

## Neorealism: Debates

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### Abstract

The term neorealism has been defined and debated among social scientists and film historians. Its characteristics and milieu have been contextualized by its theoreticians and practitioners. Andre Bazin and other humanists analyzed and made sense of the neorealist movement through the lens of its ethical implications. Another humanist Luigi Chiarini argued that neorealism tends towards new cinematic forms that stand for an authentic revolution concerning the notion of cinema as a spectacle. The neorealism postulate put up by socio-historians was a community-focused, war-and-antifascist resistance-focused account of events. Robert Philip Kolker distinguished between two neorealisms: the first was an Italian film genre that existed from 1945 to 1955; the second was a political movement, an aesthetic movement, and a radical reorientation of filmmaking that altered our understanding of the past and prepared the way for much of what came after. Alternatively, neorealism was seen as a paradigm shift away from reality-based aesthetic movements like naturalism and verismo, as well as cinematic examples like the 1930s French populism or the British documentary school of John Grierson and Basil Wright. Some others rejected it to be a movement. In the course of our discussion, we will try to understand neorealism in the context of contemporary Italian society and the background of fascism.

**Keywords:** Humanists, Socio-historians, Andre Bazin, Movement, Fascism

The term neorealism has been defined and debated among social scientists and film historians. Its characteristics and milieu have been contextualized by its theoreticians and practitioners. Neorealism was seen and analyzed by humanists such as Andre Bazin concerning its ethical implications. Another humanist Luigi Chiarini argued that neorealism tends towards new cinematic forms that stand for an authentic revolution concerning the notion of cinema as a spectacle. Neorealism, as proposed by socio-historians, was an all-inclusive account of the war and antifascist resistance that prioritized social issues. One neorealism was the style of Italian cinema from 1945 to 1955; the other was a political movement, an aesthetic movement, and a radical reorientation of cinema that altered our perception of previous works and allowed for

much of what came later. Robert Philip Kolker discussed both neorealisms. As an alternative, neorealism was seen as a paradigm shift, away from reality-based aesthetic movements like naturalism and verismo, as well as cinematic examples like the 1930s French populism and the British documentary school of John Grierson and Basil Wright. Some others rejected it to be a movement. In the course of our discussion, we will try to understand neorealism in the context of contemporary Italian society and the background of fascism.

### Humanists

Humanists analyzed and made sense of the neorealist movement through the lens of its ethical implications. If neorealism is not first and foremost a humanism and secondly a cinematic style, then what? asks Andre Bazin.<sup>1</sup> Among the humanist neorealists, Bazin stood out. He thinks that modern Italian films are great for what they stand for - a fundamental humanity that allows us to enjoy a revolutionary flavor without the presence of fear. Although the 1974 Congress on neorealism was very critical of Bazin's characterization of neorealism as a "revolution in art," he continued to defend it. Not just in Bazin's but also in other authors' works, the word revolution appears often. An overstatement would be to call this movement a revolution; it was heavily influenced by and linked to conventional aesthetics as well as 1930s cinema (descriptive calligraphist realism, de Robertis's documentarism, Rossellini's war films, French Populism, etc.).<sup>2</sup> However, from Bazin's perspective, it was a revolutionary shift in the way the form influences the content. Because they put the occurrence ahead of the narrative, De Sica and Zavattini were able to substitute a micro action based on endlessly divisible attention to the nuances in even the most mundane situations for the plot itself. This is well seen in *Bicycle Thieves*, as the film skillfully portrays a seemingly straightforward scenario while skillfully highlighting all of the complexity involved. This disqualifies any semblance of psychological, dramatic, or ideological order among the depicted events.<sup>3</sup>

The centrality of *mise en scène* to neorealist films, according to Bazin. His use of the term "mise en scène" alludes to techniques like deep focus and the sequence shot, which draw the spectator farther into the action on screen. Because the depth of focus puts the spectator in closer proximity to the picture than he is to reality, Bazin finds its progression to be more than simply a filmic technique; it is a dialectical step forward in the history of the film language. Consequently, this points to a more engaged audience and a more positive attitude about the ongoing performance. On top of that, deep-focus photography has a philosophical downside:

<sup>1</sup> James Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, OUP, U.S.A. 1981, p. 389

<sup>2</sup> Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present*, Univ. of California Press, California, 1984, p.134

<sup>3</sup> Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema Vol. II*, University of California Press, California, 1971, pp. 89-90

"While montage eliminates ambiguity in expression through its very nature, neorealism helps restore a sense of reality's ambiguity to cinema." Free to select, we are free to interpret.<sup>4</sup> Bazin's dedication to Italian neorealism was guided not only aesthetically, but equally by socio-political sympathies with a movement that emerged out of Catholics and Communists uniting against fascism. Moreover, he wrote in an era of depressing post-war Europe and he had experienced the inconceivable terror of genocide and mass extermination.<sup>5</sup>

Bazin acknowledged a realism of perceptual experience wherein the day-to-day life routine of 'apperception, acknowledgment, and mental elaboration' is recreated in films.<sup>6</sup> For Bazin, authenticity is continually a question of being grounded in a perceptual as well as a specific social reality. Therefore, according to Bazin, realism is more of a stance or attitude that the filmmaker takes toward his subject matter than it is a method or result that the audience is given.<sup>7</sup>

In his work "Neorealism," Bazin argues that the term refers to a way of seeing the world that is "disposed to see things as a whole."<sup>8</sup> Bazin argues that in neorealism there is definite "wholeness" to reality. Reality, in his view, is an "inseparable whole," and this theory suggests that the "fact" that a film uses has an ontological unity that the film must respect. The producer's receptiveness ("a cognizance arranged to consider things to be entirety"), according to Bazin, is the filter through which the objects themselves ("reality conceived as a whole"), which constitute the film's ontological existence, reveal their meaning. Neorealist cinema subordinates itself to the "facts" and becomes a window on a certain reality or a particular situation or a specific historical circumstance.<sup>9</sup> In Italy, another humanist, Luigi Chiarini argued that neorealism tends towards new cinematic forms that stand for an authentic revolution concerning the notion of cinema as a spectacle. He examined the neorealist phenomenon, criticizing the simplified socio-historical approaches. His main point was that people often mistake neorealism for cinematic verismo and think they can make a neorealist film by simply filming real people in real locations, without actors. Ignoring the need for a spiritual attitude in favor of a technical truth was the result of that error. Assigning the label "neorealist" to any films that deal with social issues and have exterior

<sup>4</sup> James Monaco, *How to Read a Film...*, p. 389

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses*, Routledge, New York, 2010, p. 28

<sup>6</sup> Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory*, OUP, New York, 1984, p. 50

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory...*, p. 29

<sup>8</sup> Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema...*, p. 97

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory...*, p. 30

characteristics like using amateur performers and filming on location is completely subjective.<sup>10</sup>

One of the first Italian cinema reviewers to be impacted by Benedetto Croce's views, Mario Gromo, whenever he discussed neorealism, linked historical events to the rise of human liberty. He maintained that life was harsh and merciless when half of the country was still under fascism when it ended German rule; the filmmakers, who were both liberated and fixated on this pain, made movies on this torment. As a result, *Open City* and *Shoeshine* came into being and were praised globally. They emerged unexpectedly among an environment of three worn-out conformities: the majority of American industry; the Russian, 100 percent political; what's more, the French, for the most part artistic. What arose was not a new reality as it was a new truth based on the pursuit of new freedom.<sup>11</sup>

