

RITES OF REALISM



ESSAYS

ON

CORPOREAL

CINEMA

Edited by IVONE MARGULIES

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Essays on Corporeal Cinema

Edited by **I V O N E M A R G U L I E S**



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For Mark Cohen

Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Bodies Too Much *Ivone Margulies* 1

Bazinian Contingencies

Death Every Afternoon *André Bazin*
Translated by Mark A. Cohen 27

The Screen of Fantasy (Bazin and Animals) *Serge Daney*
Translated by Mark A. Cohen 32

History of Image, Image of History: Subject and Ontology
in Bazin *Philip Rosen* 42

The Object of Theory *Mary Ann Doane* 80

Cultural Indices

No Longer Absolute: Portraiture in American Avant-Garde
and Documentary Films of the Sixties *Paul Arthur* 93

In Search of the Real City: Cinematic Representations of
Beijing and the Politics of Vision *Xiaobing Tang* 119

Private Reality: Hara Kazuo's Films *Abé Mark Nornes* 144

Mike Leigh's Modernist Realism *Richard Porton* 164

Why Is This Absurd Picture Here? Ethnology/Heterology/Buñuel
James F. Lastra 185

Retracings

Exemplary Bodies: Reenactment in *Love in the City*, *Sons*,
and *Close Up* *Ivone Margulies* 217

Pasolini on *Terra Sancta*: Towards a Theology of Film
Noa Steimatsky 245

Ecstatic Ethnography: Maya Deren and the Filming of Possession
Rituals *Catherine Russell* 270

Filmic Tableau Vivant: Vermeer, Intermediality, and the Real
Brigitte Peucker 294

Dreyer's Textual Realism *James Schamus* 315

Selected Bibliography 325

Contributors 333

Index 337

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Rites of Realism

Bodies Too Much

Ivone Margulies

Under the general rubric of realism, *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema* subscribes to the epistemological promise of referential images: that what we see refers to an existing reality and we can thus “know” a certain landscape, a suburb, a room, or a farming method. This anthology articulates, however, a more pointed intervention in the discourse on realism and film. The essays focus on issues that had become taboo in the 1970s theoretical equation of realism and essentialism. How can one recall an event’s concrete peculiarity or reproduce its original urgency through a medium that so clearly defers? One way to invite such hard questions is to represent those events that most stubbornly resist the notion of duplication because of their close association with the carnality of the body and decay, to represent realities such as possession ritual, animal sacrifice, torture, or physical disability.¹ How is one to grant a corporeal weight to faces, places, and events through a medium that can imply but lacks depth? Where the body appears as theater, as third dimensional, it highlights cinema’s constitutive hybridity.²

The title word *rites* is meant to invoke the ritual connotation of representations that have actual effects on reality and in particular the reality of

profilmic bodies. When in *Sons* (1996) Zhang Yuan directs an actual Beijing family to reenact the last ten days before the sons commit their alcoholic father to a mental asylum, this restaging, two years after the fact, poses a number of questions having to do with the significance of retracing an original event in film. What is the status and purpose of this second time around? When Kazuo Hara follows his ex-wife, a feminist militant, in *Extreme Private Eros: Love Song, 1974* (1974), what exactly do we witness? How does the film performance of her private life differ from her public, politicized provocations in real life?

The essays in the book discuss makers who have, either in their subject choice or approach, engaged with the problem of originals. Literal representation may be, for instance, at the service of a faithful retracing of documents, places, and biographical events. And yet literal reenactment is shown to have little to do with accessing an original, pure past, working instead as an example offered to the audience with the aim of public betterment. The importance of these retracings lies in their present, performative efficacy.³ They may be forms of psychodrama, provoked instances of acting out that produce a catharsis of a personal (*Sons*) or a historical nature (in Hara Kazuo's *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On*, 1987); they may create a mutual contamination between a displaced text and its contemporary setting (in Pasolini's *The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 1964); or they may mimic a host of discourses on a people ironically commenting on ethnography and its pseudo-objectivity (in Buñuel's *Land without Bread*, 1932). In each case, the film's reference to a preexisting event or text produces a form of provocative mimesis.

In an attempt to delineate a problematic of cinematic realism that bypasses questions of verisimilitude, this anthology is inspired by, and pays tribute to, André Bazin's thoughts on the dilemmas of performance (the once-only profilmic event) and filmic reproducibility.

Bazin was always wary of the ways in which conventions dull realism, and his choice of the terms *reality* and *the real* have a strategic rather than a descriptive function. He says: "the cinema has come a long way since the heroic days when crowds were satisfied with the rough rendition of a branch quivering in the wind!" Or, commenting on *Farrebique's* impact, he asks why Rouquier has offended so many. "He has understood that verisimilitude has slowly taken the place of truth, that reality had slowly dissolved into realism. So he painfully undertook to rediscover reality."⁴

Bazin's own "rediscovery of reality" involves instead a heightened sense

of the eclectic materiality of film. Images that bear the marks of two heterogeneous realities, the filmmaking process and the filmed event, perfectly illuminate his search for visceral signifiers for the real. And the registered clash of different material orders best defines for him, in turn, that which is specifically cinematic. In *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), the bridge, which “really spans the River Kwai,” could not survive the film: “the absurdity either had to be *in* the film or it had, finally, to be the film *itself*.”⁵ In *Kontiki* (1950), it is the missing and not the existing footage — “the negative imprints of the expedition” — that best represents the danger faced by the explorers.⁶ It is the ellipsis in the last episode of *Paisa* (1946) that best tells us about the terror of being at war in one place instead of another. As Philip Rosen points out in his essay in this volume, such “markers of indexicality” attest to Bazin’s continuous interest in contingency as the principal measure of the humanity (and reality) of cinema.



Bazin’s images for the incidental and the contingent have usually served to exemplify the achievement of a surface realism through the putative inclusion of the marginal, nondramatic element. His description of the episode in *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) is exemplary: “in the middle of the chase the little boy suddenly needs to piss. So he does.”⁷ Siegfried Kracauer, another reputed defender of a realist ontology for cinema, finds similar examples for an inverted relation between those images that further the story and those that can do so precisely because they “retain a degree of independence of the intrigue and thus succeed in summoning a physical existence.”⁸ Within a different critical agenda, Roland Barthes has characterized literary references to objects that have no discernible narrative function except to give a material, worldly weight to the description as “reality effects.”⁹ While Bazin and Kracauer seem to note and celebrate these little escapes from narrative determinism, Barthes’s functional analyses actually cast a shadow over those descriptive images that seem to be there merely to confirm an overall effect of naturalness. These formulations imply the potential co-optation of such irrelevant details for a realistic notation. But they may also define a critical impasse both in literature (with descriptions) and in cinema

1. The actual bridge explosion in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, David Lean, 1957 (frame enlargement of video)

(with the contingent events): the category of verisimilitude is inadequate to define what modern realist films do beyond differing from classical realist representations.

