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**MASTER'S THESIS**

**FICTIONAL TRUTH:  
Use of documentary style to create  
truthfulness in fiction films**

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Examiner:

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**Využití dokumentárního stylu k vytváření dojmu  
opravdovosti ve fikčních filmových příbězích**

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## Declaration

I declare that I have prepared my Bachelor's Thesis/Master's Thesis, Dissertation independently on the following topic:

Fictional Truth:  
Use of Documentary Style to Create Truthfulness in Fiction Films

under the expert guidance of my thesis advisor and with the use of the cited literature and sources.

Prague, date:

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Signature of the candidate

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the influence of documentary style on the truthfulness of two fiction films of the late 90's – *The Celebration* (1998) of Danish director Thomas Vinterberg and *Rosetta* (1999) of Belgian brothers Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. These two films can be explored through their amount of realism in various form, whether realism is their specified goal or not. To shed light on the realistic tendencies of these films they will be analysed through story content, acting, directing, cinematography, *mise-en-scène*, location choices, budget size, sound and editing. In addition, it is important to look at the chief points of the technological developments in documentary films and important earlier cinema movements to which these films share a resemblance. *The Celebration* was the first result of a movement, Dogma 95, announced 3 years prior to the film's release. *Rosetta* is a product of 'Dardennian' style developed from the directors' move from documentary to fiction. Both films will be analysed through their dedication to their respective movements, Dogma 95 and 'Dardennian' style, and both the films and the movements in accordance with documentary tradition.

## **Abstrakt**

Tato diplomová práce zkoumá vliv dokumentárního stylu na realističnost fikčních filmů z konce 90. let 20. století – *Rodinná oslava* (1998) dánského režiséra Thomase Vinterberga a *Rosetta* (1999), kterou natočili belgičtí bratři Jean-Pierre a Luc Dardenne. Tyto filmy lze zkoumat z hlediska různých forem realismu, který je v nich obsažen, ať už byl zamýšlený, či ne. Realistické tendence ve zkoumaných filmech budou osvětleny prostřednictvím analýzy obsahu, herectví, režie, kamery, mizanscény, výběru lokací, rozpočtu, zvuku a střihu. Dále se zaměří na důležité milníky ve vývoji dokumentárního filmu a významná filmová hnutí, se kterými tyto filmy mají styčné body. *Rodinná oslava*

byla prvním plodem hnutí Dogma95, které bylo založeno tři roky před premiérou tohoto filmu. Film *Rosetta* je zase výsledkem dardennovského stylu, který se vyvinul při žánrové změně tvorby obou režisérů od dokumentu k hranému filmu. Oba filmy budou analyzovány z hlediska kompatibility s daným hnutím – Dogma95 a dardennovským stylem – a oba filmy i hnutí pak z hlediska tradice dokumentárního filmu.

# Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	8
2. TRADITIONAL APPROACHES, TECHNOLOGY, MOVEMENTS AND THEORY .....	12
2.1 DEFINING FICTION AND DOCUMENTARY IN FILM .....	13
2.2 OVERLAPS BETWEEN FICTION AND NON-FICTION .....	18
2.3 LESS IS MORE .....	20
2.3.1 TECHNOLOGY AS A FACTOR .....	20
2.3.2 MOVEMENTS OF THE REAL: ITALIAN NEOREALISM AND THE FRENCH NEW WAVE..	22
3. DOGME 95: A NEW WAVE? .....	26
3.1 THE VOW OF CHASTITY.....	26
3.2 <i>THE CELEBRATION</i> .....	30
3.3 THE EFFECT OF DOGMA AND DOCUMENTARY STYLE IN <i>THE CELEBRATION</i> .....	39
4. JEAN-PIERRE AND LUC DARDENNE .....	41
4.1 DARDENNIAN STYLE.....	41
4.2 ROSETTA .....	46
4.3 DARDENNIAN AND DOCUMENTARY STYLE IN <i>ROSETTA</i> .....	52
5. CONCLUSION .....	54

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Documentary and fiction films each possess a respective set of rules that distinguish them from one another. Although these rules are not written in stone, the underlying connotations they carry can strongly influence the interpretations that are made, or are expected to be made, by the audience. Certain elements can enhance the sense of realism in a film more than others, due to the historical accuracy they portray or the stylistic manner in which they are created.

As audience members, we make assumptions about the real according to our past engagement with the discourses presented in cinema. In my analysis, I examine realism in film to explore how the audience experience can be influenced by significant historical developments in cinema. Elements that create expectations or assumptions will be explored throughout my discussion. Here, I focus on style, technique, budget, lighting, camera, filming location, acting, editing, and finally, sound.

To contextualize my analysis, I will present a brief history of fiction and documentary styles of films. This discussion of culturally and historically relevant contexts is intended to aid the understanding of how and why realism became more closely associated with one style than the other. To do this, I will examine two early examples of European cinematic movements, Italian Neorealism and the French New Wave, where directors expand the sense of realism depicted in film. I will continue my analysis with an exploration of two more recent examples of cinematic realism in European films. I will focus on two Cannes Award Winning films from the late 90's: *The Celebration*<sup>1</sup> (1998, Vinterberg) which tied for the jury price in 1998 and *Rosetta*<sup>2</sup> (1999, Dardenne), which

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<sup>1</sup> *The Celebration*, Thomas Vinterberg (Nimbus Film, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> *Rosetta*, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne (Les Films du Fleuve, 1999).



received the Palme d'Or Award in 1999. *The Celebration* was a result of the Dogma 95 movement in Denmark; a movement which was initially perceived as a joke. *Rosetta*, on the other hand, is a film by Belgian directors and brothers, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, whose body of work was already considered a serious one.

Both films drifted away from the traditions of fiction and towards documentary style. Over the course of my analysis, I will discuss how each of these filming styles attempts to convey a sense of realism within an existing or constructed reality. I will explore the cultural relevance of the previously mentioned movements to ground my discussion in the historical realities of the past. I intend to show how emergent methods in documentaries created the potential for audiences to engage in cultural critique by strengthening the sense of realism in their perceptions of 'truth' within a narrative. My main focus is to explore more recent examples of realism in fiction films, made possible by the innovations associated with documentary film. I intend to respond to the question: How did changes in documentary traditions and styles serve to create a sense of realism in the realities portrayed in fiction films, such as *The Celebration* and *Rosetta*?

In Chapter 2, I will discuss the traditions and meaningful movements in cinema and explore the technological developments that influenced the history of film. I explain how and why documentary styles were borrowed in the making of fiction films. In chapter 2.1 I analyze fiction and documentary films and their respective traditions separately, before discussing how these styles can also converge. To summarize briefly, although a fiction film may represent a real scenario and recreate it as an the film remains fiction due to its style. A documentary film, however, makes a 'truth claim' by implying the assertion that the film is showing a *real* scenario. Both fiction and documentary films generally fall in line with genre specific categories based on style and content.

Films can be organized for comparison using a large scale between fiction and non-fiction, as I will discuss in chapter 2.2. Documentaries may lean on stylistic elements of fiction; they may be planned and edited in a profoundly constructed manner. Documentary films can also be partially fictional, or entirely fabricated. Likewise, fiction may also borrow elements and methods from the documentary tradition, however this was an approach that took longer to launch.<sup>3</sup> I will attempt to identify the main differences between fiction and documentary and how they overlap and converge to establish a sense of realism in film.

In chapter 2.3 I will discuss how innovations in technology, after the introduction of film itself, color and sound, had an impact on cinematic realism. My analysis will reveal a clear correlation between established approaches in documentary and the methods used in Italian Neorealist films. I will also examine how emergent technologies in documentary filmmaking influenced the French New Wave from its start. To analyse my subject it is important to establish how fiction films have been influenced by documentary style in the past.

In chapter 3 I explore the cinematic environment in which Dogme 95 is born. Dogma 95 presented itself as a rebellion against cinema norms but had little to show for it, for being taken seriously, until three years later when *The Celebration* was released. In chapter 3.1 I will try make sense of the environment from which Dogma 95 emerged and the rules laid out in the Dogma manifesto. The rules serve a purpose but not all of them have been kept in the movement. *The Celebration* is then analysed in light of the rules and documentary style, and my findings brought together in chapter 3.3.

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<sup>3</sup> Parker Tyler, "Documentary Technique in Film Fiction." *American Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (1949), 101.

Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne started their career in documentary filmmaking. They along with Palme d'Or winning film *Rosetta* are the subject of chapter 4. In chapter 4.1 I will elaborate on the pair's style in fiction films, 'Dardennian style', and identify its relation to documentary style. *Rosetta* will then be discussed in terms of 'Dardennian style' and documentary style in chapter 4.2 ending with a summary in chapter 4.3.

In chapter 5 I will collect my main findings of both films and styles and show how they are influenced by the traditions of documentary films. I will compare their strength in achieving realism through style.

While many theorists have delved into film realism, my aim is to focus on a comparison of documentary style in fiction films and in doing so I rely predominantly on texts of scholars who focus primarily on documentary. I have chosen to focus on two films and two styles from the 90's which I feel explore methods of acquiring truthfulness. There are more modern approaches to be explored but I will leave that for another thesis.

