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The World Viewed

Stanley Cavell

What is film?

Sights and Sounds

The beginning of an answer is given by the two continuously intelligent, interesting, and to me useful theorists I have read on the subject. Erwin Panofsky puts it this way: "The medium of the movies is physical reality as such."¹ André Bazin emphasizes essentially this idea many times and many ways: at one point he says, "Cinema is committed to communicate only by way of what is real"; and then, "The cinema [is] of its essence a dramaturgy of Nature."² "Physical reality as such," taken literally, is not correct: that phrase better fits the specialized pleasures of *tableaux vivants*, or formal gardens, or Minimal Art. What Panofsky and Bazin have in mind is that the basis of the medium of movies is photographic, and that a photograph is *of* reality or nature. If to this we add that the medium is one in which the photographic image is projected and gathered on a screen, our question becomes: What happens to reality when it is projected and screened?

That it is reality that we have to deal with, or some mode of depicting it, finds surprising confirmation in the way movies are remembered, and misremembered. It is tempting to suppose that movies are hard to remember the way dreams are, and that is not a bad analogy. As with dreams,

you do sometimes *find* yourself remembering moments in a film, and a procedure in *trying* to remember is to find your way back to a characteristic mood the thing has left you with. But, unlike dreams, other people can help you remember, indeed are often indispensable to the enterprise of remembering. Movies are hard to remember, the way the actual events of yesterday are. And yet, again like dreams, *certain* moments from films viewed decades ago will nag as vividly as moments of childhood. It is as if you had to remember what happened *before* you slept. Which suggests that film awakens as much as it enfolds you.

It may seem that this starting point – the projection of reality – begs the question of the medium of film, because movies, and writing about movies, have from their beginnings also recognized that film can depict the fantastic as readily as the natural.³ What is true about that idea is not denied in speaking of movies as "communicating by way of what is real": the displacement of objects and persons from their natural sequences and locales is itself an acknowledgment of the physicality of their existence. It is as if, for all their insistence on the newness of the medium, the antirealist theorists could not shake the idea that it was essentially a form of painting, for it was painting which had visually repudiated – anyway, forgone – the representation of reality. This would have helped them neglect the differences between representation and projection. But an immediate

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fact about the medium of the photograph (still or in motion) is that it is not painting. (An immediate fact about the *history* of photography is that this was not at first obvious.)

What does this mean – not painting? A photograph does not present us with “likenesses” of things; it presents us, we want to say, with the things themselves. But wanting to say that may well make us ontologically restless. “Photographs present us with things themselves” sounds, and ought to sound, false or paradoxical. Obviously a photograph of an earthquake, or of Garbo, is not an earthquake happening (fortunately), or Garbo in the flesh (unfortunately). But this is not very informative. And, moreover, it is no less paradoxical or false to hold up a photograph of Garbo and say, “That is not Garbo,” if all you mean is that the object you are holding up is not a human creature. Such troubles in notating so obvious a fact suggest that we do not know what a photograph is; we do not know how to place it ontologically. We might say that we don’t know how to think of the *connection* between a photograph and what it is a photograph of. The image is not a likeness; it is not exactly a replica, or a relic, or a shadow, or an apparition either, though all of these natural candidates share a striking feature with photographs – an aura or history of magic surrounding them.

One might wonder that similar questions do not arise about recordings of sound. I mean, on the whole we would be hard put to find it false or paradoxical to say, listening to a record, “That’s an English horn”; there is no trace of temptation to add (as it were, to oneself), “But I know it’s really only a recording.” Why? A child might be very puzzled by the remark, said in the presence of a phonograph, “That’s an English horn,” if something else had already been pointed out to him as an English horn. Similarly, he might be very puzzled by the remark, said of a photograph, “That’s your grandmother.” Very early, children are *no longer* puzzled by such remarks, luckily. But that doesn’t mean we know why they were puzzled, or why they no longer are. And I am suggesting that we don’t know either of these things about ourselves.

Is the difference between auditory and visual transcription a function of the fact that we are fully accustomed to hearing things that are invisible, not present to us, not present with us? We would be in trouble if we weren’t so accustomed, because it is the nature of hearing that what is heard comes *from* someplace, whereas what you can see you can look *at*. It is why sounds are

warnings, or calls; it is why our access to another world is normally through voices from it; and why a man can be spoken to by God and survive, but not if he sees God, in which case he is no longer in *this* world. Whereas we are not accustomed to seeing things that are invisible, or not present to us, not present with us; or we are not accustomed to acknowledging that we do (except for dreams). Yet this seems, ontologically, to be what is happening when we look at a photograph: we see things that are not present.

Someone will object: “That is playing with words. We’re not seeing something not present; we are looking at something perfectly present, namely, a *photograph*.” But that is affirming something I have not denied. On the contrary, I am precisely describing, or wishing to describe, what it means to say that there is this photograph here. It may be felt that I make too great a mystery of these objects. My feeling is rather that we have forgotten how mysterious these things are, and in general how *different* different things are from one another, as though we had forgotten how to value them. This is in fact something movies teach us.

Suppose one tried accounting for the familiarity of recordings by saying, “When I say, listening to a record, ‘That’s an English horn,’ what I really mean is, ‘That’s the *sound* of an English horn’; moreover, when I am in the presence of an English horn playing, I still don’t literally hear the horn, I hear the sound of the horn. So I don’t worry about hearing a horn when the horn is not present, because *what* I hear is exactly the same (ontologically the same, and if my equipment is good enough, empirically the same) whether the thing is present or not.” What this rigmarole calls attention to is that sounds can be perfectly copied, and that we have various interests in copying them. (For example, if they couldn’t be copied, people would never learn to talk.) It is interesting that there is no comparable rigmarole about visual transcriptions. The problem is not that photographs are not visual copies of objects, or that objects can’t be visually copied. The problem is that even if a photograph were a copy of an object, so to speak, it would not bear the relation to its object that a recording bears to the sound it copies. We said that the record reproduces its sound, but we cannot say that a photograph reproduces a sight (or a look, or an appearance). It can seem that language is missing a word at this place. Well, you can always invent a word. But one doesn’t know what to pin the word *on* here. It isn’t that there aren’t sights to

see, nor even that a sight is especially *worth* seeing (hence the trouble of thing we are *always* seeing, not being thought of here, not always hear. A sight *is* an object, like the Grand Canyon, though small southern ch... held, by the person in charge... or an extraordinary happening... ealis; and what you see, when... is an object – anyway, not the... will the epistemologist’s “... faces” provide correct desc... are not going to say that ph... with the sense-data of the... because if the sense-data of... same as the sense-data of the... we couldn’t tell a photogra... the object itself. To say that... surfaces of objects suggests t... ture. What is missing is not a... something in nature – the f... *make* sights, or *have* sights. ... objects are too *close* to their sight... reproducing; in order to rep... (as it were) make, you have... make a mold, or take an imp... photograph does? We might... cation, try thinking of a photo... or a visual impression. My di... idea is, I think, that physical r... and imprints have clear proces... their originals, whereas in... original is still as present as it... as it once was to the camera; b... machine, not the mold itself.

