



Realism in Film

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Film, Cinema and Movies

- Film scholars, specially French film theorists differentiate between the “filmic” and the “cinematic.”
- According to James Monaco,
 - The “filmic” is that aspect of the art that concerns its relationship with the world around it.
 - The “cinematic” deals strictly with the aesthetics and internal structure of the art.
 - Then we have the term “movies,” which provides a convenient label for the third facet of the phenomenon: its function as an economic commodity.

- **Meaning:**

- “Movies:” understood as “theatre” > the place where we watch films (cinema, cine, Kino). As Monaco puts it, “movies” are like popcorn, to be consumed.
- “Cinema” is high art, related to aesthetics, artistic value system and artistic experience > German “großes Kino.”
- “Film” is the most general term of all three. It is to say that Film includes all the aforementioned aspects including the material “industrial” dimension.
- In sum, the term “movies” stands for the economic; “cinema” for the artistic, and “film” includes both aspects and goes beyond as a medium of communication.

- However, in discussing the three approaches: movies, film, and cinema— we should remember that within each approach there is a corresponding spectrum of function:

Nonfiction/ Documentary	Narrative Cinema (commercial)	Avant-garde
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The major part of the historical discussion of film dwells on the middle (Narrative Cinema), since it is here that the politics and economics of film have had their most significant effect (Monaco).

Why?

- Film is a popular art. It depends on a large scale of consumers in order to function economically.
- Film is an expensive medium/art in terms of production.
- Film is highly technological, film depends entirely on technical capability.

Monaco's Eight Periods of Film History

- ❑ The period of film's prehistory includes the development of all the precursors of the Cinématographe as well as the evolution of certain aspects of the other arts that have a significant effect when applied to film (the qualities of Victorian melodrama, for example, or the values of the photographic portrait).
- ❑ The years between 1896 and 1912 saw cinema evolve from a sideshow gimmick into a full-fledged economic art. The end of this period is marked by the advent of the feature-length film.
- ❑ The years 1913 to 1927 comprise the silent feature period.
- ❑ Between 1928 and 1932, world cinema was in a state of transition. This interval holds no unusual aesthetic interest for us, but it does suggest itself economically and technologically as a significant stage.

- ❑ The period from 1932 to 1946 was the “Golden Age” of Hollywood; during this era, the movies had their greatest economic success.
- ❑ Immediately after World War II, film began to confront the challenge of television. The years 1947 to 1959 were characterised by this response, concurrent with a growing internationalism. Aesthetically, if not economically, Hollywood now no longer dominated.
- ❑ The growth of the New Wave in France in the early sixties signalled the beginning of the seventh period of film history, 1960–80. Technological innovations, a new approach to the economics of film production, and a new sense of the political and social value of film combined to form numerous “new wavelets” in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and eventually even the United States and Western Europe.

□ 1980 seems as good a point as any to mark the end of the “New Wave” period of world film history and the beginning of what we might call “postmodern” film. During this present era, movies are best seen as part of a varied panoply of entertainment and communications media clearly dominated by television in all its forms. As a member of the group that includes audio recordings, videotapes, and discs, and various types of print as well as broadcast, satellite, and cable television, film no longer exercises the economic leverage it once did. Movies still serve as prestigious models for these other forms of media, but increasingly film must be understood in this broad context. Theatrical feature filmmaking is simply one of the numerous facets of this new media world. Indeed, we now need a new term to indicate.

How are these eight periods defined?

- By aesthetic differences?
- By economic development?

Whether in understanding film history, film theory, film, as a single text, or film in general, we must pay attention to the political, economical, social, psychological and aesthetic factors. In addition, we must examine the dynamical relationship among all these factors.

- In this sense, the right question would not be: “What caused what?,” rather : What is related to what? And, How is it related?

Film Theory(s)

Vachel Lindsay's *The Art of the Moving Picture* (1915)

- Film was still considered as a sideshow entertainment
- In his book, Lindsay started the debate about perceiving film as art
- The first thinker to tackle the question of interaction between film and spectator. He suggested that a film's soundtrack should be replaced by an active discussion among the audience while watching.

