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NAAC ACCREDITED 'A' GRADE

Topic: Italian Neo-Realist Movement

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What is Italian Neorealism?

The term Neorealismo, which directly translates to “new reality” or “new realism,” sprouted in the wake of World War II in Italy. Neorealismo signified a trend in art and film that aimed to provide insight into the contemporary Italian society of the 1940’s. The films associated with Italian Neorealism are focused on showing Italy removed from Fascist influence.

Characteristics of Italian Neorealism:

- Social disorder
- Representations of extreme poverty
- “The Rehabilitation of an entire culture and people through cinema” - Martin Scorsese

Motion Pictures

The Neorealistic movement in film paralleled the Italian literary movement. The films’ style was a documentary-like objectivity; actors either were or

looked like ordinary people involved in commonplace situations. Although Neorealist productions were often crudely and hastily made, their radical departure from the escapist idealization of traditional moviemaking and their boldness in handling contemporary themes had an international impact.

The first of such pictures to appear was Roberto Rossellini's *Open City* (1945), an antifascist film showing the brutal decisions imposed on the Italians by the Nazi occupation. Rossellini's *Paisan* (1946), six vignettes of the war in Italy, had a similar harrowing quality. Other important Neorealist films were Vittorio De Sica's *Shoeshine* (1946) and *The Bicycle Thief* (1948), dealing with the everyday life of working-class Italians, and Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema* (1948; *The Earth Trembles*), a story of impoverished Sicilian fishermen, which used no professional actors. After 1950 the trend of Italian films turned from realism toward fantasy, symbolism, and literary themes.

The impact of Italian Neorealism in film cannot be overstated. The works of Roberto Rossellini, Federico Fellini, and other major Neorealist directors are undeniable when it comes to the influence they have had on cinema throughout the world. They also had an immense effect on a young boy growing up in Queens named Martin Scorsese.

We're going to look at a series of seminal Italian Neorealist films, including; *Roma Città Aperta*, *Ladri di Biciclette*, *I Vitelloni*, *La Strada*, and *Viaggio in Italia* and how they informed stylistic decisions in some of Scorsese's best films.

In 1937, Benito Mussolini founded Cinecittà, a massive studio that operated under the slogan "Il cinema è l'arma più forte," which translates to "the cinema is the strongest weapon." The purpose of the studio was to produce propaganda films for the Italian state. But during the war, it was bombed by Allied forces and nearly entirely destroyed.

After the war, filmmakers had to find a new way to produce their stories. Many directors chose to shoot their films in the streets, with low budgets and amateur actors.

Roma Citta Aperta (1945)

Scorsese's sage scrutiny on neorealist films

Roma Citta Aperta was one of the first films to be produced outside of Cinecitta after the war. Director Roberto Rossellini consulted his close friend Federico Fellini and Sergio Amidei to help with the script.

The film struggled in production while being shot just months after Italy was declared open from Nazi occupation. Roma Citta Aperta was Rossellini's first anti-fascist film. It was also Fellini's first foray into Neorealist film and is recognized today as one Italian cinema's most important films.