of Brunette's description in an interview: "I don't know how to construct a part, I don't know how to build a character. If the character is authentic and moves me, I mean if I feel it is like myself, then I can give it my best performance ... I might be presumptuous, but I don't think I act. I act badly if I try to act. I live what I do, or I believe I'm living it, which is the same thing" (Hochkofler 95).

Most Italian critics at the premiere of *Amore* at the 1948 Venice film festival found *La voce umana* inferior to its companion film, *Il miracolo*, and were unimpressed by its excessive emotiveness. Arturo Lanocita found an imbalance between the film and the performance, suggesting that the former was moulded to the latter rather than vice versa, and dismissing it rather coldly as "an essay in acting ability which is superior and admirable thanks to Anna Magnani" (Cdel S, 22 Aug. 48). Guido Bezzola found Cocteau's "icy, tainted cerebral" style completely at odds with Magnani's revue-fostered "innate gifts of sensitivity, improvisation and warm, cordial humanity" (23), a view of this exercise in abjection that seems entirely appropriate.

Magnani made few films in the period after her break-up with Rossellini. The ill-fated *Vulcano*, set up as a rival project to Rossellini's *Stromboli* with Ingrid Bergman and shot on a neighboring island in Sicily, saw her in a supporting role to the American actress Geraldine Brooks and generated stories of her screaming abuse across the sea at Rossellini after each day's filming (Faldini and Fofi, 1935-1959 204). The film's American director, William Dieterle, has gone on record as describing her as "the last of the great shameless emotionalists" (*NYT* 27 Sept. 1973). Neither Rossellini's nor Magnani's films were particularly successful, and both were eclipsed as media events by the birth of Ingrid Bergman's first child. These circumstances provided the impetus for an article about Magnani by John Kobler, "Tempest on the Tiber," which appeared in *Life* magazine and portrayed Magnani as a woman with two personalities: "one, full of humanity, a desperate will to live, to enjoy life and be loved, a woman with a strong personality; the other, suffused with melancholy, discomfort, even lacking in

understanding towards herself and others, a woman of manifest fragility” (qtd. in Mida: 91). These are the words one of Rossellini’s assistant directors, Massimo Mida, uses to recall Kobler’s article, which he uses as the starting point for a personal memoir on Magnani he published in 1988. Mida praises the aptness of Kobler’s description and suggests he was satisfying an American public that had admired *Roma città aperta* and resented Ingrid Bergman’s abandonment of Hollywood for Rossellini and Ciencitta. It is an interesting example of the mythologizing of Magnani’s personality as a protagonist in an international love affair in which she played the role of discarded mistress and victim. In the media narratives surrounding the Rossellini-Bergman-Magnani story, Magnani was cast as vulnerable, sympathetic underdog, a persona she was never subsequently able to cast off, and which gave her other persona, the forceful, passionate and wilful woman, a tragic dimension.

Magnani’s role in Visconti’s *Bellissima* as Maddalena Cecconi, the mother of the “beautiful” five year old of the title, whom she tries to get a part in a film at Cinecittà, is her most celebrated role after *Roma città aperta*. In it she became the embodiment of Italian notions of motherhood that were fuelled by her own experiences with her son Luca, who was a victim of polio and required almost constant attention. Visconti made *Bellissima*—a film that Claretta Tonetti in her book on the director considers as only “one of Visconti’s minor successes” (58), presumably because it is far more of an unashamedly popular melodrama than his other more operatic films—primarily so he could work with Magnani.<sup>4</sup> She had been his first choice for the main role in *Ossessione* in 1942, but had been forced to withdraw because she was pregnant. This early blow to her career was exacerbated by the extraordinarily passionate and powerful performance Clara Calamai gave in *Ossessione*, and Calamai had in fact been Rossellini’s first choice for *Roma città aperta*.