Bazin's impatience with verisimilitude can suggest ways for theoretical speculation to account more adequately for modern realist films. His dismissal of verisimilitude is made clear in his frequent comments on the felicity of (mis)cast actors or the irrelevance of likeness for reenactment's moral projects.¹⁰ He delves instead into the problematic of profilmic performances, taking special interest in production and reception contingencies. It is this interest that overlaps in an illuminating manner with materialist analyses of filmic images.

At the end of his reading of Jean Renoir's *La Marseillaise*, Bazin states: "An admirable touch, as he reviews the troops in the Tuilleries, Louis the XVI is hindered by the fact that his wig is askew."¹¹ Bazin adds a physical embarrassment to Louis's social predicament, and this material detail disturbs at once two forms of spectacle: Louis's and Pierre Renoir's royal attire and film costume. Bazin's admirable touch has to do with the seeming casualness with which he juxtaposes fictions, defining each through their shared physicality. In Jean-Louis Comolli's analysis of the same film, historical determinism uncovers the shakiness of appearances and lays bare the naked king: "The wig . . . is this part which first detaches itself from the disintegrating royal body. Never has this body stopped falling apart as it was constructed before our eyes . . . something undecidable floats around him [Pierre Renoir], a blur in the image, duplication: there is a ghost in this body. At any rate there is some historical knowledge, some referent constituting a screen for the image and preventing the actor and *mise-en-scène* from playing on self-evidence."¹²

Comolli's critical narrative is one of many materialist readings of film indebted to Bazin's insights into profilmic contingency.¹³ His comments on the difficult referentiality of historical film indicate, however, where Bazin's thoughts about incidents of production and performance most productively lead—toward an understanding of the complex layering of referential modes.

What interests Bazin are precisely the rough edges of representation, the moment of encounter and productive maladjustment between representation and the actuality of filmmaking. The social and cultural resonances of this mis-fit are never lost in his criticism, and in the essays that follow one finds a similar attentiveness to the density of profilmic reality.

This anthology addresses referential genres and topics particularly prone to bodily discomfort. Historical film, but also portraiture, adaptation, and reenactment, create representations beset by competition with prior images (from portraits to filmic roles) and descriptive regimens (biographies, histories, and ethnographies) that vie to adequately represent a given reality. Because they refer to existing titles, events, and people, such films can eventually claim that they provide viable references for a critical understanding of one's culture and society. At the same time, since they are often perceived as parasitic of original sources, they also have an interesting aesthetic potential to betray a totalized or idealized version of reality.

Just as this anthology does away with verisimilitude as a working category appropriate to considering modern realist film, it also distances itself from the generalized indictment of realist aesthetics as a form of deception. The bodies brilliantly uncovered in Comolli's historical-materialist undressing are no longer "too much" or an excess worthy of ideological alarm. This excess is the question that moves several of the essays to rethink, not to condemn, realism.

The essays in this book look at films that make apparent use of straightforward recording, only to magnify how distant realism can be from a mere reproduction of appearances. The filming of possession rituals in Maya Deren's trance films and the infamous shot of the goat falling in *Las Hurdes* (*Land without Bread*) raise the prospect that what seems like a transparent record is not always a naive or deceptive form of representation. Even more forcefully than a reflexive comment on film language, a fully visible framing of reality may pose difficult questions about the relations between the clarity of vision and that of meaning.

This volume is divided into three parts: "Bazinian Contingencies," "Cultural Indices," and "Retracings." The essays resonate across sections, and their joint attention to the contingencies of reality and the film image will hopefully flesh out the changeable nature of realism and provide categories in which to consider new emerging representational aesthetics.

Bazinian Contingencies

For Bazin, nothing better illustrates the radical breach between the transience of existence and mechanical reproduction, which transcends it so obliviously, than a never to be repeated spectacle in flesh and blood.¹⁴ *Rites of Realism* opens with one such image from Pierre Braubenger's documen-

tary *The Bullfight* (*La Course de Taureaux*, 1949) and André Bazin's plaintive comment: "I cannot repeat a single moment of my life, but any one of those moments cinema may repeat indefinitely before me. . . . on the screen the toreador dies every afternoon."¹⁵

Mournful references to the unique moment are often cast as a theoretical throwback to an era before the structural-semiotic divide. Stephen Heath's text "Film Performance" is one example of the ways in which 1970s theoretical discourse talked about "performance." This discourse showed an obtuseness toward what was in front of the camera. Heath deploys Bazin's insight that cinema's fundamental obscenity is never as vivid as in its unique ability to reanimate dead bodies, that its remorse (in Bazin's pun *re-mords* / *re-morts*) lies in projecting on-screen the singular moment of a change to inert matter again and again.¹⁶ But Heath only falsifies the thrust of Bazin's sensibility to the singularity of the recorded event. He opts for quite a different image of death to talk about the cinema, one that is from the start imbricated with capitalist commodification, an image that associates document, sensationalism, and profit. He rehearses Apollinaire's snuff film parable *Un beau film*. The narrator of "A Good Film," recounts how, after founding the International Cinematographic Company (CIC), the producers procured "films of great interest." The CIC had a "well-rounded program," but one subject was missing, the record of a crime. . . . giving up the possibility of licitly coming upon the spectacle of a crime, the producers decided to organize one."¹⁷ "It is not by chance," notes Heath, "that Apollinaire's fascination with the new medium is immediately, in 1907 the story of a murder, the relation of cinema and crime." For the "crime of the good film is the film itself, its time and its performance . . . made of a series of stops in time, the timed stops of the discrete frames." Film depends, for its reconstitution of a moving reality, on "the *artifice* of its continuity and coherence."¹⁸

I paraphrase Heath's version of the inherent guilt of the "good film," frequently equated with classical Hollywood cinema (and in a further semantic/ideological slippage with realism *tout court*), in order to draw attention to a different crime scene. For in fact Heath has diverted us from the crime we are supposed to be seeing, from the murder actually perpetrated in front of the camera in this snuff film, to the presumed masked area of aesthetic production (editing) and reception. In this haste to indict a suspect ideology, we may have been inadvertently sidetracked.¹⁹