Hugo Münsterberg's *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916)

- Psychological approach to film (pre-Freudian)
- Freudian film psychology emphasizes the unconscious, dreamlike nature of the experience and therefore concentrates on the passive attitude toward the medium
- Münsterberg's theory of film psychology sees film as an active process—a strongly mental activity—in which the observer is a partner with the filmmaker (Phi phenomenon)

Expressionism, Formalism and Realism

Expressionism:

A film form where a subjective feeling, rather than objective observation, is represented symbolically in forms such as shapes, colour, contrasts and subject matter.

Rudolf Arnheim's *Film as Art* (1932)

- According to Arnheim, film is art due to its “manipulation” of and difference from reality
- Art equals effect, or expression. The magnitude of a work of art is directly related to the degree of the artist's manipulation of materials
- The limitations of an art form only generate its aesthetics and do not restrict them

'The professor!

Call the professor!'

Russian Formalism (Montage)

Pudovkin:

- Relational Montage: contrast, parallelism, symbolism, simultaneity, and leitmotif (reiteration of theme)
- Montage as the pumping heart of film
- It controls the ‘psychological guidance’ of the spectator
- its purpose was to support narrative rather than to alter it

Eisenstein:

In contrast to Pudovkin's understanding of Montage, Eisenstein saw Montage as collision rather than linkage.

- montage has as its aim the creation of ideas, of a new reality, rather than the support of narrative
- The concept of “Attractions:”
every aggressive moment [...] every element [...] that brings to light in the spectator those senses or that psychology that influence his experience—every element that can be verified and mathematically calculated to produce certain emotional shocks in a proper order within the totality (qtd in Monaco 452).

Eisenstein's *October* (1928)

“In the name of God...”

Realism(s)

Physical Realism:

Kracauer's *The Redemption of Physical Reality* (1960)

- Reality must first begin with the scientifically concrete, physical world
- Film can only gain aesthetic credibility if it builds from its basic properties: the raw data of the physical world. After this has been accomplished, film can then build upon the more formative tendencies
- “Film is uniquely equipped to record and reveal physical reality and, hence, gravitates toward it.” Therefore, he suggests, content must take precedence over form (Monaco 451).

De Sica's *The Bicycle Thief* (1948)



Functionalism

Andre Bazin's *What is Cinema?* (1958)

- Bazin's theory is clearly Realist in organization, but, for Bazin, the significance of film lies of what film does, not in what it is. Therefore, the term "Functionalism" proves suitable when addressing Bazin's thought
- Realism is more a matter of psychology than of aesthetics
- Unlike Kracauer, he refuses the simple equation between film and reality
- Stresses a subtle relationship between film and reality: Film is a line that continually approaches a given curve (reality) but never touches it
- Bazin criticises the Russian Montage Movement: "montage by its very nature rules out ambiguity of expression."
- Mise-en-Scène is the heart of Realist film

Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941)



Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men* (2006)

- Based on *The Children of Men* by P.D James (1992)
- Classified as Dystopian Thriller
- Set in 2027, UK
- Two decades of human infertility
- Europe collapsed entirely and no functioning states remain
- The UK is the exception: the only stable nation with a functioning government