Visconti stated that Magnani contributed substantially to Cesare Zavattini’s storyline and she improvised some of the sequences that eventually found their way into *Bellissima* (Governi 156), but her name does not appear in the screenplay credits alongside those of Visconti, Francesco Rosi, and Suso Cecchi d’Amico. Her performance completely dominates the film, even if it is contained within Visconti’s rather misogynist notion that “women are marvellous and passionate creatures. But they lack rationality and they often provoke disorder and commotion” (Tonetti 53). Certainly Magnani lived the role so fully that she even considered adopting Tina Apicello, and refused to go to the film’s premiere so that the girl could have all the limelight (Governi 158).

In her book *Women and Film*, E. Ann Kaplan distinguishes between three psychoanalytic notions of motherhood: as narcissistic fetishization (or Kristeva’s “paternal symbolic”), which finds the phallus in the child; as narcissistic fetishization (or Kristeva’s “paternal symbolic”), which finds the phallus in the child; as narcissistic “in the sense ... of finding oneself in the child ... women here do not relate to the child as Other, but as an extension of their own egos;” and in a more radical sense where motherhood can sub-

vert patriarchy because of the gap left by its suppression by the law of the father (203). In *Bellissima* Magnani clearly portrays the second type, and the law of the father is firmly in place. Although Maddalena's husband is a shadowy, mild figure who is rarely present, his relative absence in fact reaffirms her transgression of the law in sacrificing the financial and emotional interests of her family to her ambition for her daughter to be a film star.

The sequence in the film where Maddalena prepares her daughter for a photography session to increase her chances of getting a role in the film shows her projection of ambition on to her daughter in highly negative, and quite self-reflexive terms. Looking at herself in the mirror, Maddalena muses on the nature of acting: "What is acting? If I pretend to be another person, if I make believe I'm somebody else, then I'm acting." This establishes the keynote of the scene: Maddalena herself is acting inauthentically, being someone else, and playing the role of a bad mother. She prepares her daughter to be an object of scopophilia, "Don't you mess up your hair or I'll smack you") and tries out the experience herself in the mirror. The gloomy, darkened interior setting of the scene suggests furtive, illicit activity, while the sound of children playing outdoors hints that little Maria would be far better off outside playing with them than being prepared for a role for which she is clearly unsuited. Maddalena starts coaching her in acting, and we discover that Maria has a lisp, which becomes contagious--the humiliation of both mother and daughter in the brutal world outside of the Italian cinema is already imminent. The child asks if she is going to school tomorrow, which further develops a sense of illicitness, and when Maddalena opens the window so she can see to change her clothes, the appearance of a little boy "peeping tom" brings a sense of perversion to the scene, reinforcing the characterization of a "bad mother."

The film's portrayal of the world of Italian cinema is not particularly profound, but a strong sense of its patriarchal aspect emerges, and of an environment in which women and children are abused and discarded. As in *Angelina*, Magnani's character finally rejects her public ambitions, even though her daughter is offered a role in the film, and retreats back into the private world, resolved to be a good wife and mother, despite her continuing cinephilia. Visconti's flirtation with Marxism, like Zampa's in the earlier film, clearly did not extend to the notion of women assuming a public and self-determining role. As Claretta Tonetti puts it: "In spite of her faults, Maddalena is an honest and faithful woman, faithful to her husband and faithful to herself ... She is a working-class woman ... and even though she wants a better future for her daughter with every fibre of her body, we know that Maddalena will always be herself" (53). The film is framed as a cautionary moral tale for women in the title of Albert Moravia's review, "Will Anna Magnani, the deluded mother of Cinecitta, move the hearts of Italian women?" Moravia continues: "It has been said that Italian civilization is maternal and that the numerous representations of the madonna and child its symbol. In the character of Maddalena Cecconi, Visconti's intention is to impersonate a mother of the Italian people, full of wild irrationality and destructive jealous passion (qtd. in Hochkofler: 97-98). This concern