The repudiation of realist cinema as a worthy object of analysis repre-

sented, in 1970s theoretical writing, an unquestioned allegiance to a political modernist agenda. As David Rodowick suggests in his analysis of the political modernist discourse, the dominant opposition at work here is that of realism versus modernism. This discourse polarized classical and countercinema practices, constantly pitching Hollywood cinema's deceptiveness and illusionism against an avant-garde cinema whose task was the promotion of the critical awareness of the materiality of the medium.²⁰ This polarity has framed realist cinema as needing demystification rather than explanation.²¹

Ideological accounts of the camera have obscured important historical distinctions in ways of perceiving reality. Their explanatory power has been pervasive enough to create, in Jonathan Crary's words, "a confusing bifurcated model of vision in the nineteenth century." "On the one level," he says "there is a relatively small number of advanced artists who generated a radically new kind of seeing and signification, while on a more quotidian level vision remains embedded within the same general 'realist' strictures that had organized it since the fifteenth century."²²

At least in part, the impetus for the detailed historicization of media and reception has been a reaction to the technological determinism of apparatus theories.²³ In *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity*, James Lastra carefully dismantles the ahistorical claim that the camera's production of spatially coherent images (from the Renaissance's camera obscura to cinema) produces a transcendental subject and that the re-creation of the movement of objective reality could have the same effect "by each and every use of the cinema."²⁴

Lastra, Tom Gunning, Miriam Hansen, Vanessa Schwartz, and Ben Singer, among others, have shown how broadly conceived historical analyses can clear up well-worn clichés on cinematic practice and reception.²⁵ Most significant studies that align cinema with other popular media and forms of entertainment from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have allowed a number of important questions to frame anew the issue of realism. What is cinema's response to the search for sensations apparent in turn of the century forms of spectacle such as the cabaret, the morgue visit, the wax museum, and the panorama? How is the spectator's body redefined by cinematic shock, and how does the reception of cinema compare with other physical and sensorial thrills of modern life? Such considerations have opened up the debate on realism to include other models not necessarily associated with film's lifelike qualities.

New film histories working on issues of performance and the body have also been instrumental in opening the field of inquiry beyond the operations of the camera lens, acknowledging that the camera does more than simply register a passive reality.²⁶ Distinctions between the notion of a captured moment in art, photography, cinema, and video have resulted in an enriched understanding of the relations of different media to the contingencies of reality, a reality that itself is subject to multiple levels of construction. Several considerations have qualified old critical paradigms based exclusively on the camera's agency: the acknowledgment that different perceptual regimens and interests inflect the reception of images, that profilmic and diegetic elements (staging, acting, and lighting as well as character development and narrative logic) are interlinked to, but not entirely accounted for by, editing or framing.

The selection of films and filmmakers for discussion in *Rites of Realism* is strategic regarding this renewed attention to profilmic operations. One of the most enduring effects of the simplistic proposal of apparatus theory lies in how effectively it associates depth perspective with "bourgeois" illusionism. The characterization of certain forms of representation as automatically suspect led the political modernist radar to miss important work operating in any other register than that subtended by the screen/surface analogy. As Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs suggest in *Theatre to Cinema*, the emphasis on the shot and editing as the key defining features of cinema was linked to early cinema's need to define itself as art, not copy. The emphasis on editing at the expense of the content of individual shots (and at the expense of considerations of profilmic reality) was necessary in order to deflect the "suspicion that the moving-picture camera was no more than a sophisticated copying device, that any art there was in the cinema resided in the objects, people, events, and actions that had once been in front of the passive camera."²⁷ But it was only in the 1970s that formal strategies such as the foregrounding of surface flatness, the visible integrity of the shot, and breaks with cinematic verisimilitude such as direct address to the camera and graphic interruptions gained an overblown critical (and moral) valence. Conversely, any reading attentive to the reality in front of the camera, to the materiality shared by actor and individual, by a specific place and a dramatic setting, was somehow compromised by the illusory pull of verisimilitude.²⁸ Any work that did not seem to discursively parade formal quandaries was somehow suspect. Any film that embraced figuration and a discernible reference to external reality was dismissed along with a generi-

cally defined classical cinema. This led to a selective valorization of work, with more overt formal projects automatically disqualifying a number of films and issues from consideration.²⁹

This book resists the segregation between avant-garde/modernist and realist films characteristic of the 1970s modernist agenda by looking at directors such as Luis Buñuel, Maya Deren, Carl Th. Dreyer, Peter Greenaway, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Andy Warhol. Otherwise known for the experimental and formal qualities of their films, they are discussed here because of their confrontations with real existing bodies and their manipulations of profilmic realities.

The bullfight demarcates this book's alternative problematic, located this time in front of the camera in the profilmic area.³⁰ It is in this arena of "represented/actual bullfighting" that, like man and beast, different material registers productively clash.

It seems fitting, then, to open this anthology with a counterimage to Heath's anti-illusionist stance. In Bazin's "Death Every Afternoon" (*La mort tous les après-midi*) the difference between the dead and the living, central to the ontology of cinema and its uncanny animation, figures not simply as a perceptual trick set in motion by the projector but *also as* subject matter. The "permanent virtuality" of the bullfighter and the bull's death provides him with one more occasion to stress contingency as the central quality of the cinema. But Bazin has reminded us in another context that the subject matter should matter after all.³¹

The imminent death on-screen encapsulates the complexity of profilmic reality (its danger as well as its theatricality) at the same time that the long shot proffers its full visibility. Serge Daney's "The Screen of Fantasy (Bazin and Animals)" rethinks the consequences of such full visibility. He convincingly shows that Bazin's attention to subject matter is not simply a warning directed to the dangers of the *politique des auteurs's* excessive formalism. Bazin's examples of the interdiction of montage—the encounter between man and beast framed together in a long shot—are, in their uncompromising figuration of heterogeneity, a favorite sign of violence and reality. Instead of an aesthetic safeguard for representing the integrity of the reality, the spatial and temporal expansions Bazin explores provide in fact the best conceivable stage for the emergence of the real, of its unpredictable heterogeneity.