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see, nor even that a sight has by definition to be especially *worth* seeing (hence could not be the sort of thing we are *always* seeing), whereas sounds are being thought of here, not unplausibly, as what we always hear. A sight *is* an object (usually a very large object, like the Grand Canyon or Versailles, although small southern children are frequently held, by the person in charge of them, to be sights) or an extraordinary happening, like the aurora borealis; and what you see, when you sight something, is an object – anyway, not the sight of an object. Nor will the epistemologist's "sense-data" or "surfaces" provide correct descriptions here. For we are not going to say that photographs provide us with the sense-data of the objects they contain, because if the sense-data of photographs were the same as the sense-data of the objects they contain, we couldn't tell a photograph of an object from the object itself. To say that a photograph is of the surfaces of objects suggests that it emphasizes texture. What is missing is not a word, but, so to speak, something in nature – the fact that objects don't *make* sights, or *have* sights. I feel like saying: Objects are too *close* to their sights to give them up for reproducing; in order to reproduce the sights they (as it were) make, you have to reproduce *them* – make a mold, or take an impression. Is that what a photograph does? We might, as Bazin does on occasion, try thinking of a photograph as a visual mold or a visual impression. My dissatisfaction with that idea is, I think, that physical molds and impressions and imprints have clear procedures for getting *rid* of their originals, whereas in a photograph, the original is still as present as it ever was. Not present as it once was to the camera; but that is only a mold-machine, not the mold itself.

Photographs are not *hand*-made; they are manufactured. And what is manufactured is an image of the world. The inescapable fact of mechanism or automatism in the making of these images is the feature Bazin points to as "[satisfying], once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism."⁴

It is essential to get to the right depth of this fact of automatism. It is, for example, misleading to say, as Bazin does, that "photography has freed the plastic arts from their obsession with likeness,"⁵ for this makes it seem (and it does often look) as if photography and painting were in competition, or that painting had wanted something that photography broke in and satisfied. So far as photography satisfied a wish, it satisfied a wish not confined to painters, but the human wish, intensifying in the

West since the Reformation, to escape subjectivity and metaphysical isolation – a wish for the power to reach this world, having for so long tried, at last hopelessly, to manifest fidelity to another. And painting was not "freed" – and not by photography – from its obsession with likeness. Painting, in Manet, was *forced* to forgo likeness exactly because of its own obsession with reality, because the illusions it had learned to create did not provide the conviction in reality, the connection with reality, that it craved.⁶ One might even say that in withdrawing from likeness, painting freed photography to be invented.

And if what is meant is that photography freed painting from the idea that a painting had to be a picture (that is, *of or about* something else), that is also not true. Painting did not free itself, did not force itself to maintain itself apart, from *all* objective reference until long after the establishment of photography; and then not because it finally dawned on painters that paintings were not pictures, but because that was the way to maintain connection with (the history of) the art of painting, to maintain conviction in its powers to create paintings, meaningful objects in paint.

And are we sure that the final denial of objective reference amounts to a complete yielding of connection with reality – once, that is, we have given up the idea that "connection with reality" is to be understood as "provision of likeness"? We can be sure that the view of painting as dead without reality, and the view of painting as dead with it, are both in need of development in the views each takes of reality and of painting. We can say, painting and reality no longer *assure* one another.

It could be said further that what painting wanted, in wanting connection with reality, was a sense of *presentness*⁷ – not exactly a conviction of the world's presence to us, but of our presence to it. At some point the unhinging of our consciousness from the world interposed our subjectivity between us and our presentness to the world. Then our subjectivity became what is present to us, individuality became isolation. The route to conviction in reality was through the acknowledgment of that endless presence of self. What is called expressionism is one possibility of representing this acknowledgment. But it would, I think, be truer to think of expressionism as a representation of our *response* to this new fact of our condition – our terror of ourselves in isolation – rather than as a representation of the world from within

the condition of isolation itself. It would, to that extent, not be a new mastery of fate by creating selfhood against no matter what odds; it would be the sealing of the self's fate by theatricalizing it. Apart from the wish for selfhood (hence the always simultaneous granting of otherness as well), I do not understand the value of art. Apart from this wish and its achievement, art is exhibition.

To speak of our subjectivity as the route back to our conviction in reality is to speak of romanticism. Perhaps romanticism can be understood as the natural struggle between the representation and the acknowledgment of our subjectivity (between the acting out and the facing off of ourselves, as psychoanalysts would more or less say). Hence Kant, and Hegel; hence Blake secreting the world he believes in; hence Wordsworth competing with the history of poetry by writing out himself, writing himself back into the world. A century later Heidegger is investigating Being by investigating *Dasein* (because it is in *Dasein* that Being shows up best, namely as questionable), and Wittgenstein investigates the world ("the possibilities of phenomena") by investigating what we say, what we are inclined to say, what our pictures of phenomena are, in order to wrest the world from our possessions so that we may possess it again. Then the recent major painting which Fried describes as objects of *presentness* would be painting's latest effort to maintain its conviction in its own power to establish connection with reality — by permitting us presentness to ourselves, apart from which there is no hope for a world.

Photography overcame subjectivity in a way undreamed of by painting, a way that could not satisfy painting, one which does not so much defeat the act of painting as escape it altogether: by *automatism*, by removing the human agent from the task of reproduction.

One could accordingly say that photography was never in competition with painting. What happened was that at some point the quest for visual reality, or the "memory of the present" (as Baudelaire put it), split apart. To maintain conviction in our connection with reality, to maintain our presentness, painting accepts the recession of the world. Photography maintains the presentness of the world by accepting our absence from it. The reality in a photograph is present to me while I am not present to it; and a world I know, and see, but to which I am nevertheless not present (through no fault of my subjectivity), is a world past.