expresses the Italian notion of *mammismo*, the cult of the mother as an emotional, impetuous nurturer, combining the pagan image of the she-wolf that is the symbol of Rome with the Christian image of the Virgin Mary and the infant Christ.<sup>5</sup> But Visconti, aristocratic director that he was, managed to give the film a working class perspective that still retains vestiges of neo-realism. As the critic of *Il Mondo*, Corrado Alvaro pointed out: “The most notable feature is that it is not a performance of a character in exceptional, romantic conditions, but of a few days in the life of an average Roman woman and of a little story of illusions and daily disappointments (qtd. in Hochkofler: 100-101). This emphasis on the modesty and averageness of the film’s working-class milieu serves to essentialize and idealize notions of female behavior that are seen as eternal and outside history. Corrado went on to apostrophize Magnani at great length for her

...nobility, her blend of the fantastic and the pragmatic, of a capacity for illusion and realism; a nonchalant sexuality which seems continually on the point of yielding but which has a profound sense of restraint, her fundamentally stubborn fidelity, her experience of men and their desires gained through an ancestral practice of defense and familiarity with all their ploys; the sense of danger which a beautiful Italian woman knows how to sustain along with the ability to unleash just the right amount of drama, her moments of weakness soon overcome, and an attachment to the family nucleus and the cult of the child as a desire for family power, a guaranteed form of redemption from poverty, and hope for the future (qtd. in Caldiron and Hochkofler: 81).

This litany combines an apostrophizing of her seductiveness with an affirmation of the eternal Christian family beliefs that are fundamental to a conventional patriarchal view of Italian womanhood. Magnani’s interplay between these two positions can be seen as both an affirmation of conventional morality that the film promotes and a flirtation with a sense of “danger” and transgression that constitutes the seductive enigma of her appeal.

Magnani’s reputation outside Italy was increased considerably by *Bellissima*: Arthur Knight in the *New York Saturday Review* called her “the Italian Bette Davis ... transforming what was merely a good story idea into a warm and frequently moving experience” (21 Mar. 1953). The *New York Times* called her “the reigning queen of the burgeoning Roman film colony ... [in] a worthy, moving and purposeful vehicle, as compassionate and incisive a portrait of mother love as any” (18 May 1953). *Variety* judged it “[a] good entry for the sureseater trade, with the Anna Magnani name and the film’s behind-the-scenes look at Italian film-making as drawing cards. ... Magnani runs the thespian gamut ... in her colorful portrayal of the mother’s role” (9 Apr. 1952). Magnani’s association with motherhood had become concretized; whereas Pina in *Roma citta aperta* had combined mistress and mother, and *Angelina* had combined politician and mother, *Bellissima* foregrounded motherhood pure and simple.

It was four years before Magnani was persuaded to make a film in America, after a strong performance as Anita Garibaldi in a wooden his-

torical epic credited to her estranged husband Alessandrini but actually finished by Francesco Rosi and a rather awkward performance as a *commedia dell'Arte* figure in Jean Renoir's uneven, baroque historical romance *La Carosse d'Or*. Eventually Tennessee Williams convinced her to overcome her uncertain English and play Serafina delle Rose in *The Rose Tattoo*, coaching her in the part in the ship from Italy to America and casting her opposite Burt Lancaster, the actor Maddalena had admired so much in *Bellissima*. The trajectory of her career reached its peak when she won an Oscar for the role, despite the fact that her inadvertent caricaturing of an Italo-American widow is eclipsed only by the even broader caricature of Burt Lancaster's "village idiot" performance as Alvaro Mangiacavallo (a name that means "horse eater"). But many American critics produced their most hyperbolic epithets: *Variety* praised her "spellbinding ... animalistic drive" (2 Nov. 1955), while the *New York Times* said, "she plays (sic) on the screen a warm, full-blooded tragicomic character ... she overwhelms all objectivity with the rush of her subjective forces" (13 Dec. 1955); the *Herald Tribune* found her "dazzling," and *Newsweek* overlooked her Romanesque qualities in characterizing her in terms of classical Greek tragedy as a "Neapolitan Medusa [who] ... conjures up the dignity of Medea." The same critic, in an unsigned article, summed up the American critical response: "Critics have understandably obscured her outlines by a ponderous metaphor montage which has likened her to every major natural eruptive phenomenon from Vesuvius (the most recurring) to a boiled-over kettle" (26 Dec. 1955). Intriguingly, the *Newsweek* description of Magnani reappears almost word-for-word seven years later in John Howard Reid's portrait of the director of *The Rose Tattoo*, Daniel Mann, in *Films and Filming*, but Reid substitutes the above passage with the following: "the most explosive emotional actress of her generation had, in fact, erupted over filmland and was filling the vicinity with temperamental lava, flaming ash and general consternation..." (Mar. 1962). The hackneyed quality of the rhetoric is matched, regrettably, by the banality of Magnani's performance; denied access to the Roman dialect that was the well-spring of her technique, she resorted to a heightened form of over-acting which critics unversed in Italian ways interpreted as what the *Sight and Sound* reviewer called "a flawless display of Italian mannerisms" (195).