The UK 2027

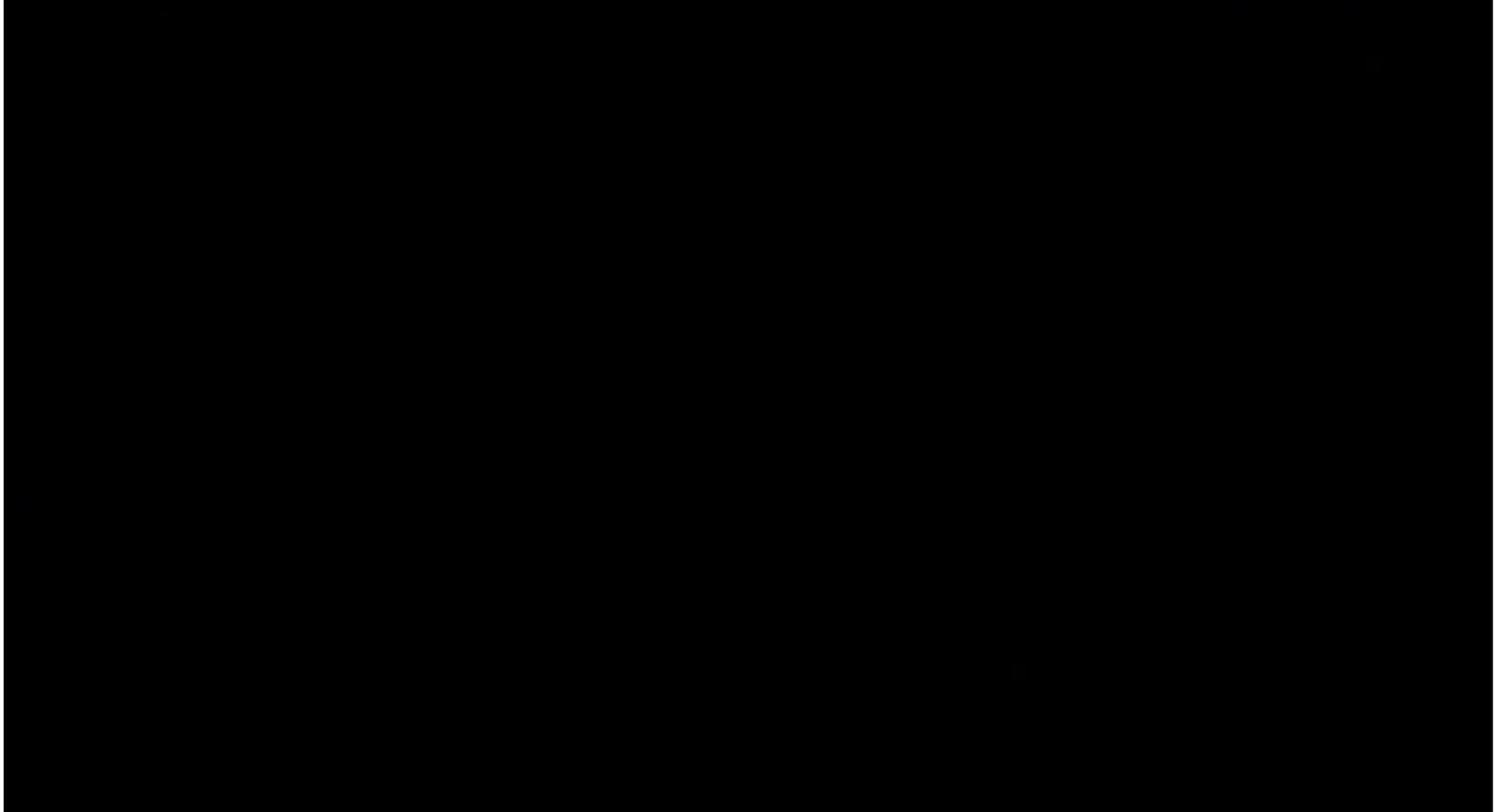
- Deluged by asylum seekers fleeing the chaos and war that has taken hold around the world
- Has become a police state
- All foreigners have been declared illegal immigrants and are rounded up by British military forces to be deported

Plot

- Theo (Clive Owen) is the main protagonist
- Asked by his ex-wife Julian (Julianne More) to help securing transit papers for a refugee woman
- Julian is the leader of The Fishes, a political activist group for immigrants rights
- Theo succeeds in getting the papers, but must himself accompany the refugee, Kee
- Theo agrees and he joins Julian (Julianne Moore) her associates and Kee as they drive to the southern coast of England
- Along the way, they are attacked in by a large mob and Julian is killed
- Kee reveals to Theo that she is eight months pregnant

- Julian's murder is a betrayal by her associates
- Theo escapes with Kee
- The aim is to get her to The Human Project which is a collection of scientists based in the Azores off Portugal working on a cure of infertility

Opening Scene (00:00:00-00:02:24)



(00:24:58-00:29:04)



(01:20:26-01:26:40)