Photograph and Screen

Let us notice the specific sense in which photographs are of the world, of reality as a whole. You can always ask, pointing to an object in a photograph — a building, say — what lies behind it, totally obscured by it. This only accidentally makes sense when asked of an object in a painting. You can always ask, of an area photographed, what lies adjacent to that area, beyond the frame. This generally makes no sense asked of a painting. You can ask these questions of objects in photographs because they have answers in reality. The world of a painting is not continuous with the world of its frame; at its frame, a world finds its limits. We might say: A painting *is* a world; a photograph is *of* the world. What happens in a photograph is that *it* comes to an end. A photograph is cropped, not necessarily by a paper cutter or by masking but by the camera itself. The camera crops it by predetermining the amount of view it will accept; cutting, masking, enlarging, predetermine the amount after the fact. (Something like this phenomenon shows up in recent painting. In this respect, these paintings have found, at the extremest negation of the photographic, media that achieve the condition of photographs.) The camera, being finite, crops a portion from an indefinitely larger field; continuous portions of that field could be included in the photograph in fact taken; in principle, it could all be taken. Hence objects in photographs that run past the edge do not feel cut; they are aimed at, shot, stopped live. When a photograph is cropped, the rest of the world is cut *out*. The implied presence of the rest of the world, and its explicit rejection, are as essential in the experience of a photograph as what it explicitly presents. A camera is an opening in a box: that is the best emblem of the fact that a camera holding on an object is holding the rest of the world away. The camera has been praised for extending the senses; it may, as the world goes, deserve more praise for confining them, leaving room for thought.

The world of a moving picture is screened. The screen is not a support, not like a canvas; there is nothing to support, that way. It holds a projection, as light as light. A screen is a barrier. What does the silver screen screen? It screens me from the world it holds — that is, makes me invisible. And it screens that world from me — that is, screens its existence from me. That the projected world does not exist (now) is its only difference from reality.

(There is no feature, or set of features, that differs. Existence is not a presence in the field of a photograph, the way that is to say, no border. Its limit is the edges of a given shape as they are, or the relations, or capacity, of a container. The frame; the frame is the whole world as a frame of film is the whole world. A photograph, like the frame of a loom, is a screen, in this sense, the screen-frame is a medium.)

The fact that in a moving picture the film frames are fit flush in a continuous frame results in a phenomenon that is indefinitely extendible and continuous. The smallness of the object it captures is a state of its technology, and it is not the span of the world. Drawing and panning it, are two ways of looking at a frame; a close-up is of a part of one object or small set of objects, reverberating the whole frame. Altering frame is the image of a world. Early in its history the cinema was a possibility of *calling* attention to parts of persons and objects; the possibility of the medium not to show them but, rather, to let the world parts draw attention to them in their natural weight. This possibility explored than its opposite. Dreyer, Renoir, and Antonioni are ma-

Audience, Actor, and Stage

The depth of the automatism of a movie can be read not alone in its mechanical nature, an image of reality, but in its relation to our presence to that reality. The theater can be defined as those things that are present while they are not present. But movies allow the audience to be mechanically absent. The fact that the audience is inaudible to the actors, and that the actors no longer needs accounting for, is a convention I have to comply with. I do not have to make good the fact that I am in the face of tragedy, or that I am in the face of others. In viewing a movie, I am mechanically assured: I am present to something happening, which I may not have seen something that has happened (like a memory). In this, movie

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(There is no feature, or set of features, in which it differs. Existence is not a predicate.) Because it is the field of a photograph, the screen has no frame; that is to say, no border. Its limits are not so much the edges of a given shape as they are the limitations, or capacity, of a container. The screen *is* a frame; the frame is the whole field of the screen—as a frame of film is the whole field of a photograph, like the frame of a loom or a house. In this sense, the screen-frame is a mold, or form.⁸

The fact that in a moving picture successive film frames are fit flush into the fixed screen frame results in a phenomenological frame that is indefinitely extendible and contractible, limited in the smallness of the object it can grasp only by the state of its technology, and in largeness only by the span of the world. Drawing the camera back, and panning it, are two ways of extending the frame; a close-up is of a part of the body, or of one object or small set of objects, supported by and reverberating the whole frame of nature. The altering frame is the image of perfect attention. Early in its history the cinema discovered the possibility of *calling* attention to persons and parts of persons and objects; but it is equally a possibility of the medium not to call attention to them but, rather, to let the world happen, to let its parts draw attention to themselves according to their natural weight. This possibility is less explored than its opposite. Dreyer, Flaherty, Vigo, Renoir, and Antonioni are masters of it.

Audience, Actor, and Star

The depth of the automatism of photography is to be read not alone in its mechanical production of an image of reality, but in its mechanical defeat of our presence to that reality. The audience in a theater can be defined as those to whom the actors are present while they are not present to the actors.⁹ But movies allow the audience to be mechanically absent. The fact that I am invisible and inaudible to the actors, and fixed in position, no longer needs accounting for; it is not part of a convention I have to comply with; the proceedings do not have to make good the fact that I do nothing in the face of tragedy, or that I laugh at the follies of others. In viewing a movie my helplessness is mechanically assured: I am present not at something happening, which I must confirm, but at something that has happened, which I absorb (like a memory). In this, movies resemble novels,

a fact mirrored in the sound of narration itself, whose tense is the past.

It might be said: "But surely there is the obvious difference between a movie house and a theater that is not recorded by what has so far been said and that outweighs all this fiddle of differences. The obvious difference is that in a theater we are in the presence of an actor, in a movie house we are not. You have said that in both places the actor is in our presence and in neither are we in his, the difference lying in the mode of our absence. But there is also the plain fact that in a theater a real man is *there*, and in a movie no real man is there. That is obviously essential to the differences between our responses to a play and to a film." What that means must not be denied; but the fact remains to be understood. Bazin meets it head on by simply denying that "the screen is incapable of putting us 'in the presence of the actor'; it, so to speak, relays his presence to us, as by mirrors.¹⁰ Bazin's idea here really fits the facts of live television, in which the thing we are presented with is happening simultaneously with its presentation. But in live television, what is present to us while it is happening is not the world, but an event standing out from the world. Its point is not to reveal, but to cover (as with a gun), to keep something on view.

It is an incontestable fact that in a motion picture no live human being is up there. But a human *something* is, and something unlike anything else we know. We can stick to our plain description of that human something as "in our presence while we are not in his" (present *at* him, because looking at him, but not present *to* him) and still account for the difference between his live presence and his photographed presence to us. We need to consider what is present or, rather, since the topic is the human being, *who* is present.