Italian critics were not so well-disposed, seeing her performance as the caricature it was, and as a betrayal of her Italianness. As Guido Bezzola put it, her role was "in an imprecise limbo of stock characters from which everyone expects stock reactions, like the Mexican in westerns with a sombrero, long hair and ear-rings, who is cruel and treasonous" (44). But her American career was launched, although the three subsequent films she made in Hollywood, *Wild is the Wind* ("robust and rowdy and often touching" [NYT 12 Dec. 1957]), *The Fugitive Kind* ("the combination of Marlon Brando and Anna Magnani fails to generate the electricity hoped for" [Variety 13 Apr. 1960]), and *The Secret of Santa Vittoria* ("Miss Magnani as the tempestuous, vixenish spouse is strongly effective in a hard-hitting role"



[*Variety*, 1 Oct. 1969]) did more to enhance her reputation as an impetuous “virago” who refused to keep Hollywood working hours and fought with her male co-stars than to bring her further success. They also effectively destroyed her career in Italy, since neo-realism had become passe, and none of the new directors wanted to work with an actress who had been its main symbol and was now caricaturing Italian traits in Hollywood. As Luigi Barzini Jr. stated, “the character she has adopted late in life, which well-known foreign producers, writers and directors love, verges on caricature and is saved only by her native genius” (52). Magnani made her American films unwillingly, being committed to living and working in Italy, but her ostracism there forced her to return to America. After *The Rose Tattoo* her career began to decline sharply, and only one of her films stands out in the final twenty years of her career.

This film was Pasolini’s *Mamma Roma*, which added the role of prostitute to her range of female archetypes and idealized her as a maternal embodiment of Rome. In *Mamma Roma* Magnani again portrayed a narcissistic mother who sees her son as an extension of her own ego, a *popolana* who projects her middle class aspirations on to her son, with tragic consequences when he dies of tuberculosis after an attempted robbery with a group of street kids. No doubt her character was also a projection of Pasolini’s fixation with his own mother, with whom he lived until his death and whom he even cast as the Virgin Mary in his film *The Gospel According to Matthew*. The scene in *Mamma Roma* in which Magnani’s character gives her son a motorcycle is a revealing example of a seductive dynamic at play in her projection of her class ambitions on to her son: “Go on, stroke it, it’s better than a girl, isn’t it?” She mounts the bike behind him like a girlfriend, they leave the depressing highrise flats of the Roman *borgata* behind him, and *Mamma Roma* becomes a backseat driver giving her son advice not only on his driving but on how to conduct his life: “I’ll make somebody of you—everyone will envy you.” She cautions him against adopting Communist values and putting down the wealthy, and her commitment to the competitive values of capitalism is signified in her urging him to overtake a car: “Show them who you are!” But her bourgeois facade is ruptured when she cannot resist turning to the car they overtake and making a rude gesture of a cuckold’s horns, shouting “*a cornuti!*”—an epiphany which displays Magnani’s own street-wise Roman raunchiness as much as the character’s.