### Socio-historians

Among socio-historians, the two most influential figures were the Italian Umberto Barbaro and the French Georges Sadoul. They were too rigid in their neorealism postulation, which they saw as the only way to articulate the war and antifascist struggle while still emphasizing social concern. Its advocates sought to link all subsequent trends in Italian film to this pioneering movement. The argument that neorealist cinema was constantly portraying unfair and distorted social structures that threatened to damage and pervert the necessary and inner human value gained ground.<sup>12</sup> It will need a more thorough examination to prove that the central concern of influential "dialectics of reality and appearance," or "appearance or illusion of reality," was portrayed in neorealist films in addition to social reality that was artistically constructed. George Sedoul recognizes that the people, their struggle for national independence, and the theoretical basis explained profoundly and secretly by anti-Fascists led to the emergence of neorealism after the war. Following the broad principles of neorealism put out by Umberto Barbaro, who believed that art was both conditioned and defined by its time, reflecting a predetermined reality while simultaneously looking forward to the future and helping to lay the groundwork for a new age, Sedoul created works that reflected this outlook.<sup>13</sup>

When compared to other social critics, Sigfried Kracauer did a better job of explaining where neorealism came from. He said that when big things happen on the streets, those same streets

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<sup>10</sup> Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p.134

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p. 134

<sup>12</sup> Gerald Mast, *A Short History of the Movies*, New York: Pegasus, 1971, p. 340

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p. 135

would eventually make their way to the big screen. Paisan and Potemkin have this "street" element, even if they are ideologically and methodologically different. Rather than depicting personal issues or societal events, they show environmental conditions or occurrences that pertain to society as a whole. Put simply, they show a preference for documentary style. Dramatizing societal events in general is the purpose of these tales. There seems to be a close relationship between the documentary style and the preference for depicting genuine people on film.<sup>14</sup>

Andre Bazin's open letter to Guido Aristarco marked the conclusion of the fight between socio-historians and humanists, which had its genesis in the dispute around Rossellini. Just because Rossellini did not conform to the socio-historical standards put out by Aristarco did not mean that he should be disregarded as one of the great Italian filmmakers, in Bazin's opinion. Both the eventual fate of Italian film and the more extensive view of neorealism might be endangered if Bazin were to limit neorealism to just one aspect of its experience. By rejecting the formula that neorealism had been trapped in with the rejection of filmmakers such as Rossellini, Fellini, and Antonioni, the 1974 Pesaro group, for example, refused to see neorealism as a movement. Many film histories include socio-historical explanations, which, on the other hand, led some critics and filmmakers outside of Italy to mistrust neorealism since they saw it as nothing more than a "typical product of the traditional narrative cinema" that didn't leave room for experimental formal practices.<sup>15</sup>

The head editor of Cinema Nuovo, Bazin, made some remarks in a letter he sent to Aristarco:

Your relentless pursuit of flaws in Gelsomina's disheveled locks in *La Strada* or your contemptuous treatment of Rossellini's final feature *Voyage in Italy* lead me to believe that you are stifling some of the most exciting and potentially fruitful branches of the school of thought that continues to be known as neorealism, all in the name of theoretical purity. (These two films) have given us the impression of creative creativity originating straight from the spirit that infuses the Italian school, rather from being seen as a rupture with neorealism or even a regression here in France. Let me do my best to explain why. However, I must first admit that I have a deep distaste for a conception of neorealism that just considers one facet of it at the moment; doing so limits its future possibilities based on assumptions made in the past.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*, New York: OUP, 1960, pp. 98-99

<sup>15</sup> Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p.136.

<sup>16</sup> Andre Bazin, *What is Cinema*, Vol II..., p. 95

## Was Neorealism a Movement?

There are several forms of neorealism, according to Rossellini; each has its own merits. However, his was an ethical stance, an effort to understand oneself concerning a situation. Even in the early 1970s, there were neorealism skeptics among Italy's cinema reviewers. Unity, they said, is essential for a movement, and neorealism was lacking in that regard. According to Micciche's 1974 opening presentation at the neorealism conference:

One of the reasons neorealism fell from grace was the misconception that it was and, worse, sought to be an aesthetic, while it was neither. An "ethic of aesthetic" defined neorealism. "Shall we have a culture capable of protecting people against suffering instead of just comforting them?" was Vittorini's question. It was the response of a generation of filmmakers. Despite their striking stylistic differences, the Viscontis, De Sicas, Rossellinis, and De Santis were all morally aligned in this one area.<sup>17</sup>

By its very name, neorealism sought to reassert the realm of reality, rejecting the claims of earlier cinematic traditions while simultaneously posing as a precursor to the cinema of the future.<sup>18</sup> Almost every subsequent cinema trend in both the West and the East can be traced back to the aforementioned director, who was so drastically different from the other, and who brought out phenomena with clearly defined technical and moral components.