## 2. TRADITIONAL APPROACHES, TECHNOLOGY, MOVEMENTS AND THEORY

“Cinema maintains an affair with the real, even where it presents its stories in an irrealist form.”<sup>4</sup>

Cinematic realists have argued that, of all the arts, it is the art of filmmaking that has the greatest potential to convey reality.<sup>5</sup> The main interest here is *how* this realistic state is achieved; whether it be merely by the medium's advantages for capturing sound, moving sight as well as the passing of time, or by rejecting an escapist Hollywood aesthetic. Some cinematic realists associate realism with methods that draw attention to the chosen medium through the use of jittery camerawork, for example, or in instances where the camera operates as a fly on the wall.

While fiction films aim to represent an artistic portrayal of life, documentaries claim to show what is real.<sup>6</sup> However, neither fiction nor documentary styles of film are confined to a set of unbreakable rules. Both styles can make adopt techniques that are more commonly associated with the other. Nevertheless, there are traditional approaches to each respective filming style, encompassed by a set of customs that have emerged over the years in the development of the seventh and youngest art form.

Although films can generally be categorized as fiction or nonfiction, there is a larger context to be considered. To discuss the ways in which documentary methods and styles can create a sense of realism in fiction films, I will first provide a brief overview of the traditional approaches associated with fiction and documentary films, respectively. For the purpose of this analysis, I will focus my discussion on narrative fiction films and emphasize specific developments in documentary filming styles that were later adopted in fiction films.

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Seel, “Film as Exploration” *The Arts of Cinema*, trans. Kizer S. Walker (New York: Cornell University Press, 2018), 90.

<sup>5</sup> Lindsey Fiorelli, “A New Defense of Cinematic Realism”, *Film and Philosophy*, vol. 19 (2015), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 33.

Each tradition will be discussed separately in terms of cinematography, editing, budget, location, *mise-en-scène*, acting, casting and sound to some extent.

Next I will outline the fundamental differences between the two traditional styles and the ways in which they can converge. I will discuss historically significant examples of cultural movements in French and Italian film to provide context for my analysis. Emphasis will be placed on the technological developments that created meaningful advances in the ways in which documentaries achieve a sense of authenticity. To understand how these advances can be integrated into fiction film, it is important to consider what can be regarded as 'real' in cinema and why. In the next section, I will also discuss theories surrounding the notion of 'truthfulness' within the context of cinematic critique and analysis.

## **2.1 DEFINING FICTION AND DOCUMENTARY IN FILM**

To define and categorize fiction and documentary styles of film, it is useful to first look at extreme examples of both in order to construct a spectrum shed a light on these styles as well as the implication of making an the exception has. Films will primarily belong to either fictional or documentary style.<sup>7</sup>

Fiction film, as indicated by its name, is created from a constructed, fabricated narrative or story. Films that fall into this category usually make use of a written script to create a fictitious reality and, although fiction films bear no responsibility for depicting factual portrayals, they can incorporate historical or contemporary events from real life.

Fiction films can be further categorized into specific genres and adhere to traditional structures. The physical spaces shown in the film are created beforehand on a

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<sup>7</sup> Seel, "Film as Exploration", 99.

set or in a studio. Exteriors are chosen and adapted to fit the story, carefully crafting the *mise-en-scène*. The story does not simply happen in front of the camera. Rather, everything that is in front of the camera must function to serve in the construction of the fictional reality by representing “information states we see in real life”.<sup>8</sup>

In fiction films camerawork is preplanned. The camera is generally either mounted on a tripod, static or mechanically moved to capture well prepared shots. A team of filmmakers arrange and plan how individual scenes are to be filmed prior to shooting, during in depth storyboarding sessions. An elaborate shooting schedule is then meticulously followed to bring the fiction film to life. Although fiction films vary in budget, they typically require a larger budget than documentary films. This is understandable; creating a fabricated world would likely require more material, and therefore more funding, than documentary films that set out to capture what already exists in the real world. None of the examples above are definitive. Fiction is supposedly fabricated and yet it can make use of the real. In *Introduction to Documentary* by film critic and distinguished documentary theorist Bill Nichols, the fiction film is described as easily identifiable works:

“[...]that conjure up an imaginary world populated by actors who play assigned roles (characters). [They] go about their business as if the camera that beholds them were in no way part of their world. What they say and [...] do may be incredible, fantastic, seemingly impossible, and hence amazing, but it all unfolds as if such occurrences were a plausible part of the world the characters inhabit.”<sup>9</sup>

Documentaries, in contrast to fiction, rely heavily on close relations with the real. There are expectations that arise with the audience when watching documentary cinema.

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<sup>8</sup> Fiorelli, “A New Defense”, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Nichols, *Introduction*, 144.

Nichols points to three basic assumptions that documentaries are: about reality, real people and telling stories about what has really happened.<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Brian Winston, Professor of Film and Media at the University of Lincoln and author of *Claiming the Real*, addresses claims about the relationship between image and reality. As Winston explains, the root word of 'documentary' comes from 'document' which derives from the Latin word '*documentum*', originally related to legal rights and contract making. It refers to evidence of some nature. The modern use of this word still holds this implication of evidence. The photograph, for example, is recognized as documentation and therefore as a source of evidence. Winston mentions that "this evidential status was passed to the cinematograph and is the source of the ideological power of documentary film."<sup>11</sup> Documentary films aim to capture and utilise material of real events, documented as they happened. The documentarist wants to show the real world, to catch it in action. The 'indexical quality', as Nichols calls it, strengthens the credibility of the documentary. It is the "uncanny sense of a document, or image that bears a strict correspondence to what it refers to. [...] The indexical quality of an image refers to the way in which its appearance is shaped or determined by what it records."<sup>12</sup>

Although, scripts for documentaries are written and plans are laid out, this style of film is comparatively less scripted or pre-planned than fiction films, particularly in relation to camera and storyboarding. The camera can feel present or as if it is observing from afar, depending on the approach. The filmmaker may rely on the flexibility of a lightweight, hand-held camera to show the subject as it exists and moves. The budget for documentaries are lower on average than Hollywood fiction films. The subjects, the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>11</sup> Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real: The Documentary Film Revisited*, (London: The British Film Institute, 1995), 11.

<sup>12</sup> Nichols, *Introduction*, 34.

people in front of the camera, are in control of their own clothing and make up. The *mise-en-scène* is composed of what actually exists on location and what arrives with subjects.

These are some suggestions of an extreme example of documentary style. However, Nichols defines non-fiction, documentary films as a cinematic form that addresses actual circumstances and events. They depict and engage with real people, so-called social actors, “who present themselves to us in stories that convey a plausible proposal about or perspective on the lives, situations, and events portrayed.”<sup>13</sup> The documentary filmmaker offers a perspective on the world based somewhat on their point of view but heeding the established facts about it rather than “creating a fictional allegory,”<sup>14</sup> as would be fitting in a fiction film. According to Nichols, there is an “intricate relationship that may arise between the interaction of the filmmaker and the film’s social actors who clearly co-exist in the same historical world. It is from this interaction that the film’s story, proposal, or perspective frequently arises.”<sup>15</sup>

These interactions, proposals and perspectives are defining forces when selecting the methods of approach for documentary filmmaking, where many diverse perspectives “overlap” and “intermingle”.<sup>16</sup>

The six principal documentary modes are:

- *Poetic mode*: emphasizes visual associations, tonal or rhythmic qualities, descriptive passages, and formal organization. [...] This mode bears a close proximity to experimental, personal, and avant-garde filmmaking.
- *Expository mode*: emphasizes verbal commentary and an argumentative logic. [...] This is the mode that most people associate with documentary in general.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 3.



- *Observational mode*: emphasizes a direct engagement with the everyday life of subjects as observed by an unobtrusive camera. [...]
- *Participatory mode*: emphasizes the interaction between filmmaker and subject. Filming takes place by means of interviews or other forms of even more direct involvement from conversations to provocations. Often coupled with archival footage to examine historical issues. [...]
- *Reflexive mode*: calls attention to the assumptions and conventions that govern documentary filmmaking. Increases our awareness of the constructedness of the film's representation of reality. [...]
- *Performative mode*: emphasizes the subjective or expressive aspect of the filmmaker's own involvement with a subject; it strives to heighten the audience's responsiveness to this involvement. Rejects notions of objectivity in favor of evocation and affect. [...] The films in this mode all share qualities with the experimental, personal, and avant-garde, but with a strong emphasis on their emotional and social impact on an audience."<sup>17</sup>

Documentaries are more likely to be considered realistic or untampered with by issuing “a truth claim of a sort, positing a relationship to history which exceeds the analogical status of its fictional counterpart”.<sup>18</sup> The truth claim of documentaries stems from how they maintain that the situations that they presented, and rely on the expectation of audience that this situation is or was as it is then represented in the film “exactly as they appear in the film.”<sup>19</sup> Documentaries have also been defined as ‘creative treatment[s] of actuality’,<sup>20</sup> a term which contradicts itself. Eventually they can be selective of what they show. The selection is based on the importance to the subject matter of the film and often on how it will best be understood by the audience.<sup>21</sup> The camera is directed at something and the composition in editing is chosen by the filmmakers to convey a subject as they see fit.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>18</sup> Winston, *Claiming*, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Seel, “Film as Exploration”, 94.