*Mamma Roma*’s public display of ambition frames Magnani once again in the role of a bad mother, misguided in her attraction to the materialist values of consumption that Pasolini detested and saw as destroying the purity and peasant nobility of Roman slum life he idealized. *Mamma Roma* was Pasolini’s second and last attempt at portraying Roman street kids in terms of a poetic naturalism that combined Catholic with Communist sympathies with actors picked off the streets with trappings of high culture like the Vivaldi music that pervades the film. This is yet another film totally



dominated by the bravura of Magnani's performance, but it is a problematic domination, since her power and range are stylistically at odds with those of the non-professionals around her and with Pasolini's rough, emotive poetic style. Nonetheless, it was the last of her great performances in the cinema. The film's imbalance was expressed by the critic Leo Pestelli, who said "her style and her 'Romanesque' identity belong to a naturalistic aura which is not present in the film, and causes it to fall into the commonplace and outmoded traps of neorealism" (*La Stampa* 1 Sept. 1962). Giuseppe Marotti put it more simply: "'Nannarella' is too real and becomes apocryphal in Pasolini's calculated, intellectualized frame" (*Europeo* 7 Oct. 1962). Magnani resented being blamed for the film's lack of success and intimated that even her roles as a *popolana* were becoming regressive and stereotyped: "They wore me out with these eternal roles as a noisy, hysterical *popolana*" (Faldini and Fifi, 1960-1969 239). Pasolini acknowledged, "It was my mistake to think I could take her totally in my hands and destroy her. It was absurd and inhuman on my part to think I could" (Faldini and Fofi, 1960-1961 131).

*Mamma Roma* was never released in the English-speaking world, no doubt partly because of the boldness and abrasiveness of its portrayal of the prostitute milieu of Rome, particularly in a stunning five-minute tracking shot in which Magnani delivers an extended monologue to various interlocutors who join her in a long walk along a Roman street. *Variety*, reviewing it at the Venice film festival, saw Magnani's performance as "a return to the instinctively earthy roles which first gave her fame" (5 Sept. 1962). When *Mamma Roma* was shown as part of the Magnani retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in November 1988, an event which passed relatively unnoticed, J. Hoberman, the *Village Voice* reviewer, described her performance in terms which outdo nearly all the stock clichés used to describe her thirty years earlier. Ironically, he gives pride of place in his column to the curiosity film *We the Living*, a 1942 pro-fascist piece of propaganda by Magnani's ex-husband Goffredo Alessandrini, based on Ayn Rand's novel. He then describes Magnani in *Mamma Roma* as

a found object. Neither the director, nor his Vesuvian diva, waste any time developing her persona--it's instant over-the-top. Thirty seconds into the movie, Mount Magnani is sputtering, singing, screaming and otherwise spewing lava in your face. She's a veteran whore, attending her pimp's wedding. Throughout, she's a continual spectacle--everything, from her openmouthed laugh and apoplectic *malocchio* to her free and easy gait to her unruly crown of hair, signifies an excess of life force (108).

Plus ça change?

The fact that by the 1960s Magnani's international stature had been eclipsed by Sophia Loren was epitomized by her refusal to play the role of Loren's mother, which Carlo Ponti offered her in de Sica's film of Moravia's *La Ciociara* (*Two Women*). As Zeffirelli commented:

She let out a booming guffaw, 'If anything, that cow should play the mother, not the daughter--she's old enough.'

As Anna was to say later, she should have cut out her tongue, because it was then that Ponti conceived the notion of replacing the old Magnani with a newer, more fiery model--his wife. The film was made and Loren seemed to many people to be playing every gesture, every inflection a la Magnani. Anna believed her characterization had been appropriated (182).