According to Basil Wright, cinema will never be the same after films like *Bicycle Thief*, *Germany Year Zero*, *Shoeshine*, and *Paisan*. The filmmakers' intellectual world got permanently embedded with the neorealist approach. From Godard and Truffaut to Clouzot, Clement, and Cayatte, it had an impact on French film. Cinematographers from Japan such as Kinoshita, Ichikawa, and Oshima were heavily impacted by it, while Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchali* was also influenced by neorealism.<sup>19</sup> Though the neorealism movement only lasted until the early 1950s, James Monaco argues that its aesthetic effects were felt for a long time thereafter, lending credence to Basil Wright's claim.<sup>20</sup> According to French critic Louis Corelles, the first efforts to create an affordable, more realistic, and technically free cinema can be seen in the neorealism of 1944–1945, the British free cinema of 1956–1959, and the French new wave of 1958–1959.<sup>21</sup>

Robert Philip Kolker distinguished between two neorealisms: the first was an Italian film genre that existed from 1945 to 1955; the second was a political movement, an aesthetic movement,

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance*..., p.129.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Philip Kolker, *The Altering Eye: Contemporary International Cinema*, New York, OUP, 1983, p.17

<sup>19</sup> Basil Wright, *The Long View*, New York 1974, pp. 221-222

<sup>20</sup> James Monaco, *How to Read*..., p. 253

<sup>21</sup> Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance*..., p.130

and a radical reorientation of filmmaking that altered our understanding of the past and paved the way for much of what came after. On occasion, he says, filmmakers like Visconti, Rossellini, De Sica, Fellini, and others from that era nearly mirrored the idea and execution of neorealism. By analyzing the visual elements of neorealism's films via the lens of theory and theory as seen through a certain historical lens, we may have a better grasp of the movement. Specifically, a new awareness of cinematic representation and narrative telling began to develop with the advent of neorealism, which Louis Althusser calls a "break" in the tradition.<sup>22</sup>

The seriousness of the social and ethical commitment toward neorealist practice was reflected, in De Sica's belief, by *Sciuscia* (Shoeshine), his first film of the post-war era. The need to escape the past stories told in Italian cinema, to immerse oneself in actual life, to face reality, to find one's identity, and to seek redemption was universal, in his view, and he believed that the Second World War experience was crucial. *Shoeshine* was a little stone to contribute to the ethical rebuilding of the nation. Films that were seen as vehicles for emancipation and independence emerged after the eras of Fascist obscurantism and regional escapist cinema, according to Elio Petri, who characterized neorealism as a tool "leading to knowledge about reality".<sup>23</sup> It was liberation from the sin of aiding and abetting fascism's immoral moral order and social inequities that brought about this release.

Zavattini argued that the neorealist movement recognized that films should depict the daily life and circumstances of the Italian masses.<sup>24</sup> Zavattini's primary tenet was the unwavering acknowledgment of "life all things considered," which included catching reality as intently as conceivable continuously. The filmmakers' desire to include photographable content was dismissed by him. He said that all intellectuals were shaped by their history, namely the twenty years of Fascism in Italy.<sup>25</sup> Zavattini's primary tenet was the unwavering acknowledgment of "life all things considered," which included catching reality as intently as conceivable continuously. The filmmakers' desire to include photographable content was dismissed by him. He said that all intellectuals were shaped by their history, namely the twenty years of Fascism in Italy..<sup>26</sup> Neorealists desired to observe the world without mediations and interferences so that the lives of the poor would unfold themselves. It also did not want predetermined ends where emotional excesses, demand for sacrifice, and hope of mobile acts from the hero dominated the moving image. Felix A. Morlion, an Italian Critic, wrote in 1948:

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<sup>22</sup> Robert Philip Kolker, *The Altering Eye...*, p. 20