One's first impulse may be to say that in a play the character is present, whereas in a film the actor is. That sounds phony or false: one wants to say that both are present in both. But there is more to it, ontologically more. Here I think of a fine passage of Panofsky's:

Othello or Nora are definite, substantial figures created by the playwright. They can be played well or badly, and they can be "interpreted" in one way or another; but they most definitely exist, no matter who plays them or even whether they are played at all. The character in a film, however, lives and dies with the actor. It is not

the entity "Othello" interpreted by Robeson or the entity "Nora" interpreted by Duse, it is the entity "Greta Garbo" incarnate in a figure called Anna Christie or the entity "Robert Montgomery" incarnate in a murderer who, for all we know or care to know, may forever remain anonymous but will never cease to haunt our memories.¹¹

If the character lives and dies with the actor, that ought to mean that the actor lives and dies with the character. I think that is correct, but it needs clarification. Let us develop it slightly.

For the stage, an actor works himself into a role; for the screen, a performer takes the role onto himself. The stage actor explores his potentialities and the possibilities of his role simultaneously; in performance these meet at a point in spiritual space – the better the performance, the deeper the point. In this respect, a role in a play is like a position in a game, say, third base: various people can play it, but the great third baseman is a man who has accepted and trained his skills and instincts most perfectly and matches them most intimately with his discoveries of the possibilities and necessities of third base. The screen performer explores his role like an attic and takes stock of his physical and temperamental endowment; he lends his being to the role and accepts only what fits; the rest is nonexistent. On the stage there are two beings, and the being of the character assaults the being of the actor; the actor survives only by yielding. A screen performance requires not so much training as planning. Of course, both the actor and the performer require, or can make use of, experience. The actor's role is his subject for study, and there is no end to it. But the screen performer is essentially not an actor at all: he *is* the subject of study, and a study not his own. (That is what the content of a photograph is – its subject.) On a screen the study is projected; on a stage the actor is the projector. An exemplary stage performance is one which, for a time, most fully creates a character. After Paul Scofield's performance in *King Lear*, we know who King Lear is, we have seen him in the flesh. An exemplary screen performance is one in which, at a time, a star is born. After *The Maltese Falcon* we know a new star, only distantly a person. "Bogart" means "the figure created in a given set of films." His presence in those films is who he is, not merely in the sense in which a photograph of an event is that event; but in the sense that if those films did not exist,

Bogart would not exist, the name "Bogart" would not mean what it does. The figure it names is not only in our presence, we are in his, in the only sense we could ever be. That is all the "presence" he has.

But it is complicated. A full development of all this would require us to place such facts as these: Humphrey Bogart was a man, and he appeared in movies both before and after the ones that created "Bogart." Some of them did not create a new star (say, the stable groom in *Dark Victory*), some of them defined stars – anyway meteors – that may be incompatible with Bogart (e.g., Duke Mantee and Fred C. Dobbs) but that are related to that figure and may enter into our later experience of it. And Humphrey Bogart was both an accomplished actor and a vivid subject for a camera. Some people are, just as some people are both good pitchers and good hitters; but there are so few that it is surprising that the word "actor" keeps on being used in place of the more beautiful and more accurate word "star"; the stars are only to gaze at, after the fact, and their actions divine our projects. Finally, we must note the sense in which the creation of a (screen) performer is also the creation of a character – not the kind of character an author creates, but the kind that certain real people are: a type.

Types; Cycles as Genres

Around this point our attention turns from the physical medium of cinema in general to the specific forms or genres the medium has taken in the course of its history.

Both Panofsky and Bazin begin at the beginning, noting and approving that early movies adapt popular or folk arts and themes and performers and characters: farce, melodrama, circus, music hall, romance, etc. And both are gratifyingly contemptuous of intellectuals who could not come to terms with those facts of life. (Such intellectuals are the alter egos of the film promoters they so heartily despise. Roxy once advertised a movie as "Art, in every sense of the word"; his better half declaims, "This is not art, in any sense of the word.") Our question is, why did such forms and themes and characters lend themselves to film? Bazin, in what I have read of him, is silent on the subject, except to express gratitude to film for revivifying these ancient forms, and to justify in general the legitimacy of adaptation from one art

to another. Arnold Hauser, if I suggest wrong answers, in a passage that suggests the remark "Only a young art form can be new" (and Dickens and Chaplin and in young arts?) but suggests that it is natural for the movies to pick up the forms of entertainment. In any case, it was natural – anyway it happened, but not because movies were a new form of entertainment (they were at first no more than a form of entertainment). In any case, they are likely to pick up the forms of art for their material – popular art, burlesques. And it means next to nothing that movies are young, because we know the normal life span of an art is long; what would count as a unit of time? It raises the question of the appropriateness of original forms, but his answer

The legitimate paths of evolution were opened, not by running folk art character of the primitive, developing it within the limitations. Those primordial productions on the folk art of retribution, sentiment, sensuality and crude humor – could be genuine history, tragedy and adventure, and comedy realized that they could be by an artificial injection of by the exploitation of the possibilities of the new medium.

The instinct here is sound, but of traps. What are "the unique properties of the new medium?" them as dynamization of space of time – that is, in a movie they can be moved instantaneously anywhere, and you can witness happening at the same time. properties as "self-evident to it" and, because of that, "neglected." One hardly disputes. But we still do not makes these properties "the medium." I am not now asking know that these are *the* unique properties (though I will soon I am asking what it means to be at all.

exist, the name "Bogart" would
oes. The figure it names is not
ace, we are in his, in the only
r be. That is all the "presence"

ated. A full development of all
us to place such facts as these:
was a man, and he appeared in
and after the ones that created
them did not create a new star
oom in *Dark Victory*), some of
— anyway meteors — that may be
Bogart (e.g., Duke Mantee and
ut that are related to that figure
our later experience of it. And
was both an accomplished actor
for a camera. Some people are,
le are both good pitchers and
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"actor" keeps on being used in
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note the sense in which the
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the kind of character an author
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as Genres

our attention turns from the
f cinema in general to the spe-
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and Bazin begin at the begin-
proving that early movies adapt
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And both are gratifyingly con-
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ncient forms, and to justify in
acy of adaptation from one art

to another. Arnold Hauser, if I understand him,
suggests wrong answers, in a passage that includes
the remark "Only a young art can be popular,"¹² a
remark that not only is in itself baffling (did Verdi
and Dickens and Chaplin and Frank Loesser work
in young arts?) but suggests that it was only nat-
ural for the movies to pick up the forms they did.
It *was* natural — anyway it happened fast enough —
but not because movies were destined to popular-
ity (they were at first no more popular than other
forms of entertainment). In any case, popular arts
are likely to pick up the forms and themes of high
art for their material — popular theater naturally
burlesques. And it means next to nothing to say that
movies are young, because we do not know what
the normal life span of an art is supposed to be, nor
what would count as a unit of measure. Panofsky
raises the question of the appropriateness of these
original forms, but his answer is misleading.