It was left to Zeffirelli to orchestrate Magnani's return to the stage in Verga's *La Lupa (The She Wolf)*, a role which consolidated her new persona as a battling, abrasive victim of injustice: "To three generations of Italians Anna Magnani was a symbol of survival, then woman who fights against all the odds, who's always getting the rough deal but who soldiers on" (205). Later there was a project to film Marquez's novel *A Hundred Years of Solitude* with Magnani playing the part of Ursula, which regrettably remained in the realm of speculative fantasy, as was the plan for Giorgio Strehler to direct her in Brecht's *Mother Courage*. Her career was partially salvaged by a series of four television films directed in 1971 and 1972 by Alfredo Giannetti recreating the archetypes she had portrayed throughout her career. In *La sciantosa* she was a night club singer who performs for soldiers at the front, while *1943: un incontro* cast her as a nurse who harbors a partisan in war-time Rome; in *L'automobile* she was "La Contessa," a prostitute who finally manages to buy herself a car, only to have it destroyed in an accident; and in *1870* she played opposite Marcello Mastroiani as the wife of a conspirator against the annexing of Rome to Italy.

This last film was transmitted the night of her death from cancer of the pancreas on September 26, 1973, but her last and most powerful final cinematic statement came in a 50-second sequence at the end of Fellini's *Roma*, where she was once again idealized as "mamma Roma" in an unashamed homage to Magnani as the ultimate and most potent symbol of Rome. The *Roma* sequence also shows Magnani's sense of privacy and her refusal to take Fellini's idealization of her seriously. To Fellini, she is "in a sense the symbol of this city, Rome as a she-wolf, vestal, aristocrat and beggar, tragic victim and clown." Magnani replies in disbelief, "What am I?" and tells Fellini to go home and go to sleep, "I don't trust you." She retreats into shadow, says goodnight, and closes the front door of the Palazzo Altieri, the "ancient patrician building" in the centre of Rome where she lived for a number of years. This final act of rejection of the idealized roles that had been projected on to her banishes her various public personae and leaves us with a brief, fragmentary glimpse of her private solitude.

By the time of her death Magnani had become largely forgotten in international and even in Italian cinema, eclipsed by the softer, more conventional and optimistic beauty of Sophia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida, who were more easily assimilated into stereotypes of Italian sensuality. As Mario Caccavale pointed out in a recent interview with Gina Lollobrigida: "Magnani is a different matter. She is the war, and drama, and misery. She was

born with wrinkles and old age on her face ... La Lolla represented a country which immersed itself in the present as a way of forgetting the recent past; who ate steak almost every day for the first time in history, and were fed up with neorealism ... She was the economic boom ... ” (29). It is Magnani’s harshness, raucousness, and abrasiveness that made her an unconventional, problematic figure, who when taken out of the context of her native Rome found it almost impossible to adapt, and who paid the price of exile. Attempts to rehabilitate her reputation both in Italy and abroad have met with little success, and she remains, as Moravia pointed out, a historical icon primarily associated with postwar Italian neo-realism. Tullio Kezich, the most influential Italian film critic since the 1960s, commented at the time of her final television films: “The explanation of why Anna Magnani is a great actress who has been neglected and under-employed is not only attributable to the chronic absent-mindedness of the Italian cinema. Magnani is the last glorious incarnation of the naturalistic acting which was the mainstay of Italian theatre for decades ... and as a result she ... is a personality associated with a poetic which is outmoded (*Panorama* 15 Jan. 1972). It would be encouraging to think that feminist film criticism might provide a means of rehabilitating Magnani’s career, and that Ann Kaplan’s notion of motherhood that “lies outside of patriarchal concerns, networks, economy ... (and) eludes control” (206) could be put into practice in re-examining her roles in films like *Roma città aperta*, *Bellissima*, *Angelina*, and *Mamma Roma*. There are signs that such a project may be getting under way in Italy, and hopefully Anglo-Saxon film studies will also begin to take note of one of the most neglected actresses in cinema history.