<sup>23</sup> Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism*, Princeton; Princeton Univ. Press, 1986, pp. 14-15

<sup>24</sup> Robert Philip Kolker, *The Altering Eye...*, p. 45

<sup>25</sup> Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p. 104

<sup>26</sup> Robert Philip Kolker, *The Altering Eye...*, p. 47

A specific premise that the Italian neo-realist school upholds is in direct opposition to another that views film only through the prism of language, lighting effects, and entirely fictional scenarios. The central tenet of neorealism is that the screen functions as a magical portal leading to the "real"; according to this school of thought, cinematic art is the practice of channeling one's innermost thoughts and feelings into an extreme representation of the unseen reality that underlies all mental processes.<sup>27</sup>

Post synchronization was a method used by Italian neorealists in which dialogues recorded on location were not used except as a reference in the recording of the final soundtrack made under controlled acoustical conditions. It was pivotal in developing the aesthetics of neorealism (and, by extension, Italian filmmaking in general). The vast majority of the films were filmed in post-synchronization silent mode. This experience imparted them with high levels of skills in sound recording and dubbing. So much so that almost no one even noticed a difference once they refined it. One of the most well-known examples is the film *Bicycle Thief*, in which an actor dubbed Lamberto Maggiorani's voice for the role of an unemployed laborer.

The music in neorealist films, according to French critic Jacques Daniol Valcroze, is evocative of the outdoors, the filmmakers move quickly, and there is no effort to achieve any kind of impression. The performers follow these motions; they 'exist,' submissively looking into the lens. According to Italian film scholar Giuseppe Ferrara, the neorealist cinematographer, like the illustrious Caravaggio, only followed the "stream of light." To rephrase, if the light came in via only one window, then there was just one source of illumination that shone a light on the most basic aspects of existence. Things were not meant to be made beautiful; rather, their rawness, authenticity, and strikingness were to be enhanced by their perceived lack of refinement. A dazzling realism that had not been seen in previous movies was a hallmark of neorealism.<sup>28</sup>

Neorealism has been defined by some as an aesthetic of rejection, according to these commentators. Jurji Lotman, a Soviet semiotician, fully adopted the theory of rejection in his work. The "equation of art and extra-artistic reality" was the ultimate goal of Italian neorealism, he said, which was a reaction against pomposity. Its defining features were a consistent rejection of convention, whether it was the employment of professional actors, the star system,

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<sup>27</sup> Felix A. Morlion, *The Philosophical Basis of Neorealism* in David Overby ed. *Springtime in Italy: A Reader on Neorealism*, Hamden: Conn, Archen Books, 1978

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p.13

montage, established setups, ready language, dramatic melodic accompaniment; or stereotypical heroes or distinctive scenes.<sup>29</sup>

No significant neorealist picture can withstand Lotman's reasoning. Achieving the full "equation of art and extra artistic reality" was something that the leading neorealist directors likely never even attempted. Pro actors were used in *Rome Open City*, *Bitter Rice*, and *Without Pity*. *Tragic Hunt*, *Shoeshine*, and *Umberto D.* included prepared dialogue. *Bicycle Thieves*, *Bitter Rice*, and *La Terra Trema* had an intricate montage. *Germany Year Zero* featured dramatic musical accompaniment. All Lotman did was boil neorealism down to an anti-historical stance.<sup>30</sup>