The legitimate paths of evolution [for the film]
were opened, not by running away from the
folk art character of the primitive film but by
developing it within the limits of its own pos-
sibilities. Those primordial archetypes of film
productions on the folk art level — success or
retribution, sentiment, sensation, pornography,
and crude humor — could blossom forth into
genuine history, tragedy and romance, crime
and adventure, and comedy, as soon as it was
realized that they could be transfigured — not
by an artificial injection of literary values but
by the exploitation of the unique and specific
possibilities of the new medium.¹³

The instinct here is sound, but the region is full
of traps. What are "the unique and specific pos-
sibilities of the new medium"? Panofsky defines
them as dynamization of space and spatialization
of time — that is, in a movie things move, and you
can be moved instantaneously from anywhere to
anywhere, and you can witness successively events
happening at the same time. He speaks of these
properties as "self-evident to the point of trivial-
ity" and, because of that, "easily forgotten or
neglected." One hardly disputes this, or its im-
portance. But we still do not understand what
makes these properties "the possibilities of the
medium." I am not now asking how one would
know that these are *the* unique and specific pos-
sibilities (though I will soon get back to that);
I am asking what it means to call them possibilities
at all.

Why, for example, didn't the medium begin and
remain in the condition of home movies, one shot
just physically tacked on to another, cut and edited
simply according to subject? (Newsreels essentially
did, and they are nevertheless valuable, enough
so to have justified the invention of moving pic-
tures.) The answer seems obvious: narrative
movies emerged because someone "saw the possi-
bilities" of the medium — cutting and editing and
taking shots at different distances from the subject.
But again, these are mere actualities of film mech-
anics: every home movie and newsreel contains
them. We could say: To make them "possibilities
of the medium" is to realize what will give them
significance — for example, the narrative and phys-
ical rhythms of melodrama, farce, American com-
edy of the 1930s. It is not as if film-makers saw
these possibilities and then looked for something
to apply them to. It is truer to say that someone
with the wish to make a movie saw that certain
established forms would give point to certain
properties of film.

This perhaps sounds like quibbling, but what it
means is that the aesthetic possibilities of a med-
ium are not givens. You can no more tell what will
give significance to the unique and specific aes-
thetic possibilities of projecting photographic im-
ages by thinking about them or seeing some, than
you can tell what will give significance to the
possibilities of paint by thinking about paint or
by looking some over. You have to think about
painting, and paintings; you have to think
about motion pictures. What does this "thinking
about them" consist in? Whatever the useful criti-
cism of an art consists in. (Painters before Jackson
Pollock had dripped paint, even deliberately. Pol-
lock made dripping into a medium of painting.)
I feel like saying: The first successful movies — i.e.,
the first moving pictures accepted as motion pic-
tures — were not applications of a medium that was
defined by given possibilities, but the *creation of a
medium* by their giving significance to specific
possibilities. Only the art itself can discover its
possibilities, and the discovery of a new possibility
is the discovery of a new medium. A medium is
something through which or by means of which
something specific gets done or said in particular
ways. It provides, one might say, particular ways
to get through to someone, to make sense; in art,
they are forms, like forms of speech. To discover
ways of making sense is always a matter of the
relation of an artist to his art, each discovering
the other.

Panofsky uncharacteristically skips a step when he describes the early silent films as an "unknown language . . . forced upon a public not yet capable of reading it."¹⁴ His notion is (with good reason, writing when he did) of a few industrialists forcing their productions upon an addicted multitude. But from the beginning the language was not "unknown"; it was known to its creators, those who found themselves speaking it; and in the beginning there was no "public" in question; there were just some curious people. There soon was a public, but that just proves how easy the thing was to know. If we are to say that there was an "unknown" something, it was less like a language than like a fact – in particular, the fact that something is intelligible. So while it may be true, as Panofsky says, that "for a Saxon peasant of around 800 it was not easy to understand the meaning of a picture showing a man as he pours water over the head of another man," this has nothing special to do with the problems of a moviegoer. The meaning of that act of pouring in certain communities is still not easy to understand; it was and is impossible to understand for anyone to whom the practice of baptism is unknown. Why did Panofsky suppose that comparable understanding is essential, or uniquely important, to the reading of movies? Apparently he needed an explanation for the persistence in movies of "fixed iconography" – "the well-remembered types of the Vamp and the Straight Girl . . . the Family Man, and the Villain," characters whose conduct was "predetermined accordingly" – an explanation for the persistence of an obviously primitive or folkloristic element in a rapidly developing medium. For he goes on, otherwise inexplicably, to say that "devices like these became gradually less necessary as the public grew accustomed to interpret the action by itself and were virtually abolished by the invention of the talking film." In fact such devices persist as long as there are still Westerns and gangster films and comedies and musicals and romances. Which specific iconography the Villain is given will alter with the times, but that his iconography remains specific (i.e., operates according to a "fixed attitude and attribute" principle¹⁵) seems undeniable: if Jack Palance in *Shane* is not a Villain, no honest home was ever in danger. Films have changed, but that is not because we don't need such explanations any longer; it is because we can't accept them.

These facts are accounted for by the actualities of the film medium itself: types are exactly what carry the forms movies have relied upon. These

media created new types, or combinations and ironic reversals of types; but there they were, and stayed. Does this mean that movies can never create individuals, only types? What it means is that this is the movies' way of creating individuals: they create *individualities*. For what makes someone a type is not his similarity with other members of that type but his striking separateness from other people.