### Notes

This article is based on a paper given in December, 1989 at the history and Film Conference at the University of Technology, Sydney. My thanks are due to Franco Cavarra in Melbourne for access to his vast library of books on Italian cinema.

<sup>1</sup>Irwin’s poem reproduces the “volcanic” cliché most commonly associated with Magnani by American critics: “Watching her/ you watch/ an immense firestorm/ indomitably burning, diffusing/ an awesome moment until it runs/ over your hands like lava” (46).

<sup>2</sup>This is a curious query, since Italy is generally regarded by Anglo-Saxons as being so morally repressive. Magnani’s later film *The Miracle*, in which she plays a peasant woman who falls pregnant to a man she believes is Jesus Christ, was cut in America—on grounds of blasphemy.

<sup>3</sup>Mida, in his *Compagni di viaggio: colloqui con i maestri del cinema italiano*, eulogizes Magnani’s Romanness as follows: “Anna Magnani knew how to reveal the most secret and hidden qualities of a Roman woman, and

this is the rarest quality of her art as a modern actor. In her Rome found an ideal interpreter; in Rome, in her proud and somewhat wild women of the people, explosive under their apparent languor, there is an otherwise skillful way of judging the affairs of this disputed and tragic world. It is an ancient civilization which is rather weary and wasted, and thus the women of this city have a touch of scepticism which often breaks into cynicism, since they have put up with so much for centuries. They are women without illusions, basically down-to-earth, but still aware of their arrogant nature, and yearning for the justice they have never obtained. Every so often they erupt: and Anna Magnani has rendered this in visual terms on the screen, but not only in the cinema" (99).

<sup>4</sup>John Simon, critic of *New York Magazine*, speaks of Visconti's "strident pseudoprofundity devoid of human authenticity and human vision. *Bellissima*, which I recall imperfectly, seems to me worth reviving, if only to enable us to determine why we may have overestimated it--Magnani's performance, perhaps" (190).

<sup>5</sup>That *mammismo* is still as strong as it ever was is evidenced by the fact that as I write, the number one LP on the Italian popular music charts is called "*Evviva la mamma*."

#### Works Cited

- Barzini, Luigi, Jr. "Italy's Greatest Actress." *Harper's Magazine*. September 1957: 57.
- Bezzolo, Guido. *Anna Magnani*. Milano: Guanda, 1957.
- Brunette, Peter. *Roberto Rossellini*. Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Caccavale, Mario. Interview with Gina Lollabrigida. *Il Globo*. 27 Nov. 1989: 29.
- Caldiron, Orio, and Matilde Hochkofler. *Scrivere il cinema: Suso Cecchi d'Amico*. Bari: Dedalo, 1988.
- Carrano, Patrizia. *La Magnani*. Milano: Rizzoli, 1982.
- Castellini, Silvano. Rev. of *Roma citta aperta*, dir. by Roberto Rossellini. *Star 2* (1945): 37.
- Cianfarra, Jane. "Tigress of Italy's Screen." *New York Times Magazine*. 18 October 1949: 32.
- Crowther, Bosley. Rev. of *Roma citta aperta*. *New York Times* 26 Feb. 1946.
- . Rev. of *L'onorevole Angelina*, dir. by Luigi Zampa. *New York Times* 6 Apr. 1948.