Still focusing on how Bazin stages, in his descriptive examples, the unexpected event, Philip Rosen explains in "History of Image, Image of History:

Subject and Ontology in Bazin” how central time is to Bazin’s cinematic ontology. It allows for a fantasy of convergence, the parallel unfolding of filming and event. But it also occasions a subjective investment, which is all the more active if there is a sustained ambivalence, a deferral of definition regarding where fact ends and fiction begins. Rosen draws out Bazin’s interest in the viewer’s gradual, subjective investment in the reading of an image, its temporality, but also on the critic’s inspiring insights into the image’s historicity. Bazin’s articulation of the differential between a mythical and an existential dimension (Stalin and the actors that play him) and cinema’s role in collapsing these categories becomes, through Rosen’s reading, fundamental for thinking about two genres imbricated with time and actual existence—biographical and historical films.³²

Sensitivity to the conjunction of cinema and history is central to much of the contemporary discussion around questions of realism and in particular to the evidentiary status of moving images. Renewed interest in notions of visible evidence and the rhetoric of authenticity of documentary modes epitomizes the way in which “fugitive images,” defined by their indexical link with the real, have recently grown in importance.³³ The social gravity granted to representation in the Rodney King trial and the centrality of video in this case signaled the evidentiary relevance of record—to provide material proof of an event that might otherwise vanish from collective memory. Even though it became clear in that case that evidence was not self-sufficient and that framing verbal arguments defined the image’s circumstantial significance, there was a firm desire to safeguard images as indisputably linked to truth.

The awareness that we have entered a postmodern era in which digitization has replaced the indexicality of photography has reawakened the debate around the authenticity of images. It has generated an ethically inflected preoccupation with the real revalorized as the residue of an accelerated technological and representational obsolescence.³⁴

In “The Object of Theory,” her essay in this anthology, Mary Ann Doane moves the discussion from a moral arena—whether indexically produced images are more trustworthy than digital ones—to a historical one. She historicizes the very concern with fugitive images that has animated some of the most interesting work in the last decade, linking the interest in contingency to a broader sensitivity to cinema’s own suddenly foreshortened history. Cinephilia and the fastening on the indexically produced detail constitute a “safeguarding of the domain of the cinematic proper,” the

photographically based image menaced with extinction in the digital era.³⁵ The importance of the concept of indexicality in current film scholarship lies in its potential to make available “the particular, the singular, the unpredictable—in short, the antisystematic—within the cinematic domain.”³⁶ It is this same unpredictability that charges the indexical sign with a value, crucial for cinephiles, for registering “something, that resists . . . existing networks of critical discourse and theoretical frameworks.”³⁷

Contingency—the barely grasped instant, which is nevertheless recorded—is the main measure of cinema’s particular significance. Doane’s insights concerning the renewed interest in cinematic specificity, the historicity of the medium, and the temporality proper to cinema significantly expand the theoretical implications of Bazin’s sensitivity to the cinematic paradoxes of temporal freezing.

Cultural Indices

The book’s second part extends the focus of Bazin’s writings on neorealism, as well as his understanding of cinema’s deep power to register and interpret particular nuances of history and place, into contemporary and classic realist films. These essays participate in the realist debate in two key ways. They raise issues conventionally thought to be residual to dramatic narrative and action plots—faces (portraiture and home movies), places (location and landscape, the representation of cities), or everyday banality. They also take into account the ways in which images develop their own genealogies and histories in dialogue with other national and international aesthetic traditions and forms of signification.

Fredric Jameson has proposed a neat periodization of film history corresponding to the development of global capitalism—realism, modernism, and postmodernism.³⁸ He suggests that the “moment of realism can be grasped . . . as the conquest of a kind of cultural, ideological and narrative literacy by a new class or group.”³⁹ Given the implications of such a developmental model, it is to Jameson’s credit that his categories keep breaking up to include alternate forms of what he terms “oppositional realism.” *Oppositional realism* refers to films and film movements that present at the same time the self-referentiality of modernist art and the epistemological retrieval of a marginal reality. He exemplifies this tendency with a number of feminist and ethnic works from Akerman’s *News from Home* to Stephen Frears and Hanif Kureishi’s *My Beautiful Launderette*.⁴⁰

What oppositional realism also suggests is that the equation of realism and a politics of identity is soon disqualified by a much richer and complex practice, one that often breaks the boundaries of the most readily utilized classificatory category—that of national cinemas.⁴¹

The essays grouped under “Cultural Indices” illuminate particular cinematic traits related to nationality, but their main purpose is not to make broad statements in line with a given national agenda or cultural sensibility. If anything, the emphasis on theoretical issues is meant to suggest the complexity of realist aesthetics, issues that are applicable to diverse realities.

The films analyzed here follow the thematic mandate of realism—to pay heed to underrepresented aspects of society. But they do so, at times, with a perverse excess (Warhol or Buñuel, Mike Leigh) or, and with similarly interesting results, with sincere earnestness (Stan Brakhage, direct cinema). Their representation of existing landscapes, physiognomies, and cityscapes yields portraits that are as precise as they are defamiliarized.

Film can, because of its indexicality, guarantee the particularity of its object in time and space, its precise historicity. Time can operate, however, as a potent agent of “disfiguration.”⁴² It is extended time and an excess of contingency that after all destabilize Warhol’s portraits. The camera shifts from merely recording and begins with time to “narrate [the subject’s] anxious response to the process of being photographed.”⁴³ As Paul Arthur describes, with a nuanced attention to detail, the facial expressions, the “orchestrated little comic fugues consisting of nods, lip movements, eye exercises,”⁴⁴ in avant-garde film, he posits the ways in which cinema, and certain referential modes in particular, are inordinately suited to unpredicted revelation.

Arthur’s essay in this volume, “No Longer Absolute: Portraiture in American Documentary and Avant-Garde Films of the Sixties,” follows Doane’s incisive reflections on the nature of contingency in modernity. He recasts Bazin’s central problematic—how to grant “presentness” to “embalmed time”—examining the particular affinity for a fluid identity evinced in both the 1960s countercultural ethos and the portrait film. Arthur explains how avant-garde cinema and direct cinema documentaries were particularly prone to the display of social diversity in an era that privileged spontaneity, unfettered self-expression, and personal idiosyncrasy.