Until recently, types of black human beings were not created in film: black people were stereotypes – mummies, shiftless servants, loyal retainers, entertainers. We were not given, and were not in a position to be given, individualities that projected particular *ways* of inhabiting a social role; we recognized only the role. Occasionally the humanity behind the role would manifest itself; and the result was a revelation not of a human individuality, but of an entire realm of humanity becoming visible. When in *Gone With the Wind* Vivien Leigh, having counted on Butterfly McQueen's professed knowledge of midwifery, and finding her as ignorant as herself, slaps her in rage and terror, the moment can stun us with a question: What was the white girl assuming about blackness when she believed the casual claim of a black girl, younger and duller and more ignorant than herself, to know all about the mysteries of childbirth? The assumption, though apparently complimentary, is dehumanizing – with such creatures knowledge of the body comes from nowhere, and in general they are to be trusted absolutely or not at all, like lions in a cage, with whom you either do or do not know how to deal. After the slap, we are left with two young girls equally frightened in a humanly desperate situation, one limited by a distraction which expects and forgets what it is to be bullied, the other by an energetic resourcefulness which knows only how to bully. At the end of Michael Curtiz' *Breaking Point*, as the wounded John Garfield is carried from his boat to the dock, awaited by his wife and children and, just outside the circle, by the other woman in his life (Patricia Neal), the camera pulls away, holding on the still waiting child of his black partner, who only the unconscious Garfield knows has been killed. The poignance of the silent and unnoticed black child overwhelms the yarn we had been shown. Is he supposed to symbolize the fact of general human isolation and abandonment? Or the fact that every action has consequences for innocent bystanders? Or that children are the real sufferers from the entangled efforts of adults to straighten out their

lives? The effect here is to attach so much importance, and generally to blot out all suffering by invoking a type about which this film has not

The general difference between a stage type is that the individual film naturally takes precedence in which that individuality gets on film social role appears and movies have an inherent tendency to democratic, or anyway the ideal (But because of film's equally democratic or populist.) This depends on film types as inhabited by or may well meet in other recognized recurrence of film become a central idea as we proceed. I am emphasizing only that performers there was until recently for them to recur in, except in which we have already met them would not have expected to see siblings. I cannot at the moment person in a film making an order of a newspaper, or a ticket to a let alone writing a check. (*Pimp* *Sun* prove the rule: in the form purchase is a climactic scene latter, it provides the whole su

One recalls the lists of stars who have provided the movie subjects – individuals capable for individualities, whose inflections of demeanor were given full play in its provided, and still provide, staple one gesture or syllable of mo passing mannerism was enough from all other creatures. The of singularity – that we can see our disguises of bravado and one, perhaps a god, capable of defeats. This was always made their distinction by beauty made them more like us – difference from us less a matter to which we must accede, than ability, to which we must have made them even more glorious should be able to stand upon

lives? The effect here is to rebuke Garfield for attaching so much importance to the loss of his arm, and generally to blot out attention to individual suffering by invoking a massive social evil about which this film has nothing to say.

The general difference between a film type and a stage type is that the individuality captured on film naturally takes precedence over the social role in which that individuality gets expressed. Because on film social role appears arbitrary or incidental, movies have an inherent tendency toward the democratic, or anyway the idea of human equality. (But because of film's equally natural attraction to crowds, it has opposite tendencies toward the fascistic or populist.) This depends upon recognizing film types as inhabited by figures we have met or may well meet in other circumstances. The recognized recurrence of film performers will become a central idea as we proceed. At the moment I am emphasizing only that in the case of black performers there was until recently no other place for them to recur in, except just the role within which we have already met them. For example, we would not have expected to see them as parents or siblings. I cannot at the moment remember a black person in a film making an ordinary purchase – say of a newspaper, or a ticket to a movie or for a train, let alone writing a check. (*Pinky* and *A Raisin in the Sun* prove the rule: in the former, the making of a purchase is a climactic scene in the film; in the latter, it provides the whole subject and structure.)

One recalls the lists of stars of every magnitude who have provided the movie camera with human subjects – individuals capable of filling its need for individualities, whose individualities in turn, whose inflections of demeanor and disposition were given full play in its projection. They provided, and still provide, staples for impersonators: one gesture or syllable of mood, two strides, or a passing mannerism was enough to single them out from all other creatures. They realized the myth of singularity – that we can still be found, behind our disguises of bravado and cowardice, by someone, perhaps a god, capable of defeating our self-defeats. This was always more important than their distinction by beauty. Their singularity made them more like us – anyway, made their difference from us less a matter of metaphysics, to which we must accede, than a matter of responsibility, to which we must bend. But then that made them even more glamorous. That they should be able to stand upon their singularity! If

one did that, one might be found, and called out, too soon, or at an inconvenient moment.

What was wrong with type-casting in films was not that it displaced some other, better principle of casting, but that factors irrelevant to film-making often influenced the particular figures chosen. Similarly, the familiar historical fact that there are movie cycles, taken by certain movie theorists as in itself a mark of unscrupulous commercialism, is a possibility internal to the medium; one could even say, it is the best emblem of the fact that a medium had been created. For a cycle is a genre (prison movies, Civil War movies, horror movies, etc.); and a genre is a medium.

As Hollywood developed, the original types ramified into individualities as various and subtle, as far-reaching in their capacities to inflect mood and release fantasy, as any set of characters who inhabited the great theaters of our world. We do not know them by such names as Pulcinella, Crispin, Harlequin, Pantaloon, the Doctor, the Captain, Columbine; we call them the Public Enemy, the Priest, James Cagney, Pat O'Brien, the Confederate Spy, the Army Scout, Randolph Scott, Gary Cooper, Gable, Paul Muni, the Reporter, the Sergeant, the Sheriff, the Deputy, the D.A., the Quack, the Shyster, the Other Woman, the Fallen Woman, the Moll, the Dance Hall Hostess. Hollywood was the theater in which they appeared, because the films of Hollywood constituted a world, with recurrent faces more familiar to me than the faces of the neighbors of all the places I have lived.

The great movie comedians – Chaplin, Keaton, W. C. Fields – form a set of types that could not have been adapted from any other medium. Its creation depended upon two conditions of the film medium mentioned earlier. These conditions seem to be necessities, not merely possibilities, so I will say that two necessities of the medium were discovered or expanded in the creation of these types. First, movie performers cannot project, but are projected. Second, photographs are of the world, in which human beings are not ontologically favored over the rest of nature, in which objects are not props but natural allies (or enemies) of the human character. The first necessity – projected visibility – permits the sublime comprehensibility of Chaplin's natural choreography; the second – ontological equality – permits his Proustian or Jamesian relationships with Murphy beds and flights of stairs and with vases on runners on tables on rollers: the heroism of momentary

survival, Nietzsche's man as a tightrope across an abyss. These necessities permit not merely the locales of Keaton's extrications, but the philosophical mood of his countenance and the Olympic resourcefulness of his body; permit him to be perhaps the only constantly beautiful and continuously hilarious man ever seen, as though the ugliness in laughter should be redeemed. They permit Fields to mutter and suffer and curse obsessively, but heard and seen only by us; because his attributes are those of the gentleman (confident swagger and elegant manners, gloves, cane, outer heartiness), he can manifest continuously, with the remorselessness of nature, the psychic brutalities of bourgeois civilization.

