

From the Editor

Author(s): L.B.

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From the Editor

Neorealism, as everyone agrees, is a nebulous term. If André Bazin championed it on the grounds that neorealist directors captured the immediacy of ontological reality, Guido Aristarco implicitly reduced Bazin's phenomenological sweep to socio-historical perspectives derived from Lukacs and Gramsci. This split in critical methodology led to Bazin's endorsement of Roberto Rossellini as the most representative figure of the movement because the most rigidly devoted to the direction of "facts," while Aristarco threw his lot in with Luchino Visconti, in whose work he admired the consistent observation of man's struggle to live in history. This debate of whether neorealism should concern itself with essence (Bazin) or with historical reality (Aristarco) has been resolved in the current tendency of Italian cinema to incorporate both. The Taviani brothers, for example, acknowledge their artistic fathers to be Rossellini *and* Visconti, and their films combine the examples of both directors. The same holds true for the contemporary works of Petri, Rosi, Olmi, and Bertolucci. Thus, it is precisely because the critical contradictions about neorealism remain a point of reference for contemporary Italian cinema that a debate on neorealism can never be a useless exercise. With this faith in mind, the present issue is intended to determine how much critical latitude the term allows and to suggest, however implicitly, the kind of legacy neorealism left behind.

Invariably, a "special number" such as this one results in the neglect of some subjects at the expense of others. The work of Luchino Visconti, who was so crucial to neorealism, is only superficially discussed here. The concentration on Rossellini, on the other hand, must be considered as a healthy sign that this mercurial and intelligent director is in the process of being re-evaluated. "You can't live without Rossellini," quipped a character in Bertolucci's *Before the Revolution*, and it is time that those who live in the cinema acknowledge the admonition. For Fellini, "Rossellini *is* neorealism."

L.B.