The city is a recognized theme in discussions of realism.⁴⁵ As Kracauer continually suggested, “street and face open up a dimension much wider than that of the plots they sustain.”⁴⁶ Kracauer refers here to contingency, the unpredictable flow of movement and expression likely to appear on the

face and city. But even more significantly what qualifies it as an important setting for realist art is the fact that, like the face, the city is a socially inscribed landscape. Its constructed nature easily places it in a precise historical moment. Cities can thus be indicators of three main characteristics of realist drama and film according to Raymond Williams: the secular (the action played in exclusively human terms), the contemporary (the siting of actions in one's present), and a conscious movement toward social extension.⁴⁷

The city's potential to serve as a barometer for shifts in the relation of individuals to the forces of modernization makes it an especially significant subject in contemporary China. The focus on contemporary urban life has often emerged as the trait that distinguishes the Fifth from the Sixth Generation filmmakers. Focusing instead on later films made by members of the Fourth Generation, filmmakers who made some of the most realistic films about rural China in the 1980s, Xiaobing Tang's close analyses suggest a more complex picture. His text evokes separate intellectual and aesthetic traditions: typicality in the case of *Good Morning Beijing* (Zhang Nuan, 1990) and modernist investigation of psychological depth in *Black Snow* (Xie Fei, 1989).

Also dealing with aspects of social geography, Richard Porton analyzes the intertexts for British realist Mike Leigh. He demonstrates how dramatic forms inherited from the theater intersect and reshape Leigh's modernist tale telling of everyday banality, thereby distinguishing his work most notably from the "kitchen sink" realism of the 1960s. Leigh's preference for claustrophobic interiors allows him a theatrically stylized but sociologically accurate depiction of the aspirations of petty bourgeois and working class characters. Using Henri Lefebvre's concept of "spatial politics," Porton suggests how Leigh's films reveal social alienation and class distinctions physically, through the "artifacts of social hierarchy." The kind of hors d'oeuvre served can suggest a person's anxiety about receiving a guest in *Abigail's Party*. But the accumulation of such cultural inscriptions, their excess, creates a distilled, critical version of that society.

There is no doubt a connection between the inventiveness of recent realist film and the anxiety felt by many around the world in the face of rapidly changing realities in their daily lives. Moreover, the attention to marginalized segments of urban societies, running the gamut from unemployment and urban anomie (Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep* and *My Brother's Wedding*, the Dardenne Brothers' *La Promesse* and *Rosetta*, Bruno Dumont's *Life*

of *Jesus*, or Eric Zonca's *Dreamlife of Angels*) to the state of care for mentally handicapped children in China (Zhang Yuan's *Mama*), implicitly affirms the affinity of realism for social issues. It is, however, as important to note film's relative autonomy in interpreting and then forming fresh cultural images. As the filmmakers discussed here grapple with the complexities of this reality, they invent new forms of realism and additional aesthetic and social references.⁴⁸ Xiaobing Tang's essay on urban representation might seem, at first glance to describe a stable version of Chinese identity in the late 1980s. Nonetheless, his different emphases—on subjective representation in the case of *Black Snow* or on social mapping in the case of *Good Morning Beijing*—suggest in fact that realism is a plural aesthetics and not simply a way of recording signs of plurality.

These essays, then, have multiple tasks—they map both the referential horizons of a given moment, what is pressing as subject matter, and the aesthetic boundaries crossed on the way to representing particular issues. Hara Kazuo's provocative tracking of taboos and charged questions in *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On* (cannibalism in World War II) or *Sayonara CP* (physical handicap) suggests the reach of Japanese documentary but also what constitutes a taboo in mid-1970s or early 1980s Japan. Abé Mark Nornes details the documentary tradition to which Hara responds as he creates an idiosyncratic, provocative dialogue with repressive elements in his culture.

The contributors to this anthology all examine realism as an aesthetic that effectively enacts cultural and social tensions. In "Why Is This Absurd Picture Here? Ethnology/Heterology/Buñuel," James F. Lastra traces Buñuel's 1932 film *Las Hurdes*'s aesthetic of equivocation to its dialogue with the film's avowed sources: Maurice Legendre's 1926 anthropological study and Miguel de Unamuno's 1922 travel essay. He suggests how Buñuel's depiction of the *hurdanos* is in fact a critical gesture aimed at the 1930s purist national discourses.

The anthology is organized so that each essay opening a section develops some of the questions broached in the next essay or section. For example, Arthur's "No Longer Absolute" discerns a cultural and historical particularity in 1960s portraiture—the genre's thirst for contingency and the consequent affinity for the thematic of wavering identities in that period. Arthur's insights on the parallel historical and aesthetic registers of the contingent in the production of 1960s identities significantly illustrates how Doane's work on indexicality and temporality matters for current readings of referential genres such as historical and portrait film. Lastra's essay closes

the book's second part because of its focus on the cultural representation of the *hurdanos* in right-wing discourse. Buñuel's procedures of mimicry, yet another version of a provocative *retracing* initiates the next part's discussion. The extended discussion of the infamous goat shot in *Land without Bread*, a provoked, filmic, and filmed death, suggests once again the centrality of images of death in discussions of realism and cinema. This image of sacrifice is echoed in the essays' complex and layered forms of repetition and adaptation—in reenacted events, in transmuted locations, in possessed bodies, in "textual realism."

Retracings

In the last part of the anthology, the contributors discuss a number of realist genres that refer to actual, existing originals (documents, books, events, and people). The essays' questions have to do with the predicaments of performance (the once only of an event) in film (reproducible, circulating images). They consider the complexities of literal representation and embodiment.

Literal representation is associated with the faithful retracing of documents, places, and biographical events. It generates distinct projects and questions in the work of Dreyer, Pasolini, Antonioni, and Abbas Kiarostami.

In my essay, "Exemplary Bodies: Reenactment in *Love in the City*, *Sons*, and *Close Up*," I discuss how reenactment functions as a form of atonement in public. Reenactment is not, for instance, enlisted in the retracing of past events but rather in the production of redemptive images and public examples for future action. The consciousness-raising appeal of these biographical re-creations lies in this on-screen repetition, which I define as a form of exemplary realism. I discuss two late neorealist films—Zavattini and Maselli's *Love of a Mother* and Antonioni's *Attempted Suicide*—and their use of reenactment to counter the perceived abuses of fiction cinema. I also analyze two contemporary films—Zhang Yuan's *Sons* and Abbas Kiarostami's *Close Up*—indicating these films' particular resistance to moralistic, redemptive functions.

Noa Steimatsky's "Pasolini on *Terra Sancta*: Towards a Theology of Film" focuses on Pasolini's *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*. She integrates the film's production history in her interpretation of Pasolini's decision to film in Matera, Italy, after hunting for locations in Palestine and recording such images in his *Sopraluoghi di Palestina (Locations in Palestine, 1963)*. The

notion of a literal retracing of Christ's steps, here selectively transposed onto a different ground, is crucial to understanding the radicality of Pasolini's eclectic, impure realism. Steimatsky considers Pasolini's iconic stylistics, providing precise examples of the filmmaker's strategies of *analogy* and *contamination*.