Ideas of Origin

It is inevitable that in theorizing about film one at some point speculate about its origins, because despite its recentness, its origin remains obscure. The facts are well enough known about the invention and the inventors of the camera, and about improvements in fixing and then moving the image it captures. The problem is that the invention of the photographic picture is not the same thing as the creation of photography as a medium for making sense. The historical problem is like any other: a chronicle of the facts preceding the appearance of this technology does not explain why it happened when and as it did. Panofsky opens his study of film by remarking, "It was not an artistic urge that gave rise to the discovery and gradual perfection of a new technique; it was a technical invention that gave rise to the discovery and gradual perfection of a new art." We seem to understand this, but do we understand it? Panofsky assumes we know what it is that at any time has "given rise" to a "new art." He mentions an "artistic urge," but that is hardly a candidate to serve as an explanation; it would be about as useful as explaining the rise of modern science by appealing to "a scientific urge." There may be such urges, but they are themselves rather badly in need of explanation. Panofsky cites an artistic urge explicitly as the occasion for a new "technique." But the motion picture is not a new *technique*, any more than the airplane is. (What did we use to do that such a thing enables us to do better?) Yet some idea of flying, and an urge to do it, preceded the mechanical invention of the airplane. What is "given rise to" by such inventions as

movable type or the microscope or the steam engine or the pianoforte?

It would be surprising if the history of the establishment of an artistic medium were less complex a problem for the historical understanding than (say) the rise of modern science. I take Bazin to be suggesting this when he reverses the apparent relation between the relevant technology and the idea of cinema, emphasizing that the idea preceded the technology, parts of it by centuries, and that parts of the technology preceded the invention of movies, some of it by centuries. So what has to be explained is not merely how the feat was technically accomplished but, for example, what stood in the way of its happening earlier. Surprisingly, Bazin, in the selection of essays I have read, does not include the contemporary condition of the related arts as a part of the ideological superstructure that elicited the new material basis of film. But it is certainly relevant that the burning issue during the latter half of the nineteenth century, in painting and in the novel and in the theater, was realism. And unless film captured possibilities opened up by the arts themselves, it is hard to imagine that its possibilities as an artistic medium would have shown up as, and as suddenly as, they did.

The idea of and wish for the world re-created in its own image was satisfied *at last* by cinema. Bazin calls this the myth of total cinema. But it had always been one of the myths of art; each of the arts had satisfied it in its own way. The mirror was in various hands held up to nature. In some ways it was more fully satisfied in theater. (Since theater is on the whole not now a major art for us, it on the whole no longer makes contact with its historical and psychological sources; so we are rarely gripped by the trauma we must once have suffered when the leader of the chorus stopped contributing to a narrative or song and turned to face the others, suffering incarnation.)

What is cinema's way of satisfying the myth? Automatically, we said. But what does that mean — mean mythically, as it were? It means satisfying it without *my* having to do anything, satisfying it *by* wishing. In a word, *magically*. I have found myself asking: How could film be art, since all the major arts arise in some way out of religion? Now I can answer: Because movies arise out of magic; from *below* the world.

The better a film, the more it makes contact with this source of its inspiration; it never wholly loses touch with the magic lantern behind it. This suggests why movies of the fantastic (*The Cabinet*

of Dr Caligari, Blood of a Poet) are magic (say, materialization and while they have provided mood never established themselves as however strongly this "possibility" the physical medium of film: and psychologically trivial as a medium of magic itself. It is of course presented magic is itself made technically interesting (*The Invisible Man, Mr Hyde, Frankenstein, 2001*: but then that becomes another aspect of the physicality of our world. Science, in movies, as magic, which is itself a source of science. In particular, it retains magic's mystery and fantasy. Science-fiction films exploit not only various aspects of adventure, and of special effects specialize in, but the mumbo-jumbo of hearsay science. Nothing is impervious to the negation that must reverse the atom recalcitrance: it's too late!" The dialogue has tinbox-and-lever contraptions, and is so convincingly convincing in prime *F* films are carried by the immediate that motivates them (say, destruction of higher forms of life, as though the end of human life is due to its

Notes

- 1 Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Renaissance," in Daniel Talbot, ed., *Erwin Panofsky: A Collection of Essays* (Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 110.
- 2 André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 110.
- 3 Certainly I am not concerned with what may be, through film, what *Panofsky* *Film Till Now* (first published in 1967) as "possibilities... open for the [i.e., non-dialogue sound] [i.e., photographically visual] cinema" in the meantime the movies have been.
- 4 Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 12.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 See Michael Fried, *Three Americans: A Study in Modernism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Fogg Art Museum, 1965), n. 3; and "Manet's 'Olympia,'" *Artforum*, March 1969, pp. 28-79.
- 7 See Michael Fried, "Art and Cinema," *Artforum*, June 1967; reprinted in *Art and Cinema*.

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 of the fantastic (*The Cabinet*

of *Dr Caligari*, *Blood of a Poet*) and filmed scenes of
 magic (say, materialization and dematerialization),
 while they have provided moods and devices, have
 never established themselves as cinematic media,
 however strongly this “possibility” is suggested by
 the physical medium of film: they are technically
 and psychologically trivial compared with the
 medium of magic itself. It is otherwise if the pre-
 sented magic is itself made technically or physi-
 cally interesting (*The Invisible Man*, *Dr Jekyll and*
Mr Hyde, *Frankenstein*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*),
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 the physicality of our world. Science presents it-
 self, in movies, as magic, which was indeed one
 source of science. In particular, projected science
 retains magic’s mystery and forbiddenness. Sci-
 ence-fiction films exploit not merely certain obvi-
 ous aspects of adventure, and of a physicality that
 special effects specialize in, but also the terrific
 mumbo-jumbo of hearsay science: “My God, the
 thing is impervious to the negative beta ray! We
 must reverse the atom recalcitration spatter, before
 it’s too late!” The dialogue has the surface of those
 tinbox-and-lever contraptions that were suffi-
 ciently convincing in prime *Flash Gordon*. These
 films are carried by the immediacy of the fantasy
 that motivates them (say, destruction by lower or
 higher forms of life, as though the precariousness
 of human life is due to its biological stage of

development); together with the myth of the one
 way and last chance in which the (external) danger
 can be averted. And certainly the beauty of forms
 and motions in *Frankenstein*’s laboratory is essen-
 tial to the success of *Frankenstein*; computers seem
 primitive in comparison. It always made more
 sense to steal from God than to try to outwit him.