<sup>20</sup> Winston, *Claiming*, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

## 2.2 OVERLAPS BETWEEN FICTION AND NON-FICTION

“The seeds of fiction were planted early in documentary, those of documentary late in fiction.”<sup>22</sup>

Some of the same methods have been used in both documentary and fiction filmmaking. Over the years, many documentary films have made use of the traditional style of narrative fiction, applying an approach more commonly associated with fiction films, to tell true stories in a composed, structured manner. This is done by planning ahead, working with a true story and adapting it into a scripted narrative, building a set, arranging or adding to the *mise-en-scène*, using extensive sound design to emphasize aspects of the story or highlights a subject’s emotional state, placing the camera or cameras on tripods and preplanning the shots in great detail. Documentaries can also include reenactments and reconstructed material. Such methods are used to achieve an aesthetic that is common in fiction film, and thus more familiar to the audience, allowing for a firmer grasp of the narrative.

Werner Herzog’s documentaries provide great examples of highly structured documentary films, such as *Grizzly Man* (2005)<sup>23</sup>. A large amount of ‘found footage’ was collected from Timothy Treadwell, founder of a bear-protection organization. Treadwell lived around bears for years and lost his life to one. The footage acquired from Treadwell’s records was edited together for the film and lends it a strong sense of authenticity. The material is mixed in with interviews that feel performed or scripted, even though the story and its subjects, or social actors, are being presented to the audience as real. “Herzog distinguishes between surface facts and a deeper, ‘ecstatic truth’ that can only be reached ‘through fabrication and imagination and stylization’.”<sup>24</sup> His documentaries may either

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<sup>22</sup> Tyler, “Documentary Technique”, 101.

<sup>23</sup> *Grizzly Man*, Werner Herzog (Lions Gate Entertainment, 2005).

<sup>24</sup> Church, David, “Herzog, Werner” *Senses of Cinema*, issue 41 (Senses of Cinema Inc., 2006).

challenge the traditional styles or be almost entirely fictional while “the style of his fiction films can be closer to that of documentaries.”<sup>25</sup>

Fiction films have also been known to borrow methods from documentary styles. This approach has particular relevance to my chosen subject, as we will come to later. A fiction film may be more than just a fabrication. It can make use of non-fiction sources such as clips from the everyday lives of real people passing in and out of the frame, and also of non-actors playing themselves or scripted characters. Locations can create a sense of real history. They can make use of real aspects and occurrences, including weather and terrain, exploiting “the natural information carried out by actual environments to build tone to reflect a distinctive perspective”.<sup>26</sup> The flowing and flexible camera work in some fiction films are reminiscent of that found in the documentary making process, made possible by the technological advances in the documentary field of the film industry. For some cinema realists, such as influential film critic and theorist André Bazin, the length of a take and composition in depth,<sup>27</sup> and the general process prior to editing, had significant influence on the realism in films. Ultimately he renounced the aesthetic montage, the invisible continuity style of Hollywood, and the radical montage in the spirit of Eisenstein.<sup>28</sup>

What remains is the fact that categorizing films on one side of the spectrum or the other, as either documentary or fiction, can prove difficult, even futile in some cases. For

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<https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2006/great-directors/herzog>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Fiorelli, “A New Defence”, 4.

<sup>27</sup> “History of film: France”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

<https://www.britannica.com/art/history-of-the-motion-picture/France#ref508200>

<sup>28</sup> André Bazin, *What is Cinema*, (California: University of California press, 1967, 2005), xx.

sorting purposes there are “indicators that can serve—not individually, but in various combinations—to classify a film as (more) documentary or (more) fictional.”<sup>29</sup>

## **2.3 LESS IS MORE**

As I have established some of the basic elements of documentary and fiction styles in cinema, I will now go into further detail about the advancements in the technologies used in documentary cinema and what this development has come to signify. I will continue with a short discussion of two movements in cinema that drew inspiration from the styles and technological developments of the documentary approach to film.

### **2.3.1 TECHNOLOGY AS A FACTOR**

The development of cinematic technique, especially synchronised (sync) sound and the lighter, hand-held cameras, paved the way for a new approach in documentary. Still, both additions took time to become common practice in documentary films. Winston points out that the first generation of realist filmmakers were hesitant to accept new advancements in technology.<sup>30</sup> In the 1930s such cameras were associated with amateur films or the creation of political messages.<sup>31</sup> They became more refined through war coverage. The amount of equipment needed for sync sound, namely boom, large recorders, microphones as well as two operators, was considered an unwelcome disturbance to the documenting experience at the time.<sup>32</sup> Later generations of documentary filmmakers, however, enjoyed the benefit of the flexibility of the 16mm hand-held camera and demand for a sync sound camera increased. Ultimately their demands were met by new, innovative designs as

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<sup>29</sup> Seel, “Film as Exploration”, 92-93.

<sup>30</sup> Winston, *Claiming*, 144.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

these cameras became more and more lightweight in the course of time<sup>33</sup> while sync sound equipment became more and more accessible and pragmatic over time.<sup>34</sup>

The need for small, flexible equipment came from the importance of not disturbing the subject,<sup>35</sup> emphasizing the notion that less is often more when it comes to documentary filmmaking. With these new technologies the subject could be interviewed, approached, followed and documented in real time. This change in the way in which documentaries were made and influenced the French New wave. During this movement utilising sync sound and hand-held cameras as a filming method was considered both practical and inventive as I will discuss later. Over the years new documentary techniques have led to new methods for creating a sense of realism in fiction films. Established as a means of capturing realistic images of life for documentary films, these new methods allowed fiction films to create a similar audience experience of 'real' life.

The sense of realism made possible by the technology and technique offered in documentaries then became a style, an idea. A set of rules suggested that following and filming the flow of reality implies little construction. Although the quality of authentic realism in fiction can be enhanced by the borrowing of methods, the same cannot be said for documentaries that use the stylistic traditions typically associated with fiction. Simply put, a fiction film is made more realistic by use of documentary style whereas a documentary might be considered unrealistic when stylistic choices resemble fiction films. When a documentary comes too close to fiction it "jeopardizes its own status as a documentary [if it] distorts facts, alters reality, or fabricates evidence."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 144-147.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>36</sup> Nichols, *Introduction*, 8.

Budget is also a factor. Documentaries will get less money on average for production. Documentaries and fiction films traditionally make different use of the same medium, as we have established above. Therefore a lower budget may indicate less interference with a subject or a space.

The techniques used in films serve as indicators in more ways than one. They may suggest a correlation with a specific genre or convey that some level of truthfulness exists within the narrative. A product that is highly constructed will not have the same effect as one that is less constructed. Our way of reading film is relatively well established as members of a collective audience. Cinematography plays an influential role in our perception, as it is also *the showing* of stories that we are being told.<sup>37</sup>

### **2.3.2 MOVEMENTS OF THE REAL: ITALIAN NEOREALISM AND THE FRENCH NEW WAVE**

To evaluate claims of truthfulness in fictional cinema it is important to discuss two specific cultural movements in film, Italian Neorealism and The French New Wave, to understand the historical contexts of how and why these standards emerged.

Italian Neorealism<sup>38</sup> was thought of as a “historically- and culturally-specific manifestation of the general aesthetic quality known as ‘realism’ which is characterised by a disposition to the ontological truth of the physical, visible world.”<sup>39</sup> Italian Neorealism came about as a movement led by directors who were joined by their leftist politics and

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<sup>37</sup> Not to be dismissive of the power of subtext in script and acting; showing what is not there.

<sup>38</sup> I will use ‘Neorealism’ from this point as I am referring to Italian Neorealism unless stated otherwise.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Shiel, *Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding The Cinematic City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 1.

opposition to fascism.<sup>40</sup> Their most recognisable productions were made between the mid-1940s and the mid-1950s.<sup>41</sup>

A number of things differentiate the neorealist stylistics from the common cinema of that era. For example, the use of nonprofessional actors, minimal interference by the director, modest *mise-en-scène*, shooting on location, the use of natural lighting, flowing documentary-style cinematography, and simple editing during post-production all contribute to a unique approach to realism in fiction film. Some neorealist filmmakers did not make use of all of the approaches mentioned above.<sup>42</sup> The contrast in filming methods meant films from this era were considered opposite to Hollywood films where:

“Neorealism presented culture as a critique, aware, lending dignity to the society it represented and containing relevance to that time. Hollywood, on the other hand, stood for entertainment, not without substance but not as critical and offering more of an escape than engagement with the world.”<sup>43</sup>

The movement occurred during the postwar era when Italian filmmakers “were forced to look for creative solutions to the problem of producing cinema in conditions of extreme austerity.”<sup>44</sup> Their goal was to draw attention to these economic hardships by creating cultural representations of real life in fiction films. Meanwhile they were faced with studios and equipment in proper working condition.<sup>45</sup> Looking back, Italian filmmaker Alberto Lattuada claimed that leaving the studio, while it was true that many had been destroyed, came from the need to show authentic life in spirit of the “harshness of documentaries”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

for the purpose of offering a form of cinema that places significant faith in film language to portray and critique culture.<sup>47</sup>

The first filmmakers to create films as part of this movement made use of small budgets, although budgets would vary,<sup>48</sup> at the same time demonstrating “a commitment through visual realism to making known the lot of ordinary, everyday Italians, especially the working class.”<sup>49</sup> To summarize, the neorealist approach was born out of a desire to show the real and a need to call attention to conditions of postwar society.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s French cinema was revitalised. International cinema, film theory and criticism became invigorated by way of the French New Wave.<sup>50</sup> The impact was similar to that of Italian Neorealism after World War II.<sup>51</sup> Some of the influence from the Neorealism movement could be found in how the French New Wave filmmakers made and produced their cinema. For example, they also shot on location with less-known actors and small crews. These afforded them low budget films were sometimes funded with their own money. Their films would include images of “contemporary France [and] of contemporary middle-class youths”<sup>52</sup> set in their unique social environments, selecting locations “on the streets where they lived or in the apartments where they grew up” in order to situate the narratives in real contexts.<sup>53</sup>