Another significant move away from the problematic of faithful recording is apparent in Catherine Russell's "Ecstatic Ethnography: Maya Deren and the Filming of Possession Rituals." Russell looks at Deren's Haitian project, footage and texts, to identify the ways in which scenes of possession function as a catalyst in the development of cinema vérité, the formal affinity of melodramatic structures and spectacles of possession, and most importantly the challenge images of possession pose to cinematic epistemologies. She maps Deren's desire and failure to register the ritual spectacle of possessed subjectivity onto a more general difficulty—the invocation of subjective depth and the resistance to visibility present in possession scenes. She discusses how filmmakers engaging with possession rituals were interested in transformations of the self and how reflexivity and romantic self-expression were part of this intriguing combination of high visibility and utter opaqueness.

This anthology directly engages with films that assume cinema's problematic transparency and inherent hybridity. This is the explicit theme of Brigitte Peucker's "Filmic Tableau Vivant: Vermeer, Intermediality, and the Real," which looks at the *tableau vivant* as an apt trope for cinema's heterogeneity: "one of the tensions governing tableau vivant issues has its origin in an uncertainty about the boundaries that divide the representational from the real." Peucker closely analyzes the "embodiment" of Vermeer paintings in two films: Peter Greenaway's *A Zed and Two Noughts* (1985) and Wim Wenders's *Until the End of the World* (1991). The essay's particular focus on one of the oldest tropes of realism—the painting brought to life—allows her to examine these filmmakers' distinctively postmodernist problematics: an obsession with the "real" and their relation to intertextuality and intermedia. While intermediality forms a subset of this investigation, the *tableau vivant* introduces questions about the attempts to create fuller or embodied images of reality. That this search for presence only leads to greater artifice is discussed as part of these filmmakers' particular representational questions.

James Schamus identifies, in Dreyer's close adaptation of the original trial documents in *Passion of Joan of Arc*, a form of "textual realism,"

a second-degree referentiality, which, in dialogue with other forms of character-based realism, is itself informed by the filmmaker's search for authority. This search for authenticity translates into a particular form of realism: an attempt to replicate the "written traces" of a real person, a "reenactment of the documentary word." Focusing on the films' layered textuality (scripts based on notes, diaries, letters, and transcripts), the essay draws significant conclusions about the embattled relation of Dreyer's female characters (Joan of Arc, Gertrud) with this textual authority.

On the occasion of the 1997 International Week of Cinema, which was dedicated to contemporary European cinema, Jean-Louis Comolli revisited Bazin and some of the performative impasses raised in this book. Motivated by Rossellini and his predilection for representing traces of lost realities ("the ruins in *Germany Year Zero*, the paths in *Stromboli*, the bellies in *Voyage in Italy*"); Comolli considers realism to be a necessary "cruelty from cinematography: it needs to pass through the body."⁴⁹ He claims that since Rossellini modern cinema has treated motifs of ruin and restoration literally. Ruins, the expenditure of the material world, become at the same time the film's setting and its *raison d'être*. This form of compact reflexivity is at work in many recent films, whose most immediate characteristic is their descriptive, episodic narrative. The effects of the earthquake in *And Life Goes On* (1992) are an example. Kiarostami's pretext for filming was to look for actors from his previous film *Where Is My Friend's House?* who live in that region, to return to a place where the inhabitants were working to remake their homes and are therefore also moving stones for a film set—activities hard to tell apart. The ruins are an indexical trace of the actual catastrophe. But given the long-standing impact of broken mountains, rerouted roads, and destroyed villages, there is no way of knowing, except extratextually, how long ago the event took place or how urgent the quest is to find the children who once acted in a film by the director. Both reportage and fiction films are shown to have missed the earthquake. Kiarostami's film and the diegetic filmmaker are therefore always trailing after, telling a story in winding detours, traversing the many stops that will let us see as much as we can see, all we *can* see, traces of events.⁵⁰

What is singularly brought home in such contemporary images of incidental events, staged in so many of Bazin's examples of cinematic specificity is the inherent heterogeneity of cinematic images—their awkward amalgams of literal materiality and reference.

"Modern cinema," notes Daney, can be characterized as "being always

more or less documentary on the state of the materials to be filmed, always a dual operation, dialectical.”⁵¹ Contemporary realist cinema exercises pressure over this constitutive duality—the representational and literal aspects of cinema. Tsai Ming-liang’s *The River* (1998) is an example. Caused perhaps by a brief stunt dip into a polluted river, or else by a dysfunctional family, the protagonist’s sudden excruciating pain in the neck takes over every scene, contaminating more “dramatic” moments with an overwhelming physicality. This excessively charged sign, a symptom whose cause moves and evades the entire narrative, radically checks the film’s fictive ground. The pain is a constant reminder of the actor’s body, of its literalness.

Rites of Realism initiates an account of this layered materiality in its own promotion of an impure, corporeal cinema. Together the essays propose a methodological variant to work exclusively devoted to contextual research or detailed textual readings, a critical vocabulary attentive to the various contingencies of production and reception that form referential images and inform their readings.

Notes

- 1 See Elaine Scarry’s argument on the difficulty of representing physical pain in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). For a discussion of the recent proliferation of theories about the body, see Carolynne Bynum, “Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist’s Perspective,” *Critical Inquiry* 22 (autumn, 1995): 1–34.
- 2 For an original consideration of cinema’s hybridity, see Brigitte Peucker, *Incorporating Images: Film and the Rival Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- 3 For Sandy Petrey, realist specificity is not “an impossible fidelity to a sociohistorical referent but a successful activation of the process by which sociohistorical collectivities make language appear referential.” It is in part this active dimension of realism that I want to keep in my use of the term *performative realism*. See Petrey’s *Realism and Revolution: Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, and the Performances of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 70.
- 4 André Bazin, “Farrebique or the Paradox of Realism,” in *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties*, translated by Allain Piette and Bert Cardullo (New York: Routledge, 1997), 106, 108.
- 5 André Bazin, “High Infidelity (*The Bridge on the River Kwai*),” in Bazin, *Bazin at Work*, 227–28.
- 6 André Bazin, “Cinema and Exploration,” in *What Is Cinema?* 2 vols., edited and translated by Hugh Gray (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 1:162. Both Philip Rosen and John Belton have used this example to suggest how “the greater reality” of a film equals, for Bazin, the spectator’s investment in the construction of

meaning. See Philip Rosen, this volume, 70, especially 46, 48; and John Belton, "Bazin Is Dead! Long Live Bazin!" *Wide Angle* 9:4:78. Rosen's *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) develops at length the relevance of Bazin's conception of indexicality and contingency. His discussion of Bazin, Barthes, and Comolli is an in-depth complement to my own take in this introduction. See also my analysis of realism in *Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman's Hyper-realist Everyday* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

