

Critical analysis of the bicycle thieves



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Critical analysis of The Bicycle Thieves? Many people like watching films, while few of them would pay much attention to distinctions between different kinds of films.

There are mainly two types of films based on the techniques they use- realism and formalism. To begin with, the difference between realism and formalism is actually a war between contents and forms. Realism is based on fact which makes the audience feel that the story taken place in the film can be found in daily life.

In other words, the audience believe that the story is true. To get this goal, film-makers usually wipe out the man-made part and record the natural scene. According to Dogme 95 (Reference 1), Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in. Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. Different from realism, formalism techniques mean that film-makers tend to choose some particular details from the complex daily lives and sometimes distort or stylize the facts in order to express the director™s subjective opinions. For formalism, form is far more important than content, and camera has its role in making comments on everything. It is a vital technique to emphasize the inner essence rather than the outer fact.

There are a lot of manipulative and stylized parts in formalism film. As a matter of fact, most films stand between the two. On the one hand they show the true fact.

On the other hand, stylized processing techniques are used in these films to clarify the director™s subjective opinions. While The Bicycle Thieves, as a

masterpiece of realism films is really worth watching and analyzing. This film is a famous representative work of Vittorio De Sica who is a well-known character in Italian Neo-Realism movement after World War?. The story in the film was set in Roman after the Second World War. Both of the two main leading roles in the film were chosen from nonprofessional actors. And at that time Roman was devastated. Its infrastructure, political institutions and social services had to be rebuilt immediately.

The hero in this film named Ricci who defeated dozens of competitors and won a work chance to put up posters for a company. However before getting this job, he must possess a bicycle. Therefore, he and his wife decided to sell some of their daily necessities to get some money in order to buy a bicycle. With the new bicycle, Ricci got this valuable job. And with this valuable job, he could get a respectable income. All his families were looking forward their happy new life. Surprisingly, on the first day of getting his valuable job, Ricci™s new bicycle was taken away by bicycle thieves.

Then, Ricci and his son started looking for their bicycle in every bicycle market. Although they tried hard, they could not find the bicycle anymore. Losing the bicycle means losing the valuable job. With so much disappointed experience, Ricci got desperate and decided to steal a bicycle instead of going on looking for his own bicycle.

But he was not that lucky, when he tried to steal the bicycle, he was caught by the bicycle™s owner and his friends. We can fell Ricci™s desperation and the son™s sadness when we saw that Ricci was caught in front of his son.

His son was shocked and burst into tears. In the end of the film, both of the father and the son were desperate toward life and with tears in their eyes.

In this film, the director uses realism techniques to show the hard lives of ordinary people in Roman city after World War?. Through this film, the audience can know the living conditions of Italy at that time quite well. According to CineCollage (Reference 1), Italian neorealism is a style of film characterized by stories set among the poor and working class, filmed on location, frequently using nonprofessional actors. As one of the most famous representative film of Italian Neo-Realism, The Bicycle Thieves has great effects on the following film art form. The use of realism techniques can be concluded in the follow aspects.

Firstly, it is the first time to choose unprofessional actors to act as the leading role. No one else has ever done it before. Such innovation is really a remarkable breakthrough of Italian Neo-Realism films. Italian neorealism is a style of film characterized by stories set among the poor and working class, filmed on location, frequently using nonprofessional actors. The mixture of professional and unprofessional actors has special effects on the film. On the one hand, these actors can learn from each other and the interactions between these actors bring a kind of authenticity to the film.

This kind of authenticity combines real life and art form together. Thereby, audience can easily find the theatricality from the real life. On the other hand, many dialogues in the film are made impromptu by these nonprofessional actors according to their own life experience.

Thereby, we can draw a conclusion that, The Bicycle Thieves may belong to realism spectrum. Secondly, the theme of Bicycle Thieves is quite different from Hollywood films. As mentioned above, Italian neorealism is a style of film characterized by stories set among the poor and working class.

(Reference 1) The main purpose of this film is to reflect true lives and living difficulties of ordinary people. It can give the audience very deep impressions and can move them constantly. Furthermore, audiences can always acquire some invaluable advice and can form their own understandings towards life through watching this film.

Because they firmly believe the story is true and it may take place in somewhere in their country. It is a vital trait of Italian Neo-Realism films. Although Hollywood films are famous for their grand and gorgeous settings, it cannot always touch audiences' inner heart. Therefore, the theme of this film apparently makes it sit on realism spectrum. Thirdly, the shooting style of Bicycle Thieves need to be mentioned. When making this film, the director did not bring in props and sets.

Instead, he shot it in real streets. According to Dogme 95 (Reference 1), Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in. The combination of actors' performs and real social environments rather than artificial sets was really a breakthrough. Different from the traditional films, which emphasized on the coordination of settings, The Bicycle Thieves broke the constraint of space. Because the director made a brave decision - carry their cameras to the streets and try to record real stories taken place in the real streets.

In doing so, the film can become irreplaceable real. And from this point, we can safely place this film into realism spectrum. In addition, the recording nature of this film also makes *The Bicycle Thieves* a neo-realist film.

The recording nature means the film-maker is trying to record some physical facts. It is loyal representation of real figures and events in the film. The director telling the story in the film is like broadcasting news. Real figures and events here means the real style and features of true life rather than some particular figures and events. Besides, the use of long shots adds the sense of reality to the film. After all things we see through our eyes in daily lives are mostly full-length shots.

The director's dream is to convey unmanipulated reality. So he uses few montages. One advantage of full-length shots is that they can show integral whole events which makes the story real and nature. One manipulated picture can destroy the authenticity of a film.

That is why Neo-Realism films often use large quantities of full-length shots. They can make films nature and real. *The Bicycle Thieves* uses lots of full-length shots and leave the audience a sense of reality. Last but not least, the structure of *The Bicycle Thieves* is really clear. The development of story follows the action and the audience can find the story in the material themselves.

According to American Direct Cinema, one of the essential rules of observational cinema is Follow the action, do not lead. Story must be found™ in the material. (Reference 1) The film-makers of *The Bicycle Thieves* try to tell the story in chronological order according to the coherent logical

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connection of events instead of contriving one. We can hardly find the technique of flashback in this film. All the events in this film occur naturally one by one. It is the simplest and the most outstanding structure of Neo-Realism film and at the same time, which the most touching one.

From Kracauer™s point of view, there are clashes between realism and formative tendencies, films which combine two or more dimensions are very frequent; for instance, many a movie featuring an everyday-life incident includes a dream sequence or a documentary passage. (Kracauer, 5) Maybe in Kracauer™s opinion, it is better to use some formative techniques in this film. All in all, as a masterpiece of Italy Neo-Realism film, The Bicycle Thieves makes a lot of breakthroughs and plays an important and irreplaceable role in the development of film art. It is really worth watching. ;, [-Z]