The stylistic choices that define the movement are as follows: the director is the screenwriter, shooting is improvised on set rather than fully planned or scripted beforehand with regard to dialogue and acting, shooting preferably took place on location

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>50</sup> I will use ‘New Wave’ from this point as I am referring to the French New Wave unless stated otherwise.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Neupert, *A History Of The French New Wave Cinema*, ed. David Bordwell, Vance Kepley, Jr. (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), xv.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., xvii.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., xvii.



instead of on artificial studio sets, and the crew was typically small. There was less dependence on extensive lighting equipment and film stock for shooting in low light was often favored. Non-professional or relatively new, professional actors were used. Lastly, the directing process is more freestyle than conventional.<sup>54</sup>

What stands out in this movement is the use of handheld cameras and innovations with sound. Sync sound was more commonly recorded on location, instead of relying heavily on post-sync methods.<sup>55</sup> Stylistically, the New Wave filmmakers defied normal conventions much like the neorealists before them, yet they differed from the earlier movement in important ways. Choices in the New Wave:

“provide for a greater sense of flexibility in the direction and endeavor to streamline as much as possible the heavy constraints typical of the commercial, industrialized cinema model. They are aimed at erasing the borders between professional and amateur cinema, and those between fiction, and documentary, or investigative films.”<sup>56</sup>

Films from this movement would often be “in direct defiance of commercial and narrative norms”<sup>57</sup> so much so that their critics “claimed that it led to the production of dozens of movies that were ‘unprojectable’”.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Michel Marie, *The French New Wave: an Artistic School*, trans. by Richard Neupert (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003), 70-71.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>57</sup> Neupert, *A History*, xvii.

<sup>58</sup> Marie, *The French New Wave*, 68.

### 3. DOGME 95: A NEW WAVE?

At a conference at The Odeon Theatre in Paris the filmmaker, Lars Von Trier, introduced a new manifesto for filmmaking<sup>59</sup> and with it followed a movement which would adhere to the rules inscribed in his writing. The Dogma 95 movement was born. Von Trier's intention was to continue an experiment he had started with the TV series *The Kingdom* (season 1, 1994).<sup>60</sup> He penned the manifesto, together with Thomas Vinterberg, in a mere 25 minutes accompanied by much laughter.<sup>61</sup> However, the question still remains: was the manifesto intended as a joke?

#### 3.1 THE VOW OF CHASTITY

From 1962 to 1970 Danish cinema experienced a movement similar to the French New Wave. These films would include:

“young directors and actors, of which some were amateurs, on-locations shooting (no stage/set design), casual way of speaking and casual substance, which meant that the film performed as a mirror, in which the easy living Danes around the age of 30 could see themselves and their normal lives in.”<sup>62</sup>

An early example of this approach can be found in Danish New Wave film *Weekend*,<sup>63</sup> to which *The Celebration* is often compared. Both films portray a certain spotlight on bittersweetness.<sup>64</sup> At the beginning of both films guests arrive at a party which reaches

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<sup>59</sup> Jan Simons, "Playing the Waves: The Name of the Game Is Dogme95" *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, edited by De Valck Marijke and Hagener Malte, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 181. Accessed March 9, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt45kd32>

<sup>60</sup> Lars Von Trier, *The Kingdom*, season 1 (Arte et al., 1994).

<sup>61</sup> Jan Simons "Manifesto and Modernism." In *Playing the Waves: Lars Von Trier's Game Cinema*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 12.

<sup>62</sup> Hans Jensen, *Barnet og Idioten: Danske Dogmefilm i Nærbilleder*, (Århus: Systime, 2001), 18.

My translation of: "Unge instruktører og skuespillere, hvoraf nogle var amatører, on-location optagelse (ingen kulisser), et hverdagsagtigt sprog og - stof, der betyder, at filmen fremstod som spejl, hvori velfærdsdanskeren omkring de 30 år kunne se sig selv og sit almindelige liv."

<sup>63</sup> Palle Kjærulff Schmidt, *Weekend* (Rialtofilm, 1962).

<sup>64</sup> Jensen, *Barnet og Idioten*, 18.

heights with a confrontation. The ending offers some sense of resolution to the single day's journey with a naive sense of healing and beginning anew.<sup>65</sup> While *Weekend* presents a fly on the wall approach to this journey, *The Celebration* offers the audience the opportunity to become immersed in an interactive experience with the scene, to some extent. The use of expressive, evocative editing styles allowed audiences to engage more personally with the film's heavy themes.<sup>66</sup>

The Dogma 95 movement emerged in Denmark as a rebellion by a collective of filmmakers against the traditional conventions of fiction film. The name of the movement indicates the year of its formation, 1995, and the word 'Dogma', or 'Dogme' in Danish, denotes a "fixed, especially religious, belief or set of beliefs that people are expected to accept without any doubts."<sup>67</sup> Thus, this movement in Danish cinema is defined by a set of fixed beliefs outlined in Von Trier and Vinterberg's 1995 manifesto, which became known as *The Vow of Chastity*.

Some have attempted to categorize Dogma 95 films alongside other European films of the post-war era, suggesting the movement is simply an old idea pretending to be new.<sup>68</sup> However this movement did not aim to mimic the modernist style, but rather parody and reject it.<sup>69</sup> The rules outlined in their *Vow of Chastity* were as follows:

1. Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in. (If a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is found.)
2. The sound must never be produced apart from the images, or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot.)

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> "Dogma", *Cambridge Dictionary*

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/dogma>

<sup>68</sup> Simons, "Manifesto", 14.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

3. The camera must be hand-held. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted. (The film must not take place where the camera is standing; shooting must take place where the film takes place.)
4. The film must be in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure, the scene will be cut or a single lamp will be attached to the camera.)
5. Optical work and filters are forbidden.
6. The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, weapons, etc., must not occur.)
7. Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (In other words, the film takes place here and now.)
8. Genre movies are not acceptable.
9. The film format must be Academy 35mm.
10. The director must not be credited.<sup>70</sup>

There were speculations as to whether or not the manifesto was merely intended as a joke or a parody, as the authors were, themselves, humored by it. The use of the word 'Dogma' implies a contradiction in its formal use where, ironically, a piece outlining rules of rebellion bears some similarities to the style of religious scripture.

*The Vow* is a reminder of "the rhetoric of modernist artistic and political manifestos."<sup>71</sup> It possesses a probable ode to the French New Wave, as it opens with the explicit goal of avoiding "certain tendencies in the cinema today," seemingly referring to the famous section of François Truffaut's article in *Cahiers du Cinéma* which had great significance as a manifesto during the establishment of the New Wave.<sup>72</sup> *The Vow*, then, either by choice or chance, stood against illusionism in cinema and aimed to bring forth truth in characters and settings.<sup>73</sup> What is significant about Dogma 95, in comparison with

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<sup>70</sup> Charles Lee, "DOGME95", *Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film*, edited by Ian Aitken, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 315.

<sup>71</sup> Simons, "The Name of the Game", 182.

<sup>72</sup> Simons, "Manifesto", 11.

<sup>73</sup> Simons "Manifesto", 14.

earlier New Wave and Neorealism movements, was the profoundly different cinematic environment to which it was responding.<sup>74</sup>

To reiterate, the rules introduced in *the Vow* were that a handheld camera must be used to shoot a non-artificial action that occurs in a real location and remains unaltered by heavy post-production and special effects. These rules force the filmmaker to work with what is there. Video and sound are shot on location. The camera should “*follow* the action instead of the action being staged *for* the camera.”<sup>75</sup> Some of the rules impacted the content of the film, having an effect on the story. For example, the rule relating to superficial action narrows the scope of filming to everyday occurrences. Another rule dictates that films must take place in modern times. Finally, the eighth rule commands that the films of Dogma 95 must also defy the traditional rules of genre.

The rules of this movement were not as clear cut as they may seem. The initial aim was to shoot on 35mm film stock, as stated in the ninth rule. Later, however, Von Trier and others welcomed the use of digital cameras. The obligation of the 35mm rule was rescinded soon after the manifesto was released as some filmmakers had begun capturing rich footage by engaging with digital formats. They quickly discovered that the digital camera was also more pragmatic in terms of budget.<sup>76</sup> It is interesting to note that the Dogma 95 rules did not mention editing or the length of takes,<sup>77</sup> one element which could be an indicators of realism in cinema.

The manifesto outlined only *how* the film should be made, not *why*. Arguably, however, one minor exception to this is the explicit mention of avoiding “certain tendencies” common in cinema at the time. On the surface, the rules presented in *the*

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>75</sup> Simons, “The Name of the Game”, 188.

<sup>76</sup> Simons “Manifesto”, 21.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 15.

*Vow* are not specifically aimed at portraying existing reality. In fact, realism is nowhere mentioned. Nevertheless, the rules bring Dogma 95 films closer to the real by denouncing the methods that polish the final product. Although this was not an official aim, it was a subsequent result.