How do movies reproduce the world magically?
 Not by literally presenting us with the world, but
 by permitting us to view it unseen. This is not a
 wish for power over creation (as Pygmalion’s was),
 but a wish not to need power, not to have to bear
 its burdens. It is, in this sense, the reverse of the
 myth of Faust. And the wish for invisibility is old
 enough. Gods have profited from it, and Plato tells
 it at the end of the *Republic* as the Myth of the
 Ring of Gyges. In viewing films, the sense of
 invisibility is an expression of modern privacy or
 anonymity. It is as though the world’s projection
 explains our forms of unknownness and of our
 inability to know. The explanation is not so
 much that the world is passing us by, as that we
 are displaced from our natural habitation within it,
 placed at a distance from it. The screen overcomes
 our fixed distance; it makes displacement appear as
 our natural condition.¹⁶

What do we wish to view in this way? What
 specific forms discover this fundamental condition
 of the medium of film?

Notes

- 1 Erwin Panofsky, “Style and Medium in the Moving Pictures,” in Daniel Talbot, ed., *Film* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), p. 31.
- 2 André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 110.
- 3 Certainly I am not concerned to deny that there may be, through film, what Paul Rotha in this *The Film Till Now* (first published in 1930) refers to as “possibilities . . . open for the great sound and visual [i.e., non-dialogue sound, and perhaps non-photographically visual] cinema of the future.” But in the meantime the movies have been what they have been.
- 4 Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 12.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 See Michael Fried, *Three American Painters* (Cambridge, Mass.: Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, 1965), n. 3; and “Manet’s Sources,” *Artforum*, March 1969, pp. 28–79.
- 7 See Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” *Artforum*, June 1967; reprinted in Gregory Battcock, ed.,

Minimal Art (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968), pp. 116–47.

- 8 When painting found out how to acknowledge the fact that paintings had shapes, shapes became forms, not in the sense of patterns, but in the sense of containers. A form then could give its shape to what it contained. And content could transfer its significance as painting to what contains it. The shape pervades, like gravity, or energy or air. (See Michael Fried, “Shape as Form,” *Artforum*, November 1966; reprinted in Henry Geldzahler’s catalogue, *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940–1970* [New York: E.P. Dutton, 1969].)

This is not, as far as we yet know, a possibility of the film or screen frame – which only repeats the fact that a film is not a painting. The most important feature of the screen format remains what it was from the beginning of movies – its scale, its absolute largeness. Variation of format – e.g., CinemaScope – is a matter determined, so far as I can tell, by questions of convenience and inconvenience, and by fashion. Though perhaps, as in painting, the declaration of

color as such required or benefited from the even greater expanses of wider screens.

The idea may seem obviously false or foolish that the essential ontological difference between the world as it is and as it is screened is that the screened world does not exist; because this overlooks – or perhaps obscurely states – a fully obvious difference between them, viz., that the screened world is two-dimensional. I do not deny the obscurity, but better a real obscurity than a false clarity. For *what* is two dimensional? The world which is screened is not; its objects and motions are as three-dimensional as ours. The screen itself, then? Or the images on it? We seem to understand what it means to say that a painting is two-dimensional. But that depends on our understanding that the support on which paint is laid is a three-dimensional object, and that the description of *that* object will not (except in an exceptional or vacuous sense) be the description of a painting. More significantly, it depends on our understanding of the support as *limiting* the extent of the painting in two dimensions. This is not the relation between the screen and the images projected across it. It seems all right to say that the screen is two-dimensional, but it would not follow that what you see there has the same dimensionality – any more than in the case of paint, its support, and the painting. Shadows are two-dimensional, but they are made by three-dimensional objects – tracings of opacity, not gradations of it. This suggests that phenomenologically the idea of two-dimensionality is an idea of either transparency or outline. Projected images are not shadows; rather, one might say, they are shades.

- 9 This idea is developed to some extent in my essays on *Endgame* and *King Lear* in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Scribener's, 1969).
- 10 Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, p. 97.
- 11 Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Moving Pictures," p. 28.
- 12 "The Film Age," in Talbot, *Film*, p. 74.
- 13 Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Moving Pictures," p. 18.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 16 Within that condition, objects as such may seem displaced; and close-up of an object may render it *trouvé*. Dadaists and surrealists found in film a direct confirmation of their ideologies or sensibilities, particularly in film's massive capacities for nostalgia and free juxtaposition. This confirmation is, I gather, sometimes taken to mean that Dadaist and surrealist films constitute the *avant-garde* of film-making. It might equally be taken to show why film made these movements obsolete, as the world has. One might say: Nothing is more surrealist than the ordinary events of the modern world; and nothing less reveals that fact than a surrealist attitude. This says nothing about the value of particular surrealist films, which must succeed or fail on the same terms as any others.

Ideas of displacement (or contrasted position), of privacy, and of the inability to know are linked in my study of the problem of other minds, "Knowing and Acknowledging," in *Must We Mean What We Say?*

5

A Note on the

Susanne K. Langer

There is a new art. For a few decades nothing more than a new technical sphere of drama, a new way of presenting dramatic performances. But development has already belied this as a screen is not a stage, and what is conception and realization of a film is too early to systematize any technique, but even in its present pristine state – quite beyond any doubt, I think – technique, but a new poetic mode.

Much of the material for the film was collected by four of my former students,¹ at Columbia Teachers College. I have kindly permitted me to use it. I am likewise indebted to Mr Robert (who also as a member of that series) for the study of photography that provided the valuable idea, namely that photographs should be posed, cut, or touched up, much as he called it, "authentic." I should like to suggest that suggestion.

The significant points, for my purposes, were demonstrated by the four collaborators were (1) that the structure of film is not that of drama, and indeed more narrative than to drama; and (2) that the potentialities became evident only when the moving camera was introduced.

The moving camera divorced the film from the stage. The straightforward photograph

Susanne K. Langer, "A Note on the New Key" (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955)