- 7 André Bazin, "Bicycle Thief," in Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, 2:52.
- 8 Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 231. See also Miriam Bratu Hansen, introduction to Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, xxxi. Hansen's work on Kracauer represents a historicized and highly sympathetic rethinking of cinema's affinity for the concrete. Rescuing Kracauer from his characterization as a naive realist, Hansen zooms in on the notion of materiality. She identifies Kracauer's concern as being "not with authenticity or verisimilitude but rather with film's ability to discover and articulate materiality, to enact 'the process of materialization'" ("Marseille Notebooks," 2.9, cited in Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, xvii. For another relevant reading of realism in the arts that departs from notions of lifelikeness, see Michael Fried, "Between Realisms: From Derrida to Manet," *Critical Inquiry* 21 (autumn 1994): 1–36.
- 9 Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in *The Rustle of Language*, translated by Richard Howard (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 48–71.
- 10 See André Bazin, "Le Neorealisme se retourne," *Cahiers du Cinéma* 69 (March 1957): 45–47. See also Rosen's important reevaluation of Bazin's privileging temporality instead of "spatial similarity or dissimilarity between image and the world" as an indication of the irrelevance of life-looking qualities in Bazin's conception of realism in *Change Mummified*, 16.
- 11 André Bazin, *Jean Renoir*, edited with an introduction by François Truffaut, translated by W. W. Halsey II and William H. Simon (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971–73), 67.
- 12 Jean-Louis Comolli, "Historical Fiction: A Body Too Much," translated by Ben Brewster, *Screen* 19 (summer 1978): 45, originally published as "Un corps en trop," *Cahiers du Cinéma* 278 (July 1977): 5–16.
- 13 See, for instance, "The Question Oshima" (as well as "Film Performance," which I discuss below), in Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 145–64, 113–30. Many have pointed out the parallels between the teleological conceptions of cinema in apparatus theories and Bazin. See Rosen, this volume. Besides the essay on *La Marseillaise*, Jean-Louis Comolli bases his own take on contemporary realism on Bazin's emphasis on the encounter between the profilmic and the camera ("Du Realisme comme Utopie," in *Cine Europeo El Desafio de la Realidad*, 42 Semana Internacional de Cine [Valladolid: 1997], 107–17). Stephen Bann's "The Odd Man Out: Historical Narrative and the Cinematic Image" also returns to the wig in *La Marseillaise* for his analysis of the role of indexicality in historical representation (in *The Inventions of History: Essays on the Representation of the Past* [New York: Manchester University Press, 1990], 193). For an evaluation of Bazin's continuing relevance for a contemporary analysis of referential genres, see Rosen, *Change Mummified*, 3–41.

- 14 For an original interpretation of images of death in modernist narrative cinema, see Catherine Russell, *Narrative Mortality: Death, Closure, and the New Wave Cinemas* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
- 15 André Bazin, "Death Every Afternoon," this volume, originally published as "La mort tous les après-midi," in *Qu'est ce que le cinema?* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1958), 1:65–70.
- 16 Bazin, "Death Every Afternoon," 31 n. 4.
- 17 Stephen Heath, "Film Performance," in Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, 113–14.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 114–15.
- 19 As John Corner puts it succinctly: "At once and equally suspect are the projects of verisimilitude (being like the real) and of referentiality (being about the real)." "Presumption as Theory: 'Realism and T.V. Studies,'" *Screen* 33:1 [spring 1992]: 98.
- 20 See the following relevant texts from *Screen*: Stephen Heath, "Lessons from Brecht," 15:2 (summer 1974): 103–28; Stephen Heath, "From Brecht to Film: Theses, Problems," 16:4 (winter 1975–76): 34–45; Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," 17:3 (autumn 1976): 68–112; Colin McCabe, "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses," 15:2 7–24; Colin McCabe, "The Politics of Separation," 16:4 (winter 1975/61): 46–61; and Colin McCabe, "Principles of Realism and Pleasure," 17:3 (autumn 1976): 7–28. For an excellent summary and critique of *Screen's* positions on realism, see Dick Hebdige and Geoff Hurd, "Reading and Realism," *Screen Education* 28 (autumn 1978): 68–78.
- 21 Here I substitute Stephen Melville's formulation, applied to realism in literary and visual studies, to "realism in cinema," which seems even more blatantly to deserve "explanation." Melville's review of Michael Fried's *Courbet's Realism* also cites Fried's own statement on the need to inquire further into realist art. See Stephen Melville, "Compelling Acts, Haunting Convictions," *Art History* 14:1 (March 1991): 117.
- 22 Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 4.
- 23 For basic arguments on the cinematic apparatus, see Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," 286–98; Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus," 299–318; Jean-Louis Comolli, "Technique and Ideology," pts. 3 and 4, 421–43; and Philip Rosen, "Introduction," 281–28, all in Philip Rosen, ed., *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). See also Stephen Heath, "The Cinematic Apparatus: Technology as Historical and Cultural Form," in *The Cinematic Apparatus*, edited by Stephen Heath and Teresa De Lauretis (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 1–13. Two of the recent film histories that refer explicitly to the limitations of apparatus theories are: James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); and Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Annette Kuhn and Jackie Stacie note in their introduction to *Screen Histories: A Reader* that the journal's earliest forays into the "new" film history were all histories of technology and in particular of deep space cinematography, "which at that time formed part of the journal's overall theoretical agenda" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 3–4. On the centrality of the concept of perspective to understanding the various theoretical stakes of realism, see Rosen, *Change Mummified*, 14–21.

