

Perspectives of World Cinemas (DE 410)

Film Review by Himanshu Upreti (173059004)

Michelangelo Antonioni

Red Desert



Source: Imdb

Director - Michelangelo Antonioni

Release year - 1964

Plot:

The movie revolves around a young woman with some peculiar or fanatic behaviour which was caused by some accident in her recent past. She's married to Ugo the manager of local plant but is soon having an affair with one of his co-workers, Corrado Zeller, who is visiting. Giuliana is shown unstable, not quite knowing anymore what her role is, be that a wife, or a mother. The neglectance of people in industrial society is shown in the movie. The neglectance of people in industrial society is shown in the movie. The movie was very popular but it was confusing and plot was not very clear..

New Definition of Neo Realism

- As compared to neorealism shown in "Children of Heaven", this movie came up with a brand new definition of Neorealist Cinema. The first myth, Antonioni broke was neorealism can only be shown in countryside and poor neighbourhoods.
- Antonioni tried to come up with realistic situation faced by industrial society.

Analysis of the movie

- The movie addresses a problem which isn't poverty, crime or unemployment. It's depression and loneliness.
- The color used in Red Desert was good. The slow camera movements and a lack of narrative are prominent characteristic of movie.
- The director looks like a contemplative filmmaker. The director wants to show and make the viewer feel than simply telling them or narrating to them. He created the same confusion and perplexion in viewer's mind as was actually going on Giuliana's mind.
- It was unknown even after the end of the movie what was the incident that brought such a change in Giuliana's life. He don't just wants to tell the viewer that her marriage is collapsing but rather shows it with Ugo's distance and her attraction to Corrado.
- The scene in the film occurs when Giuliana tells her son a story of a young girl on a deserted island. She chose to use a female protagonist rather than a male protagonist. I feel her son will be more able to relate to male version of her story. However, director's explicit choice of female protagonist was to reflect Giuliana

psychological state. The story clearly tells that she wants to escape her industrial environment and inhabit the of the story in all of its simplistic beauty.

- The movie plot was very perplexed but every frame of the movie have some meaning which a normal eye not able to see unless it have poetic vision. For example, Antonioni has used the colors to express hope and discord (like red and blue respectively). This information was went unnoticed by me, on first watch. With some internet resource I understand and the whole scene in waterfront cabin.
- While in her friend's gray colored cabin, we see her traverse in her typical state; upon entering a red room with her friends she exhibits signs of freedom and even promiscuity , the door to room opens, other guests are seen, the previous gray exterior is now exposed and her emotion rapidly shift backs.

Conclusions

While Michelangelo Antonioni came to be regarded as one of Italy's great Modernist artists through a career that spanned half a century, 1964's *Red Desert* saw him "going forward by going backward" and "returning to the cultural antecedents of the post-war movement," embracing the Neorealist storytelling of artists such as De Sica, Rossellini, and Visconti (Marcus 189). This isn't to say that *Desert* is old-fashioned, particularly when speaking of the period in which it was made; in fact, it could very well stand, on a formal level, as one of the most (for lack of a better term) modern examples of cinema seen up to that point.

- Children of Heaven is seems to be a very good example of early neo-realism and director has molded it into a more Iranian sense of Realism.
- The film's two young stars are as guileless as possible, even when the film contrives to turn the shoe issue into its main dramatic focus.
- Movie shows a very touching plot which everyone can understand. This movie can be included into one of idealist movie leaving the market aspect. Another such idealist movie that comes to my mind is **Lunchbox by Ritesh Batra**. I found lunchbox and children of heaven as a perfect example of neorealism.
- In "Children of Heaven," life in Teheran is documented in everyday detail, from the less desirable potatoes available to Ali's family to the way a woolen garment is carefully unraveled so it can be knitted into something else. Eking out a living is especially tough for a family of Turkish origin living in the southern part of the city, a neighborhood duly contrasted with a wealthy area in the north.
- Majid Majidi is part of the Iranian New Wave filmmakers. These filmmakers' work share some characteristics with the European art films of the period, in particular Italian Neorealism. Children of Heaven is just one example of Majid Majidi's films which takes neo-realism and molds it into a more Iranian sense of realism.
- There were many repetition of elements may be to demonstrate symbolic meaning in the film
 - the firm bonding of the Ali with the family, especially the father
 - the action of running, rushing of cycle etc
 - ali often connecting with the outside world in moments of solitude and depression (scene with the fishes in the pond)
 - flowing streams symbolizing some kind of loss
 - Majidi's poetic endings that stress on resurrection, or the destruction of the new and beloved which is then REPLACED by the new
- There is flow in the movie, something bad happens, protagonist handles it gracefully there seems a new hope but again something bad happens. It can be related to life of normal person
- The movie also seemed to be cinematic or dramatic, like when Ali's request is accepted to join the run without even eligible for run, or the lost shoes were found

to be wore by one of schoolmate of Zahra. However, most of part were pretty realistic

Conclusions

Overall, the movie was sensitive, sensible, realistic for every group of society, beautifully directed and is more than one time watch. Bollywood director **Priyadarshan** has also tried to remake the movie with a little different ending in his movie **Bumm Bumm Bole**.

<https://thefilmstage.com/features/a-closer-look-at-michelangelo-antonionis-red-desert/>

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<https://savagefilmandtv.com/2014/11/05/contemplating-red-desert/>

Neo realism

- Whereas Bicycle Thieves or Rome, Open City used the scars of a recent war to examine an environment and those who inhabit it, Red Desert explores these through personal grief and the looming shadow of industry. Giuliana (Monica Vitti) is a woman irrevocably shaped and damaged by the world of technology, someone ensconced by factories, grime, the fog of production, and the men who do the actual producing. In what's been referred to as a story of "interior neorealism," the contemporary social problem isn't poverty, crime, or unemployment – it's depression, which Antonioni treats as just a natural outcome of this setting (Marcus 188).

My favorite scene in the film occurs when Giuliana tells Valerio a story of a young girl on a desert island. It would have been more logical for Giuliana to tell Valerio a story with a male protagonist so that he could relate more to the tale. However, Giuliana's choice to use a female protagonist reflects her own psychological state. Giuliana wants to escape her industrial environment and inhabit the world of the story in all of its simplistic beauty. The rocks take on an eerie human like form, and sing to her. Because the look of the film is so bleak, this scene penetrates the membrane of the screen and assaults the viewer's visual senses with the beautiful colors of nature.

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<http://sensesofcinema.com/2015/feature-articles/hard-clarity-vaporous-ambiguity-the-fusion-of-realism-and-modernism-in-antonionis-early-1960s-films-1/>

<https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1491-red-desert-in-this-world>

Conclusion:

The movie is based on true events that happens in Potemkin ship during first world war. But the movie is pure propaganda. The Odessa Staircase was so influential that anyone who had no firm political conviction could become a Bolshevik after seeing the film.