It seems as though the authors of *The Vow* were more concerned with placing limitations on the filmmaker than on the content or realism portrayed in the film itself. The *Vow* functioned as a set of production rules that aimed to “stimulate the creativity and inventiveness of the filmmaker”.<sup>78</sup>

Over the years films were created based, partially or totally, on the rules presented in *The Vow of Chastity* and the movement developed further. Rules were broken to some degree by members of the group. In hindsight, Dogma 95 became closely associated with two production styles that were not featured in the manifesto: low budget and digital filmmaking.<sup>79</sup> Dogma 95 evolved into a minimalist approach to filmmaking, acting as “a search for truth, a rather abstract ambition”.<sup>80</sup> The strength of this movement’s potential to capture and portray realism, whether intentional or not, comes from their resemblance to documentary films.<sup>81</sup> The movement, however, was declared dead in June 2002.<sup>82</sup>

### **3.2 THE CELEBRATION**

Thomas Vinterberg’s film, *The Celebration*, was the first Dogma 95 film to be made. It premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 1998, three years after *The Vow* manifesto was presented.<sup>83</sup> The film was named *Dogma #1* at the time, as a clear indicator of their

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<sup>78</sup> Simons, “The Name of the Game”, 185.

<sup>79</sup> Peter Schepeleern, “After the Celebration: The Effect of Dogme on Danish Cinema”, 2013.  
<https://www.kosmorama.org/en/kosmorama/artikler/after-celebration-effect-dogme-danish-cinema>

<sup>80</sup> Schepeleern, “After the Celebration”.

<sup>81</sup> Lee, “DOGME95”, 314.

<sup>82</sup> Simons, “The Name of the Game”, 181.

<sup>83</sup> Simons, “Manifesto”, 11.

seriousness in pursuing the movement. Vinterberg had only made one feature prior and was the youngest in the group of Dogma filmmakers, thus he was allowed to go first. Vinterberg followed most of the rules of the manifesto. He takes liberties with some rules and, either intentionally or unintentionally, ignores others. In this section I will analyse *The Celebration* in relation to genre conventions, location choices, cinematography, documentary modes, editing, lighting, sound and budget. Here, I highlight how the rules laid out in *The Vow* and use of documentary styles led to an immersive audience experience due to its strong sense of realism.

The film opens with a still image of a certificate that indicates its compliance with the rules which define Dogma 95 as a movement (image 1).

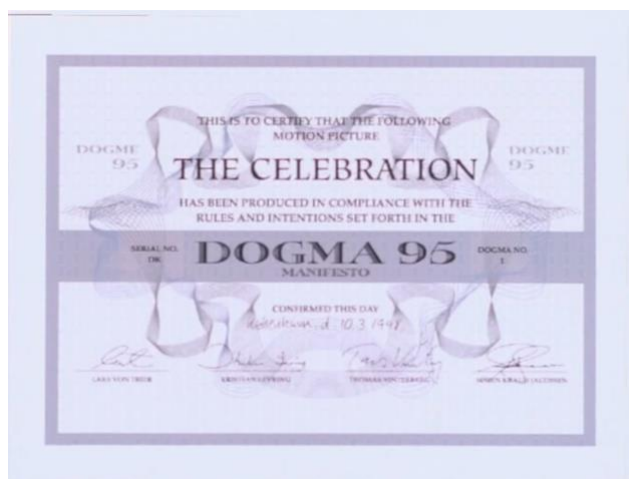


IMAGE 1: The opening of *Dogme #1*

The first shot of the film's world (image 2) shows nothing out of the ordinary. We see a road where a man walks towards the camera. The voice of Christian, our protagonist, is heard speaking on the phone. Already the second shot stands out. Christian is presented in a close-up (image 3) shot through a wide lens that distorts the edges of the frame. This is where the sense of calm comes to an end.



IMAGE 2: Typical wide shot of the protagonist arriving. IMAGE 3: Christian is shot with a wide lens up close, the edges are distorted.

Christian then arrives at the 60th birthday celebration of his father, Helge Klingefeldt, with the intention of confronting him about the sexual abuse he and his twin sister, Linda, were subjected to as children by their father. A year prior to when the film takes place, the audience is informed that Linda committed suicide in the bathtub of one of the rooms in the lavish house. The same house where Helge hosts his parties and accommodates his guests. The main objective of Christian is not only to involve the guests, and by extension the audience, as I will discuss later, but also to open the eyes of his remaining siblings, Michael and Helene, to the truth.

Michael and Helene go through their own revelations and have their own arcs. Helene is passive at the beginning, much like the party guests. She tries to ignore a letter she has found from her deceased sister; a letter that would lead her to the truth about her father. Eventually, Helene overcomes her fears and reads it aloud to the guests. Michael, an aggressive alcoholic, stops trying to attain his father's acceptance when the letter is read and Helge finally breaks character, dropping his facade for a moment and revealing himself as his children's abuser, telling Christian "it's all you were good for", for all to hear.



The film fits in well with the likes of the psychological dramas of Ibsen and Bergman.<sup>84</sup> It concludes in a relatively theatrical manner through a reliance on placement within the space and blocking of the characters. The morning after the celebration Helge proceeds to take his usual seat at the end of the table, the seat of the patriarch, (image 4) only to be asked to leave. This use of blocking indicates the father's change in status.



IMAGE 4: The theatrical placement of the patriarch.

*The Celebration* is not void of genre conventions. It can be categorized as a drama and therefore is already at odds with the rules of the manifesto. The film has been described as a “classic drama in a ‘docu-soap’ style.”<sup>85</sup> It adheres to a fairly ordinary structure and contains an easily recognisable protagonist with a clear goal. It may seem debatable as to whether or not such a story is fabricated. The content is, sadly, not improbable, however, at times the plot relies on theatrical farce. For example, an old and

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<sup>84</sup> Simons, “Manifesto”, 17.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

nearly deaf man starts to praise Helge directly following Christian's speech; symbolic of how stories of such atrocities fall on deaf ears, so to speak. The use of a Hollywood style, *hero gets the girl* arc can also be seen when the conflict has come to an end and Christian asks Pia, an old acquaintance and vague love interest, to move with him to Paris suddenly and she happily agrees.

With this example, we see that the Dogma 95 movement did not strictly limit the filmmakers to an extreme form of social realism with long takes and heavily presented subjects but kept the field of the film's story content open and perhaps under less scrutiny than the technological approach restrained by the rules.

The story of *The Celebration* could happen anywhere. According to Vinterberg the location selected for the film influenced some choices that ultimately created the atmosphere in the film:

"We found this house which had animals in the fridge and food for the extras, so the script became a story about a rich bourgeois family because that's what fitted into this house. So everything was created out of this game, out of playing with the rules".<sup>86</sup>

The choice of setting for the film was therefore made out of practicality. The decision to portray the Klingensfeldt family as rich was influenced by the location. It makes use of cultural cues that already exist in the real surroundings, the location becomes a real element within the film.

If we examine the methods used to create *The Celebration*, the cinematography is perhaps the most clearly unusual, and perhaps important, aspect of the film. Although there are a number of elements that make the film stand out from ordinary fiction, the

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<sup>86</sup> Brian Logan, "Well, is it a new wave, or isn't it?", *The Guardian*, 1999. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/1999/mar/02/features>

unconventional editing style and unusual shooting methods make the piece an important example of how realism in film creates a more in-depth audience experience.

In 1998 digital filmmaking was still in its infancy and yet Vinterberg chooses to break the ninth rule of *The Vow*. The camera used to shoot *The Celebration*, the Sony DCR-PC3, is a handycam. It produces images in relatively low quality in comparison with the potential of 35 film stock. The quality of the video, as opposed to that offered by film stock quality, may have been an attempt to highlight the roughness of the film's themes and the filmmaker's seriousness with the rebellion, despite the rule breaking use of digital filmmaking technologies. As I have mentioned, digital filmmaking later became a fundamental part of the Dogma 95 movement and as its first film, *Dogme #1*, is a digital film we can logically assume that digital technologies were a vital part of the movement from the start.

The jittery, hand-held camera work and the rapid editing serves to produce a sense of mounting chaos that forms as the guests arrive at the party in a grand house located in the Danish countryside. A seemingly pleasant event quickly devolves as tensions escalate following Christian's initial speech. The camera operates as a guest, to some extent, affording the audience an active point of view, experiencing the events as if they themselves are there. Shots frequently follow the action and responds to scenarios with movement. The guests' consumption of alcohol even has an influence on the chaotic manner in which the audience observes and experiences the film. Likewise, the pace of the plot quickens following Christian's revelation. The eye of the spectator comes alive.

When the camera is not at the center of the action, it can be found in odd places, providing wider shots. Cameras are placed in a corner of the room as the guests pass through the frame in a conga line (image 5). It is as if the camera has been left accidentally in strange places, like inside a fireplace, for example. These passive shots allow

audiences to observe events like a fly on the wall. Odd angles can also be found in shots where the camera is placed behind objects or between handrails on the stairs (image 6), providing angles that are extremely low or extremely high. The film resembles an aesthetic similar to that of an amateur style home video. The poor quality of the video emphasises this impression.



IMAGE 5: Camera as a fly on the wall or log in the fireplace. IMAGE 6: High angle between the handrails.

*The Celebration* possesses elements that resemble specific documentary modes, one being the *reflexive mode*. This is seen when the film calls attention to itself through some of the methods mentioned above; particularly the shaky cinematography and choppy editing. Another is the *observational mode*. This occurs when the audience is able to observe the characters as they endure their respective trials and tribulations in the film; It is as if the camera has been placed in the room specifically for us to observe the characters; like a fly or security camera positioned on the wall. In such shots, the angle is high and the edges are distorted. Helene is often filmed in and around the room where her sister died, using this method (Image 7-8).