As an alternative, neorealism was seen as a paradigm shift away from reality-based aesthetic movements like naturalism and verismo, as well as cinematic examples like the 1930s French populism and the English narrative school of John Grierson and Basil Wright. The French savant and film pundit Amedee Ayfre largely developed this method; she saw neorealism as a movement that made extensive use of cinema to depict real-life events and all the complexities and hidden meanings inside them. According to an article by Ayfre published in 1963, neorealist films presented themselves to those who want to see them via novice eyes as simplistic pictures without a predominating contextual idea. This led many historical researchers of the time to dismiss them as artifacts rather than works of art, seeing them as just documenting events rather than interpreting them. This kind of simplification occurs anytime completely novel items are unable to be assessed using current criteria.<sup>31</sup> The issue was brought to a head by Ayfre. The neorealist films took reviewers off guard, and the incoherence of the theoretical stances that followed them contributed to the uncertainty that ultimately led to their denigration. Although the original proponents of neorealism were no longer at the forefront of the movement, the argument over the many features of the school persisted for a long time. Just like some reviewers, moviegoers were ill-prepared to embrace pictures that were so drastically different from what they had seen up to that point. Films that failed to captivate audiences, whether it was because of their unclear and timely themes (like *Rome Open City* and *Paisan*) or their extra-cinematic elements (like *Bitter Rice's* erotica), often did not do well commercially.<sup>32</sup>

### State Retaliation

<sup>29</sup> Jurji Lotman, *Semiotics of Cinema*, Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1976, p.21

<sup>30</sup> Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p.133

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p.133

<sup>32</sup> Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p.133

The state retaliated with the time-honoured privilege of censorship. The Giulio Andreotti Law of 1949 contained certain provisions to check films portraying Italy in an unflattering light. The introduction of strict pre-censorship gave the state control over the film industry.<sup>33</sup> The submission of all scripts to a special ministerial commission and granting of production loans to only those that received official acceptance. Films dealing with difficult topics saw a precipitous decline in production as a result of this regulation, which discouraged investors from putting money into films with low box office potential. A film might have its export license revoked under this regulation because it allegedly "slandered Italy." As a result of this approach, they lost out on overseas profits that were crucial to the neorealist movement, since sales at home were insufficient to support manufacturing expenses. The denial of entry into foreign markets was an assured guarantee of financial breakdown.<sup>34</sup>

By writing an open letter to De Sica and publishing it in the Christian Democratic Party's monthly, *Liberta*, on February 24, 1952, Andreotti summarized the claims made against the neorealists. Andreotti claims that neorealist films were spreading false information about Italy, presenting an image of a country plagued by poverty, unemployment, and social unrest. According to Andreotti, De Sica has a social responsibility that goes beyond only exposing the injustices of a system and a generation; it also has to help find solutions to these problems. Andreotti begged De Sica to make no less of a notional commitment to the kind of constructive optimism that might help mankind progress and find hope. He says that the international reputation that the director has fittingly acquired provides him the right to demand that he acknowledge his responsibility and accomplish this duty.<sup>35</sup>

Yet, most filmmakers persisted in denouncing Andreotti's policies and planning protests in response. The *Lost Youth* of Pietro Germi and other films were to be suppressed by the government in December 1947, and 35 filmmakers opposed this in a letter they sent to Andreotti. In a series of essays published in the communist monthly *Rinascita* on March 3, 1949, eleven prominent Italian filmmakers criticized Andreotti's rule; the movement for the Defense of Italian Cinema was established in February 1948. The following was Pietro Germi's summary of the scenario there:

Neorealism is here to stay, not a passing fad. It did not emerge out of thin air; unfortunately, some will find themselves left behind and betrayed by the art form before it ever begins. A lot of people have worked very hard to accomplish their goals. Instead of regressing, they press forward. There has been a long and hard fight for contemporary Italy, and the present cinema is a part of that. The

<sup>33</sup> Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p. 91

<sup>34</sup> Roy Armes, *Patterns of Realism...* p. 28 and Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p. 91

<sup>35</sup> Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p. 91

"lists of grievances" of a certain era are reflected in its works. Italian film has found a new language and an endless well of ideas. The growth of this revelation, however, is beyond anyone's control; it is still in its early stages.<sup>36</sup>