- 24 Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema*, 11.
- 25 See, among others, Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetics of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator," *Art and Text* 34 (spring 1989): 31–45; Tom Gunning, "Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, edited by Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 15–45; Vanessa Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin de Siècle Paris* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); and Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). For a comprehensive account of how significant early film scholarship was in changing the field of cinema studies, see "Early Cinema: From Linear History to Mass Media Archaeology," Thomas Elsaesser's introduction to *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, edited by Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 1–10.
- 26 See, for instance, Rae Beth Gordon's *Why the French Love Jerry Lewis: From Cabaret to Early Cinema* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Linda Williams *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the Frenzy of the Visible* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989); Linda Williams, "Corporealized Observers: Visual Pornographies and the 'Carnal Density of Vision,'" in *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video*, edited by Patrice Petro (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Judith L. Goldstein, "Realism without a Human Face," in *Spectacles of Realism: Gender, Body, Genre*, edited by Margaret Cohen and Christopher Prendergast (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Mark Sandberg, "Effigy and Narrative: Looking into the Nineteenth Century Folk Museum," in Charney and Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*; and Lisa Cartwright, *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). See also Steven Shaviro's interesting take on corporeality in *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). Linda Williams's work has been consistently important in the revaluation of the body in the cinema. See her "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44:4 (summer 1991): 2–12.
- 27 Brewster and Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema*, 3, 4.
- 28 David Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988–94), xiv.
- 29 See *ibid.*, xiv. In the preface to the second edition, Rodowick suggests how inseparable the "critique of realist form in Hollywood cinema as illusionistic, and the promotion of semiotic counter-strategies of modernism" are in the discourse of political modernism.
- 30 In his interesting chapter on research for fiction films, "Detail, Document, Diegesis," Philip Rosen points out that the profilmic is a significant area of scholarly attention elided in most antirealist theories since the 1960s (Rosen, *Change Mummified*, 147–99).
- 31 See, in particular, André Bazin, "On the *politique des auteurs*," in *Cahiers du Cinéma, the 1950s: Neorealism, Hollywood, New Wave*, edited by Jim Hillier (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 248–59.
- 32 See André Bazin, "The Myth of Stalin in Soviet Cinema," in Bazin, *Bazin at Work*, 23–40. See also George Custen's definitive reading of the logic of biographical films, *BioPics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History* (N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

- 33 An essential contribution to this debate is present in Petro's *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video*. See also Timothy Corrigan, "Immediate History: Videotape Interventions and Narrative Film," in *The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography*, edited by Dudley Andrew (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 309–27. The increase in the number of anthologies on documentary can be seen as a response of sorts to digitization. See Jane Gaines, "The Real Returns," her introduction to *Collecting Visible Evidence*, where she rethinks the reasons for the dismissal of realism and documentary issues during the 1970s, (edited by Jane Gaines and Michael Renov [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999], 1, 4, 10). See also Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski, eds., *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998); Kevin Macdonald and Mark Cousins, eds., *Imagining Reality: The Faber Book of Documentary* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996); Michael Renov, ed., *Theorizing Documentary* (New York: Routledge, 1993); and Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real: The Documentary Film Revisited* (London: British Film Institute, 1995). For a wonderful discussion of documentary and realism, see Dai Vaughan's *For Documentary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
- 34 A few writers have importantly resisted and questioned the "technological argument," which sees in video or digital images the death of cinema. See Lynne Kirby's "Death and the Photographic Body," in Petro, *Fugitive Images*, 72–84; and Thomas Elsaesser's introductory essays in Thomas Elsaesser, ed., *Cinema Futures: Cain, Abel, or Cable* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998). As other anthologies make clear, the emergence of digitization has led to a comparative impulse in rethinking cinematic specificity. See Dudley Andrew, ed., *The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997); and Dagmar Barnow, *Critical Realism: History, Photography, and the Work of Siegfried Kracauer* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).
- 35 Interestingly, indexicality and André Bazin are frequently mentioned in 1990s work on the digital future of media technologies. In some historicist outlooks, the indexical gains a nondignified cast, where *instead* of being associated with the historical it becomes passé. See Philip Hayward and Tana Wollen, eds., *New Technologies of the Screen* (London: British Film Institute, 1993), especially the introduction.
- 36 Mary Ann Doane, this volume. She mentions in particular Paul Willemsen, "Through the Glass Darkly: Cinephilia Reconsidered," in *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); and Miriam Hansen's introduction to Kracauer's *Theory of Film*. See also Hansen's "'With Skin and Hair': Kracauer's Theory of Film, Marseille 1940," *Critical Inquiry* 19 (spring 1993): 437–69.
- 37 Willemsen, *Looks and Frictions*, 231.
- 38 Fredric Jameson. "The Existence of Italy," in *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 155–229.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 156.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 167–74.
- 41 Discussions of British cinema exemplify the general tendency to subordinate issues of realism to considerations of national cinemas. See John Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s*:

- Issues and Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999); and John Hill, *British Cinema: Sex, Class, and Realism, 1956–1963* (London: British Film Institute, 1986).
- 42 Miriam Hansen reads Kracauer's theories as a departure from an analogical realism: "Kracauer's investment in the photographic basis of film does not rest in the iconicity of the photographic sign, at least not in the narrow sense of a literal resemblance or analogy with a self identical object. Nor, for that matter, does he conceive of the indexical, the photochemical bond that links image and referent, in any positivist way as merely anchoring the analogical 'truth' of the representation. Rather, the same indexicality that allows photographic film to record and figure the world also inscribes the image with moments of temporality and contingency that *disfigure* the representation" (Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, xxv).
- 43 David James, *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 69, cited in Arthur, this volume, 108.
- 44 See Arthur, this volume, 109.
- 45 See David James's analysis of urban representation, "Toward a Geo-Cinematic Hermeneutics: Representations of Los Angeles in Non-industrial Cinema — *Killer of Sheep* and *Water and Power*," *Wide Angle* 20:3 (July 1998): 23–53.
- 46 Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 303.
- 47 Raymond Williams, "A Lecture on Realism," *Screen* 18:1 (1977): 63.
- 48 Manthia Diawara acknowledges the broad range of aesthetic modes in representing black realities. Still his distinctions seem to forfeit the term *realism*, as it equates it with the conventions of classical Hollywood narrative or Italian neorealism. These cinemas, as well as realism, are conceived as unified, clear-cut blocs. See Manthia Diawara, ed., *Black American Cinema: Aesthetics and Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1993), 3–25.
- 49 Comolli, "Du Realisme comme Utopie," 115.
- 50 For a smart analysis of the correlation between the temporality of events and their media representation, see Mary Ann Doane, "Information, Crisis, Catastrophe," in *Logics of Television*, edited by Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 222–39. See also Doane's "Screening Time," in *Language Machines: Technologies of Literary and Cultural Production*, edited by Jeffrey Masten, Peter Stallybrass, and Nancy Vickers (New York: Routledge, 1997).
- 51 Daney, *La Rampe*, 162.