IMAGE 7-8: The camera observes from a high angle as if it is a security camera.

As I have mentioned, rules regarding editing were not present within the manifesto. The editing choices made in *The Celebration* led to a highly expressive and evocative piece of art. It does not comply with the aesthetics commonly depicted in Hollywood films, or otherwise ordinary fictional cinema. Nor does it make use of a radical montage, filled with metaphors. Vinterberg explained that “it was clear these rules were about the making of the film, not what happens afterwards,”<sup>87</sup> possibly indicating that the freedom for the filmmaker lies in the editing room.

Unlike the New Wave filmmakers who adjusted their film stock to cope with the lighting at hand, Vinterberg was shooting on a simple digital handycam which was not nearly as efficient for the task. One consequence of this was that some scenes are simply too dark, to the point where the action is visibly lost. It is at these particular times in the story that the audience must fill in the blanks. For example, in one scene the camera is angled towards Christian’s tied hands when he has been left in the woods after trying to speak out again (image 9). Here, the audience may rightly assume that he is trying to loosen the rope in order to escape. In a later scene, Michael assaults Helge. This is shown

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<sup>87</sup> Logan, “Well, is it a new wave?”.

in a tilted and nearly pitch black frame (image 10). Sound and movement in the little light offered by the streetlights are sufficient for the action to be made comprehensible for the audience.

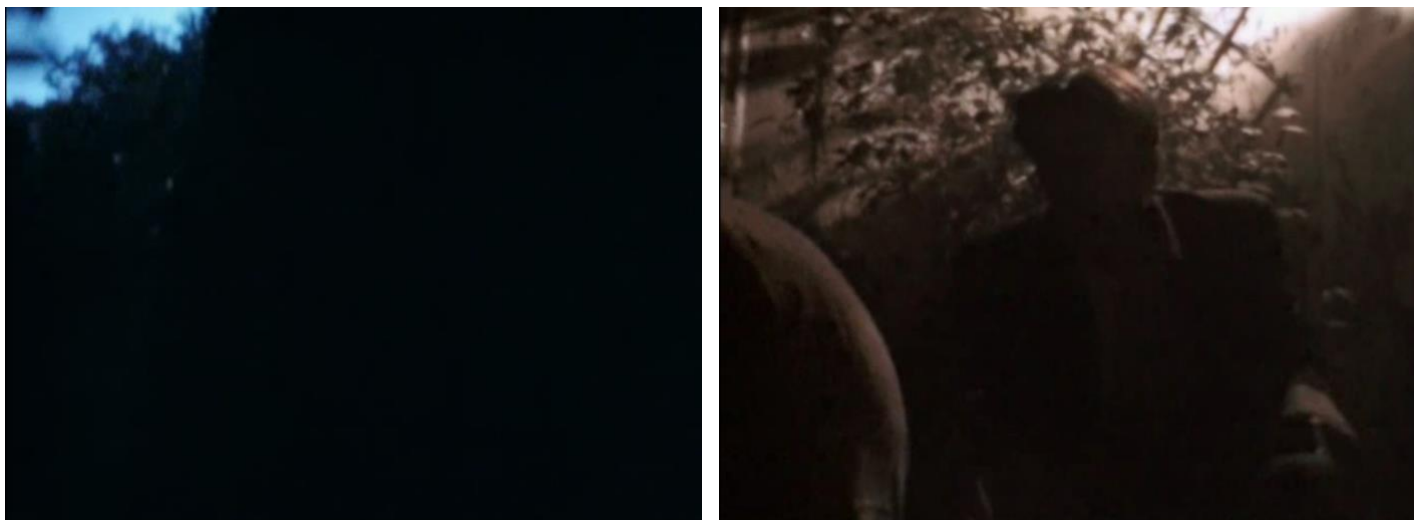


IMAGE 9: Christian is tied to a tree outside. IMAGE 10: Michael is drunkenly beating the patriarch.

The second rule of the manifesto is seemingly followed. The sound appears to have been recorded on location and in the time and place that the footage was captured. Sound is typically used to bridge the gap between two shots, however it calls attention to itself occasionally in these instances. The audio from one shot at times disrupts the flow into the next shot, creating a gap or clear and noticeable cut in both the video and the audio, simultaneously. The music heard in the film was performed by an orchestra that is present in the story, as the rules allow.

There was no rule specifying the nature of the budget for Dogma 95 films, however, as I have previously mentioned, low-budget production became a symbol of this cinematic movement. *The Celebration*, on the other hand, had a relatively high budget in comparison to other Danish films of the same era.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Simons, "Manifesto", 21.

In an interview in *The Guardian* Vinterberg disclosed that “rather than being meticulously plotted, ‘90 percent of the scenes [from *The Celebration*] came out of playing against the limitations’. While the film’s story is conventional, he’s sure that ‘it could never have been created without this set of rules.’”<sup>89</sup>

### **3.3 THE EFFECT OF DOGMA AND DOCUMENTARY STYLE IN *THE CELEBRATION***

Although Dogma 95 may have been conceived as a joke, *The Celebration* was serious in its adherence to the rules laid out in *The Vow of Chastity*. Vinterberg followed the rules, perhaps not in their entirety, but to a greater extent than was expected for a cinematic movement perceived as a potential joke.

Although Dogma 95 films were fictional, this style of filmmaking did aim to elicit the truth from the characters and settings presented in the narrative. The rules of the manifesto did not explicitly mention the importance of realism, however it did strongly reject what the writers deemed to be unnecessary aspects of the filmmaking process. Ultimately, it served as a guide for filmmakers on set and allowed for creative freedom regarding the content of a film.

*The Celebration* is a theatrical piece that brings to light a heavy subject in a bourgeois setting, where false surfaces amidst the drama. The sense of drama serves as a firm reminder for the audience that this is a fiction piece. However, the technological choices made create something of a double edged sword scenario. The film frequently makes use of wide lenses for close up shots, with the image consequently distorted at the edges of the frame. Frames are at times canted or shot from oddly-placed camera positions. Subtle hints of documentary modes can be found within the film, switching

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<sup>89</sup> Logan, “Well, is it a new wave?”.

between observational and reflexive. The choices function to both place us among the guests and to push us out and prevent us from being sutured into the film. It is as if the film does the opposite of hiding.

*The Celebration* retains stylistic tendencies similar to that of both documentary and drama films. As in the New Wave, the Dogma 95 movement represents a transitional phase towards new filming technologies. It is for this reason that these low-budget films often maintained an amateur aesthetic. The adapted documentary styles and use of a digital handycam in filming, commonly associated with documentary or home video, served to provide authenticity to theatrical content. Despite the fact that the Dogma 95 movement was not designed to strengthen a sense of realism in fiction film, it nevertheless achieved this to some extent through the technical aspects discussed above. Furthermore, this movement illustrates that camera work is indicative how the audiences' perception of 'truth' in film has become influenced by their previous knowledge of and engagement with documentary styles of film.

It is fitting, then, for the first film of the Dogma 95 movement to be a story about revealing the truth of a damaged, outdated system. The stylistic choices relating to technology and editing match the explosive revelation of the family secret. While the film, *The Celebration*, attempts to restore cinema to simple roots, it can still be categorized as a drama in the style of a docu-soap.



## 4. JEAN-PIERRE AND LUC DARDENNE

Belgian brothers, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, began their careers with documentary filmmaking.<sup>90</sup> Through the 70's and early 80's their low budget documentaries, which they funded by working in a local cement factory,<sup>91</sup> sought to give a voice to the marginalized working class around them.<sup>92</sup> In their early documentaries, the pair explored their subjects in a unique stylistic manner. Although this style did not carry over into their later works in fiction, the brothers did develop a certain theme and specific artistic aesthetic during these early years of filmmaking. The enduring strength of the influence of their fiction films, along with<sup>93</sup> the consistency in their work, has afforded them the honor of an established style known as 'Dardennian'.<sup>94</sup>

### 4.1 DARDENNIAN STYLE

The early documentary works of the Dardenne brothers' had little stylistic resemblance to their later films in fiction.<sup>95</sup> Films would include symbolic images, voiceovers, tracking shots and experimental montages.<sup>96</sup> Their first two fiction films, *Falsch*<sup>97</sup> (1986) and *Thinking of You*<sup>98</sup> (1992), likewise, did not adhere to the so-called "Dardennian style", for which they are now known. The first film was described as a "self-conscious experiment in narrative juxtaposition"<sup>99</sup> and the second, a conventional, "socially aware romantic

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<sup>90</sup> "Rosetta, The Silence, Dogma & Iranian Film" *The Spirit*, 2015.

<http://www.westsidespirit.com/news/rosetta-the-silence-dogma-iranian-film-GHNP1319991116311169973>

<sup>91</sup> Xan Brooks, "We're the same: one person, four eyes", *The Guardian*, 2006.

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2006/feb/09/features.xanbrooks>

<sup>92</sup> Joseph Mai, *Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne*. Edited by James Naremore. Contemporary Film Directors. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), xi.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, *Falsch* (Arcanal et al., 1987).

<sup>98</sup> Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, *Thinking of you* ( Centre Audiovisuel à Bruxelles et al., 1992).

<sup>99</sup> Mai, *Dardenne*, xi.

drama.”<sup>100</sup> Despite being considered a failure, *Thinking of You* had a comparatively sizable budget and conformed to mainstream norms through its use of “emotive music, moody lighting, expressive clothing and makeup, and especially the classical performances of its professional actors.”<sup>101</sup> With artistic careers spanning over more than four decades, the Dardenne brothers increasingly renounced mainstream conventions with their distinctive approach to creating fiction films.

