

Editor's Note

There is not one, but several realisms.
Each era looks for its own.
—André Bazin

Realism is a contentious term. Championed in the '40s by theorist André Bazin as the asymptotic *telos* of the filmic medium, and adopted epithetically by the Italian neorealists to denote the testimonial candor of their post-war cinema, its usage and subsequent connotations came under fire in the '60s and '70s, charged with empirical dogmatism and ideological complacency in the wake of Grand Theory's intellectual vogue. Since then, the term has been held at a cautious remove in film studies, paired often with historicizing prefixes to mark the contours of movements past (*poetic* realism, *neorealism*, *kitchen sink* realism, etc.) but uttered always in retrospective turns, pointing to the finitude of its mimetic prowess—what Christian Metz labelled its “reality-effect.”

Yet in the last decade or so, a reappraisal of realism has risen to the fore. Sparked by the demise of cinema's ontological basis (the existential link between film's corporeal nature and its real-world referent) and the renewed pertinence of Bazin's cardinal question, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, realism has been re-framed as a generative area of study in a parlous digital age, enabling new (or newly situated) discourse on cinematic reportage, authenticity, and representation. Recent scholars who have embraced realism's epistemological subscription—yet managed to traverse the epistemic fissure of a positivist approach—have recognized moments of contingency in contemporary art house and marginal cinemas, rooted either in classical tenets (spatio-temporal integrity, social extension, moral despondence) or emergent ones (“haptic” visuality, profilmic exclusivity, ethical engagement). This issue of *Cinephile* is situated at the intersection of such discussions.

To begin, Ivone Margulies negotiates the ruptures of literal reenactment in the Brazilian documentary *Serras da Desordem*, offering a tempered look at the contradictions inherent in the replaying of cultural erasure and displaced identity. Next, Richard Rushton rehabilitates the critique of

realism in light of digital technology's usurp of analogue indexicality, observing in digital narratives an ideological reality distinct from those exhibited in the classical Hollywood model. Justin Horton then traces the lineage of Bazanian realism in mumblecore entry *Kissing on the Mouth*, mediating its quotidian, sexual frankness with a Deleuzian decoupling of sound and image. Marc Di Sotto's article returns us to the site of reenactment cinema, this time the fictional recounting of the '72 Derry massacre in Paul Greengrass's *Bloody Sunday*, to consider the limitations of historical representation and the aesthetics of trauma. In “Beyond Neo-Neo Realism,” James Lattimer puts the supposed neorealist impulse in recent American cinema into perspective, and finds in Kelly Reichardt's revisionist Western *Meek's Cutoff* a subtle retooling of Bazin and Zavattini's narrative proponents. And finally, Tiago de Luca engages in a phenomenological reading of Gus Van Sant's *Gerry*, proposing a more embodied version of realism—“realism of the senses”—to understand the text's visionary images.

While not exhaustive of the surfacing strains of realism being considered in film scholarship, this issue of *Cinephile* acts as an insightful survey of at least the most absorbing areas dedicated to this reinvigorated field. My deepest gratitude to the authors for the caliber of their contributions. I must also extend thanks to my advisor Lisa Coulthard and the editorial team for their tireless dedication to an admittedly precarious topic, and the Department of Theatre and Film at UBC for their continued support.

Lastly, when initially mounting this project, I had in mind not only critical analyses but also visual evocations, some kind of testament to cinema's century-long wedding to the photographic medium. I want to thank Hanahlie Beise for bringing this to fruition, her beautiful 35mm photos poised at the start of each article. Enjoy.

—Shaun Inouye

Contributors

Hanahlie Beise received her B.F.A. from Emily Carr University of Art + Design in 2007. In 2008, she worked with *The Sartorialist* in New York and was commissioned by the Frank Gehry IAC building in Manhattan to produce a series of panoramas for permanent installation. In 2009, she was an Artist in Residence at the Banff Centre. In addition to her work as a photographer, she is also a partner in the design studio Caste Projects.

Tiago de Luca was recently awarded his Ph.D. in World Cinemas at the University of Leeds, UK. He has published articles in academic journals such as *Senses of Cinema*, *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, and *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*. He has a forthcoming chapter on realism and world cinema in the anthology *Theorizing World Cinema* (2012).

Marc Di Sotto is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Edinburgh, working on the relationship between memory and authenticity, and how these are reflected in the representations of history in literature and film. This work builds on his M.Sc. thesis, “Speaking in the Voice of Witness: A Study of Trauma and Authenticity in Fictional Representations of the Holocaust” (2008). He is a peer reviewer for the postgraduate journal *Forum*.

Justin Horton is a Ph.D. candidate in Moving Image Studies at Georgia State University in Atlanta. His area of research includes classical film theory, cinematic realism, and sound studies. His M.A. thesis, “The Flow of Water: Contemporary American Realisms” (2011), explores how free indirect discourse and the disjunction of sound and image open realism to an oneiric and/or intersubjective realm. Current projects include an investigation of voice-over in animated television, and the convergence of cinema and the “out-of-body” experience.

James Lattimer is an M.A. candidate in Film Studies at the Free University of Berlin. He has worked for the Forum section of the Berlin International Film Festival since 2008 and has been appointed to its selection committee for the upcoming 2012 edition. He is currently writing his M.A. thesis on how neorealist theory can be applied to the *oeuvre* of Kelly Reichardt.

Ivone Margulies is an Associate Professor in the Film and Media Studies Department at Hunter College (CUNY). She is the author of *Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman's Hyperrealist Everyday* (1996) and the editor of *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema* (2003). She has published articles in *Screen*, *Rouge*, *L'Esprit Créateur*, *QRV*, among others, and contributed the essay “A Matter of Time” to the Criterion release of *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (2009). Her recent essay, “Bazin's Exquisite Corpses,” can be found in *Opening Bazin: Postwar Film Theory and its Afterlives* (2011). She is currently completing a manuscript on post-war reenactment cinema.

Richard Rushton is a Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at Lancaster University, UK. He is the author of *The Reality of Film* (2011), *Cinema After Deleuze* (2012), and co-author of *What is Film Theory?* (2010). He has published articles in *Screen*, *Journal of Visual Culture*, *CineAction*, *Deleuze Studies*, *Senses of Cinema*, among others. He is currently working on a book tentatively titled *A New Politics of Cinema*.