### **Decline of Neorealism**

There are many causes of the decline of neorealism some of which have been discussed in the preceding pages: the state and financial exigencies to subdue its harshness; and the survival of prewar stylistic techniques.<sup>37</sup> At the end of the forties, neorealism was struck with a severe crisis. The crisis had two facets- an objective one (economic) and a subjective one (artistic). In the early 1950s, Giulio Andreotti was selected as Director of Performing Arts and given extensive powers by the government. Any film portraying a negative image of Italy was refused viewing rights in Italy and since he controlled bank loans, Andreotti could also hold back funds from films he believed excessively neorealist in inspiration.<sup>38</sup> Andreotti helped the business make a little money, but he also destroyed the neorealist movement since it threatened the power structure. The neorealism dilemma, according to renowned Italian historian and literary critic Carlo Salinari, was rooted in an objective general truth, namely, the resurgence of capitalism in Italy or the development of Italian society. A big, brutal, and direct hit was dealt to the film industry. The state capitalized on cinema's reliance on the industrial framework by using its whole political authority. To halt any further development of neorealism, several administrative measures were used.<sup>39</sup>

There was a subjective explanation for the crisis that matched the objective ones. De Santis, Puccini, Lizzani, Zavattini, Barbaro, and Pietrangeli were among the neorealists who wanted to keep pushing the movement forward regardless of what happened, without changing their fundamental perspective. As time went on, other directors like Lattuada, Rossellini, Amidei, Fellini, Visconti, and others began to distance themselves from the neorealist framework, expressing their disapproval of its fixation on mundane, everyday reality and advocating instead the exploration of uncharted territory. The history of neorealism is similar to that of other creative forms that have, at various points in history, abandoned naturalism in favor of exploring metaphors.<sup>40</sup> The suffering and scarcity that the neorealists usually portrayed were not appealing to Italy on the eve of a transitory economic expansion. Moreover, the success of the films had created, contrary to neorealism's esteemed principles, a new generation of colossal global stars like Sophia Loren, Marcello Mastroianni, Anna Magnani, etc. The success

<sup>36</sup> Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance*..., p. 92

<sup>37</sup> Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film*..., p. 27

<sup>38</sup> Susan Hayward, *Key Concepts*..., p. 203

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance*..., p. 101

<sup>40</sup> Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance*..., p.101

of Italian films in the United States and the rising investment of American capital in the Italian industry created commercialized and corrupted imitations of neorealism.<sup>41</sup>

According to Millicent Marcus, the ideas that gave the neorealism movement its power and will to change the world are also the ones that are causing it to wane. The difficulty with creative forms that go beyond aesthetics is that they are vulnerable to the caprices of history, which may kill them out just as suddenly and arbitrarily as they brought them to life. While neorealism's inception within the resistance gave the movement a great deal of dignity and power, it also led to the movement's inevitable downfall in the 1948 elections, when the Christian Leftist faction crushed the well-known Front. This uncovered that the powers of response had overwhelmed the powers of progress. Once neorealism ceased to play a leading role in the historical process of renewal, it could not return to its Verghanian position as a dispassionate spectator of social injustice.<sup>42</sup> At conferences like Perugia and Parma, which aimed to discuss the neorealism issue and provide protection for the movement, the neorealism movement's divisive characteristics were on full display. There may have been some kind of agreement, but the disagreements and misunderstandings were too strong and the misunderstandings were too obvious. The movement seemed to have been forced underground, and more and more of its previous adherents were leaving.<sup>43</sup>

We might conclude that Italian film may have lost its postwar optimism about the endeavor to shape political reality by an ethical principle, but it never lost its profound, sincere, and everlasting commitment to the nobleness of that pursuit. Regardless of how reverent or disrespectful it may be, the Italian cinema industry has persistently acknowledged its enduring debt to neorealism in its postwar output. Additionally, other regions of the globe also displayed the echoes of Italian neorealist film. Thus, one can argue that the debates surrounding neorealism have tried to understand the phenomenon in the context of its unfolding in the Italian landscape. The Humanists as well as Socio – historians have presented their viewpoints keeping in mind the situation of those times. There have been arguments conveying that neorealism was a movement. The contrasting viewpoint rejects this formulation. In a way, such debates add to the contextuality and relevance of neorealism in the overall framework of post-war Italian cinema.

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<sup>41</sup> David Robinson, *World Cinema...*, p. 301

<sup>42</sup> Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film...*, p. 28

<sup>43</sup> Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance...*, p. 102