*The Promise* (1996)<sup>102</sup> was the Dardenne brothers’ first fiction film to receive international acclaim and recognition.<sup>103</sup> With this claim to fame, their subsequent films became less traditional in their approach, producing a more defined Dardennian style that provided audiences with profoundly evocative experiences through “long sequence shots, rhythmic movements, an extremely edgy handheld camera, and abrupt editing.”<sup>104</sup> The brothers continued to experiment with the cinematography and camera positions, refining their style further with each film.<sup>105</sup> Since the success of *The Promise*, each Dardenne film has spent approximately three years in production.<sup>106</sup> A distinctly Dardennian style emerged with the release of *The Promise*, which then flowed into their later work

As in the Dogma 95 movement, rebellious cinematographic choices were central to the development of the Dardennian style. The Dardenne brothers’ would often open their films with the camera and the audience playing catch-up, so to speak, in an attempt to understand how a scene fits into the emerging plot, before cutting it off before the end of an action:

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, *The Promise* (Les Films du Fleuve et al., 1996).

<sup>103</sup> Mai, *Dardenne*, ix.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 64.

“leaving the viewer with an experience of time and movement but little resolution. Cuts are abrupt, sometimes brutal, taking us out of one action and plunging us [in the midst of] another, during which another [long shot] gives us a moment to situate ourselves until we are abruptly moved again. Suddenly we see a flash of color, yellow and blue, a swinging door, the texture of a fabric, a lock of hair; and then the familiarity of these colors and textures will become recognizable as a shirt [...]”<sup>107</sup>

The Dardennian style of cinema is slow. Both the preparation and post-production processes are afforded ample time.<sup>108</sup> The story is then presented through the use of rhythmic editing.<sup>109</sup> However, the editing in Dardennian style cinema can also be abrupt.<sup>110</sup> The Dardenne brothers relied on both long takes and quick editing. A shot can thus carry on throughout an action or situation until it comes to some sort of narrative closure<sup>111</sup> only to jump into the middle of an action in the next sequence of scenes.

In contrast to the reliance on voiceovers in their documentaries and expressive music in the earliest fiction films, their noteworthy works were instead “traces of industrial documentary [...] in their use of direct sound (harsh, clanking noises, no music scores).”<sup>112</sup> For example, in the opening of *The Promise*, the directly recorded soundscape of the environment can be heard; “the low hum and clicking of a gas pump, the slam of a car door, simple sounds that transition the viewer not into a fictional world, but into the everyday world that awaits us every time we step outside”.<sup>113</sup>

To capture the fluidity of motion, the Dardenne brothers rejected the use of bulky cameras and heavy equipment common for setting up tracking shots.<sup>114</sup> Instead they

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>112</sup> Phillip Lopate, "The Endless Toil of Conflicted Hearts Becomes the Stuff of Moral Catharsis in the Hands of Belgian Master Craftsmen the Dardenne Brothers." *Film Comment*, vol 39, no. 2 (2003), 22. Accessed March 9, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43456590>

<sup>113</sup> Mai, *Dardenne*, ix.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 55.

opted for lighter shoulder cameras, which provided them with greater flexibility.<sup>115</sup> For most of their fiction film careers, they used 35mm film,<sup>116</sup> but as of 2011 they began shooting their films with digital formats. Essential to their technical approach for achieving their visual style is the use of this mobile camera which affords the camera operator a human presence,<sup>117</sup> and thereby the camera as well.

While shooting on film the brothers would still allow ample space for improvisation, as was the case in *Rosetta*. “Their long sequence shots require that scenes be rehearsed numerous times until an appropriate rhythm has been found for each segment.”<sup>118</sup>

The content of the Dardennian films were often influenced by something the brothers had witnessed by chance or read, from a story they had heard or a person or act they had witnessed.<sup>119</sup> Their films would linger in social realism in ways akin to that of the Neorealists. Their style emerged from a working-class culture in their environment where “[g]eneration after generation, children have followed their parents into the factories, the churches, the unions, and the various societies that prepare for the Carnival celebration each year.”<sup>120</sup> Their stylistically distinct Dardennian films possessed an “impressive power to elicit an audience’s empathy and belief, as if the film were taking place in our own world.”<sup>121</sup> A typical character in such films would depict an “anti-slacker character on his work rounds while trying to resolve a crisis of conscience.”<sup>122</sup> A realistic strength, then, stems from the ways in which the brothers successfully captured a version of history or an experience of the world, as if it actually occurred at that moment in time.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>122</sup> Lopate, *The Endless Toil*, 22.

<sup>123</sup> Mai, *Dardenne*, x.

The Dardenne brothers have strategically chosen to create relatively low budgets in order to retain greater creative control of their material; a lesson taken from their experiences in documentary filmmaking.<sup>124</sup> They carefully selected their crew members with the mindful intention of creating a group dynamic built around common goals, avoiding restraints posed by professional distance.<sup>125</sup> Consequently, the collective synergy and rhythm of the cast and crew functioned much like a well-choreographed movement.<sup>126</sup> They shot on a location chosen by themselves<sup>127</sup> and part of their budget would secure that location throughout preparation and shooting.<sup>128</sup> Likewise, they kept their crew and actors available the entire time.<sup>129</sup> The brothers were themselves responsible for the casting and spent a substantial amount of time on this process.<sup>130</sup>

When it comes to the acting, the Dardenne brothers refrained from asking their actors to express or emote.<sup>131</sup> “[We] don't want them to act, because it's already in the scene, the way we've developed the scene.” For this reason, they preferred to work with relatively new actors who are more flexible and can be molded like clay.<sup>132</sup> Their approach while on set was also relatively unconventional. Instead of rehearsing with the actors they would begin filming right away, as the crew arrived on set, to throw the actor into a panic.<sup>133</sup>

The actors themselves greatly influence elements in their films. The Dardenne brothers often make choices regarding the *mise-en-scène* in shared dialogue with the

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>131</sup> Robert Sklar, Jean-Pierre Dardenne, and Luc Dardenne. "The Terrible Lightness of Social Marginality: An Interview with Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne." *Cinéaste* 31, no. 2 (2006), 20.

<sup>132</sup> Sklar, "The Terrible Lightness", 21.

<sup>133</sup> Mai, 136.

actors themselves.<sup>134</sup> As a contrast to the *mise-en-scène* in modern film, which the brothers considered to have become too finely tuned towards pleasing the audience,<sup>135</sup> and like the Dogma filmmakers discussed previously, the Dardenne brothers wanted to return to:

“a primitive cinematic state that would capture the energy of the set in new images. [They] wanted to let the actors and the spaces guide their camera. A ‘cinema without style’ would create images of ‘the rough, brute, unpredictable, and tense state of present reality’”<sup>136</sup>

In a 2006 interview in *the Guardian* the Dardenne brothers stated that, as a result of their documentary years, they have come to the conclusion that it is hard to define ‘truth’ as a concept.<sup>137</sup> As Jean-Pierre puts it so blatantly states: “[d]ocumentary pisses me off”.<sup>138</sup> Instead, the iconic pair are more interested in exploring “the possibilities of the human being”<sup>139</sup> in the film they create.

## 4.2 ROSETTA

In the film, *Rosetta*, the Dardenne brothers established their mode for working which they adopted in their subsequent films.<sup>140</sup> Shooting took eleven months to complete.<sup>141</sup> While the Dardenne brothers had long periods of shooting with a light 35mm camera for the purpose of catching Rosetta’s character, they also used the even more lightweight, 16mm camera.<sup>142</sup> In the film, there is a clear absence of decoration, an emphasis on social realism and a great deal of handheld camerawork in the tracking of the main character.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Xan Brooks, “We’re the same”.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Mai, Dardenne, 63.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>142</sup> “Rosetta: Technical Specifications”, *IMDb*.

[https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0200071/technical?ref=tt\\_spec\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0200071/technical?ref=tt_spec_sm)

In the story, a young Rosetta takes care of everything: dealing with the landlord, selling the old clothes her mother mends and carrying her drunk into bed. Her main ambition is to have an honest job to achieve a 'normal' life. This proves to be difficult, as she belongs to a marginalized group, living in the bleak environment of a trailer park. Her mother has severe alcohol dependency issues and does not embody a nurturing role, neither towards Rosetta nor herself. When Rosetta meets Riquet she is reluctant. He offers her friendship and information about a position at his work in a waffle truck. When she later loses this job, albeit supposedly temporarily and in no way due to her lack of effort, she deceives Riquet in order to gain his position. She is left miserable, with a job but without a friend, in the depressive reality of her life in the trailer park.