- Falconi, Dino. Rev. of *Doctor, Beware*, (1941) by Vittorio de Sica. *Popola d'Italia* 26 Dec. 1941.
- Faldini, Franca, and Geoffredo Fofi. *L'avventuroso storia del cinema italiano 1935-1959*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1979.
- . *L'avventuroso storia del cinema (1960-69)*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1981.
- Governi, Giancarlo. *Nannarella*. Milano: Bompiani, 1981.
- Hoberman, J. Rev. of Magnani's performance in *Mama Rosa*. *Village Voice* 29 Nov. 1988: 108.
- Hochkofler, Matilde. *Anna Magnani*. Roma: Gremese, 1984.
- Irwin, John. "'be beautiful, to live violently:' Anna Magnani (1908-1973)." *Film Library Quarterly*. 7.2 (1974): 46.
- Jarrett, Randall. *Italian Cinema*. London: Falcon Press, 1951.
- Kaplan, E. Ann. *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*. London: Methuen, 1983.
- Kezich, Tullio. Rev. of Anna Magnani. *Panorama* 15 Jan. 1972.
- Kobler, John. "Tempest and Tiber." *Life* 13 Feb. 1950: 1151-125.
- Knight, Arthur. Rev. of *Bellissima*, dir. by Luigi Visconti. *Saturday Review* 21 March 1953.
- Lizzani, Carlo. Rev. of *Roma citta aperta*. *Film d'oggi* 1.20 Nov. 1945.
- Liehm, Mira. *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present*. University of California Press, 1984.
- Rev. of *Angelina*, dir. by Luigi Zampa. *L'Unita* 13 Sept. 1947.
- Marrott, Giuseppe. Rev. of *Mama Roma*, dir. by Pier Pasolini. *Europeo* 7 Oct. 1962.
- Mida, Massimo. *Compagni di viaggio: colloqui i maestri del cinema italiano*. Torino: Nuovo Eri, 1988.
- Moravia, Albert. "Will Anna Magnani, the deluded mother of Cinecitta, move the hearts of Italian women?" *Al cinema*. Milano: Bompiani, 1975.
- Rev. of *The Rose Tattoo*, dir. by Daniel Mann. *Newsweek* 26 Dec. 1955.
- Rev. of *Doctor, Beware*. *New York Times* 30 April 1951.
- Rev. of Magnani in *Bellissima*. *New York Times* 13 Dec. 1955.
- .... 8 May 1953.

- Rev. of *Wild is the Wind*. *New York Times* 12 Dec. 1957.
- Obituary of Anna Magnani. *New York Times* 26 Feb. 1973.
- Pasolini, Pier Paolo. *La religione del mio tempo*. Roma: Garzanti, 1961.
- Pestelli, Leo. Rev. of *Mama Roma*. *La Stampa* 1 Sept. 1962.
- Reid, John Howard. "Portraying Life with Dignity." *Films and Filming*. March 1962.
- Rev. of *The Rose Tattoo*. *Sight and Sound* Spring 1956: 195.
- Simon, John. *Movies into Film: Film Criticism 1967-1970*. New York: Delta, 1971.
- Studlar, Gaylen. "Discourses of Gender and Ethnicity: The Construction and De(con)struction of Rudolph Valentino as Other." *Film Criticism* 13.2 (1989): 18-35.
- Rev. of *The Rose Tattoo*. *Time* 19 Dec. 1955.
- Tonetti, Clara. *Luigi Visconti*. Boston: Twayne, 1983.
- Tyler, Parker. *Classics of the Foreign Film*. London: Spring Books, 1962.
- Obit. of Anna Magnani. *Variety* 3 Oct. 1973.
- Rev. of *Roma città aperta*. *Variety* 23 Feb. 1946.
- Rev. of *Angelina*. *Variety* 6 April 1948.
- Rev. of *Bellissima*. *Variety* 9 April 1952.
- . *Variety* 2 Nov. 1955.
- Rev. of *Mama Roma*. *Variety* 5 Sept. 1962.
- Rev. of *The Fugitive Kind*. *Variety* 13 Apr. 1960.
- Rev. of *The Secret of Santa Vittoria*. *Variety* 1 Oct. 1969.
- Vermocken, Chris. *Io sono Anna Magnani*. Documentary. Brussels: Pierre Films, 1979.
- Whitehall, Richard. "Gallery of Great Artists No. 6: Anna Magnani." *Films and Filming*. July 1961.
- Zeffirelli, Franco. *The Autobiography*. London: Arena, 1987.