The film opens with a door being slammed in the face of the audience. We are thrown into the midst of a scene, plunged into the action; the camera operator runs after Rosetta who does not wish to be caught. There are fleeting images of others appearing in the frame, but Rosetta is the only perceivable center of focus. Her character demands the entirety of the frame. Other people are merely a part of the setting around her, with whom she is competing with to keep her job. The lighting in *Rosetta*, at times, needed to be adjusted to accommodate this quick and fluid movement. For scenes filmed around Rosetta's trailer, two crew members had to be positioned on top of the structure to adjust the lighting in response to the cameras' movements.<sup>143</sup> For this reason, the crew used lightweight and mobile lighting equipment.<sup>144</sup>

Rosetta does not reveal her point of view to the audience. We do not see the story unfold through her eyes, we watch as if constantly peaking over her shoulder (image 11). The numerous over the shoulder shots and close ups of Rosetta's face (image 12) provide

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<sup>143</sup> Mai, *Dardenne*, 137.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

the audience with a third person point of view to the story. The audience is kept on the outside, observing Rosetta exclusively, even when an important action is happening outside of the frame; her mother crying, Riquet buying a waffle from her after she sells him out, a woman who lost her job talking with Rosetta's new boss. The main character is trying to survive and thus does not sympathize with others, so they are subsequently ignored by the camera. As audience members, we are not expected to identify with her but rather, to observe her situation,<sup>145</sup> closely but from the perspective of an outsider. By following Rosetta and watching her, witnessing how the world unfolds, the film *Rosetta* gives off the impression of an observational documentary about a girl trying to survive in a world in which she does not feel she belongs. Rosetta shows a "horrible social impulse to compete, annihilate, exploit, motives tied to self-industriousness",<sup>146</sup> with this, she annihilates the audience.



IMAGE 11: The camera looks over Rosetta's shoulder.

IMAGE 12: Rosetta is often observed instead of what she is observing.

While the story and cinematography of *Rosetta* offer a clear display of social realism in film, the Dardenne brothers' approach to selecting a location, their usage of

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<sup>145</sup> "Rosetta, The Silence".

<sup>146</sup> "Rosetta, The Silence".



blocking and their perspectives on acting strengthens this form of realism, visually, as does the *mise-en-scène*. The trailer park is seemingly marginalized from society. Rosetta must go through a fence and pass through the woods from the trailer to the outside world and change between simple black shoes and dirty boots depending on where she is going. There is a clear absence of decorative elements; the frame is far from stacked with symbolic objects, with just the lowest amount needed for telling the story about a group of people who do have very little.

Mirroring frames and blocking in *Rosetta* indicate the dangers the main character faces. Rosetta and her mother fight often during the film and will be seen pulling objects from each end (image 13). In a scene with Riquet, they hold each end of his jacket, wringing water from it (image 14) after she reluctantly saves him from the water. While these shots are framed and captured in a similar way, one describes conflict and the other, although under dismal circumstances, portrays a collaborative effort. Rosetta herself had been deliberately pushed into the water by her own mother in an earlier scene. Through the repetition in this action and how it is framed, the audience is provided with images of Rosetta's reality. She may follow in her mother's footsteps, or her interactions with Riquet may offer another path. At the end of the film, we are shown an extremely close and just barely perceptible scene of Riquet supporting Rosetta (image 15), as she had done for her mother (Image 16). This serves to emphasize the recurring contexts of Rosetta's life. The Dardenne brothers are artistically eluding to a possible fate for the character of Rosetta.



IMAGE 13: Rosetta and her mom pulling at each end of an object. IMAGE 14: Rosetta and Riquet wringing the water out.



IMAGE 15: Riquet supports Rosetta. IMAGE 16: Rosetta carries her passed out mother into their home.

When Riquet enters Rosetta's life there is a perceptible shift in the framing. From the usual over-the-shoulder or close-ups, Rosetta begins to share the frame with Riquet (image 17). He is the only character in *Rosetta* that shows her personal interest and asks her questions that are not merely practical. When she loses her job, he offers her other options, but not the honest kind of work that she desires. His presence within the frame reveals his importance to the plot. When she takes his job, the sharing of the frame ceases again and the framing goes back to its original form.



IMAGE 17: Rosetta shares the frame with Riquet.

The use of abrupt editing in *Rosetta* also reflects the main character's situation. The film quickly devolves into the chaos of a woman at war with society, representing her position at any given moment. We jump from scene to scene, action to action, at times even day to day, in a turbulent manner. While there are a few indicators of the passage of time, usually voiced by a character, the timeframe of the film is undefined. There is a sense of calm, however fragile,<sup>147</sup> when Rosetta's life has some form of stability, upon meeting Riquet and whilst she has a steady job, for example, only to return to the chaos when times once again get tough.

Sound is only diegetic, remaining true to the world that is on display. There is little said throughout the film, however much is revealed. The main soundscape is the environmental sounds. The only instance of music in *Rosetta* is when Riquet plays his demo. The lack of rhythm in his drumming on the demo provides it with a realistic impression. His character's presence in the film, despite often remaining off screen is depicted and represented by the sound of his scooter.

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<sup>147</sup> Mai, *Dardenne*, 103.

### 4.3 DARDENNIAN AND DOCUMENTARY STYLE IN *ROSETTA*

Dardennian style is not unlike that of the Neorealist movement. Both provide examples of social realism portrayed in fiction films through their use of relatively new actors, flowing cinematography, authentic locations and *mise-en-scène* complementary to what the setting and the situation demand for a realistic portrayal. The Dardenne brothers' use of the 16mm handheld camera, along with the 35mm shoulder camera, is evidence of a resemblance to The New Wave approach.

In *Rosetta* the audience is dropped into a difficult environment where the importance of characters, to the main character herself, is told with the framing and the camera. The editing represents Rosetta's emotional situation. The film is thematically connected to the Dardenne brothers' earlier films, which were documentaries and often portrayed the working-class.

Ultimately, what *Rosetta* portrays is a real response to a dismal situation. In the story, Rosetta is searching for the bridge between the inside and outside world. This takes the forms of either a job or a friend, or both. Perhaps there is a moral that lies within *Rosetta*, suggesting that friends are important. However a moral, as a romanticized Hollywood style would demand, is not essential to grasping the truthfulness of the film. The content and setting are shown through patterns in the framing and blocking. The film, then, visually represents the situation of a young girl in need of a job to survive. Her communication with her mother is mirrored in her relationship with Riquet. Riquet is to Rosetta what she is to her mother. We are not given information about how this relationship will play out, but as Riquet lifts Rosetta up there is a glimmer of hope.

Throughout *Rosetta*, we the audience are merely meant to observe. We are kept on the outside looking in, close enough to see but not enough to know and identify with the main character. This confines us to a third person perspective on the situation, as is

typical in a documentary. We are not meant to live within this constructed reality, but rather to observe it from the outside. As a character, Rosetta does not need to be remotely likeable or relatable, although, for some she is. The reluctance of Rosetta to lend the audience her point of view, and the choice of the Dardenne brothers to keep us on the outside, gives the film a specific documentary-like viewpoint. It is not necessary to become immersed in the subject in order to observe it in its 'real' setting.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The documentary issues a truth claim while the fiction is, supposedly, fabricated. While fiction and documentary style demand different approaches to their subjects these styles can overlap. Documentaries have drawn from fiction, in terms of style and technique, for longer than fiction has borrowed from documentary. When a film, belonging to either style, makes an exception this can have a significant influence on how the film is perceived.

In this thesis I have attempted to pinpoint the means by which fiction can use documentary style to create a sense of truthfulness. There are methods such as use of hand-held cameras, use of minimal lighting, sync sound, shooting on a location which is not heavily decorated and by means of a low, or seemingly low, budget. The implications of each choice has developed through documentary as well as realist movements such as the Italian Neorealist movement and the French New Wave.

The Dogma manifesto was ridiculed at the start and to critics to whom it was not clear whether the authors themselves took it seriously. Thomas Vinterberg, a member of the Dogma 95 movement, then premiered the first certified Dogma film, *The Celebration*, which adhered to most of the rules set out by the manifesto. The rules functioned more like a manual for directors to follow in order to rid themselves of special effects and focus instead on the fundamental elements of filmmaking. The manifesto does not limit the content of the film significantly. The rules can be broken, as they often are. While the manifesto bans genre *The Celebration* is a drama with theatrical elements, a docu-soap. The technical approach is the most significant aspect to the truthfulness of the film. The flow of the camera and the implication of the digital quality of the time, as if we are filming ourselves with a cheap camera, capturing our own home video, provides the audience with a seat at the table. On the other hand, the shocking effects of the rapid editing can

serve to pull us back into the realization that we are watching a film. The movement was possibly a joke but it had serious consequences.

The Dardenne brothers represent a bleak reality of the working class. They defined their themes while creating documentaries. *Rosetta* is a socially realistic film meant to be purely observed and not entered. *Rosetta* makes a truth claim by use of the hand-held camera which follows the action even more vigorously than is the case with *The Celebration*. The jump cuts then, while abrupt, do not necessarily shock the audience out of the film world. *Rosetta* does not fall into the same romantic patterns as *Dogma* and while it is a drama it refrains from being theatrical. There is no need for romanticising the ending.

There is a clear link between Dardennian style and documentary. *Dogma* does not claim to be documenting their subject. The documentary influence on the style of *The Celebration* and *Rosetta* are relatively different, though both play off elements within the world which grant them a more authentic touch.

For Thomas Vinterberg and the *Dogma 95* movement, declared dead, and the living *œuvre* of brothers and co-workers, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, the overlap between documentary and fiction tells the audience that there are real elements within their films. It is by our perception of what documentary and evidence are and how it is shown that we come to experience a sense of realism in film. We associate the hand-held camera with catching the real in action, purely diegetic sound, minimal *mise-en-scène* in a simple setting, positioned in the real space and simplicity, with a low budget and subsequently less interference with the world that is presented. The strongest element in both films is the cinematography and how it makes use of the observational mode, traditionally affiliated with documentaries, to create an authentic experience that we, the

audience, are observing people living through a situation, seated at the patriarch's 60th birthday party or facing Rosetta as she faces the world.



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