

NOTES

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1. Frederick A. Talbot, *Moving Pictures, How They Are Made and Worked* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1912).
2. E. G. Lutz, *Animated Cartoons* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920).
3. This and other information about the early invention of animated films from Nat Falk, *How To Make Animated Cartoons* (New York: Foundation Books, 1941), pp. 17-18.
4. Richard Schickel, *The Disney Version* (New York: Avon, 1968).
5. See title pages, Robert Benayoun, *Le Dessin animé après Walt Disney* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1961). UPA (United Productions of America) was set up in the 1940s by a breakaway group of animators from the Disney Studios and developed a distinctive and highly influential style, usually described in such terms as 'economical vivacity', 'spare elegance' and so on.
6. Robert Russett and Cecile Starr (eds), *Experimental Animation* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1976), p. 92.
7. Mike Barrier, 'An Interview with Chuck Jones', *Funnyworld* no. 13 (Spring 1971), p. 6.
8. As listed in Daniel J. Weintraub and Edward L. Walker, *Perception* (California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 22-9.
9. Russett and Starr, op. cit., p. 123.
10. A roscope is a projection device which allows the film-maker to trace, frame by frame, live-action footage.

10. Machines of the Visible

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INTRODUCTION

One of the hypotheses tried out in some of the fragments here gathered together would be on the one hand that the cinema—the historically constitutable cinematic statements—functions with and in the set of apparatuses of representation at work in a society. There are not only the representations produced by the representative apparatuses as such (painting, theatre, cinema, etc.); there are also, participating in the movement of the whole, the systems of the delegation of power (political representation), the ceaseless working-up of social imaginaries (historical, ideological representations) and a large part, even, of the modes of relational behaviour (balances of power, confrontations, manoeuvres of seduction, strategies of defense, marking of differences or affiliations). On the other hand, but at the same time, the hypothesis would be that a society is only such in that it is *driven by representation*. If the social machine manufactures representations, it also manufactures *itself* from representations—the latter operative at once as means, matter and condition of sociality.

Thus the historical variation of cinematic techniques, their appearance-disappearance, their phases of convergence, their periods of dominance and decline seem to me to depend not on a rational-linear order of technological perfectibility nor an autonomous instance of scientific 'progress', but much rather on the offsettings, adjustments, arrangements carried out by a social configuration in order to represent itself, that is, at once to grasp itself, identify itself and itself produce itself in its representation.

What happened with the invention of cinema? It was not sufficient that it be technically feasible, it was not sufficient that a

camera, a projector, a strip of images be technically ready.¹ Moreover, they were already there, more or less ready, more or less invented, a long time already before the formal invention of cinema, 50 years before Edison and the Lumière brothers. It was necessary that something else be constituted, that something else be formed: the *cinema machine*, which is not essentially the camera, the film, the projector, which is not merely a combination of instruments, apparatuses, techniques. Which is a machine: a *dispositif* articulating between one another different sets – technological certainly, but also economic and ideological. A *dispositif* was required which implicate its motivations, which be the arrangement of demands, desires, fantasies, speculations (in the two senses of commerce and the imaginary): an arrangement which give apparatus and techniques a social status and function.

The cinema is born immediately as a social machine, and thus not from the sole invention of its equipment but rather from the experimental supposition and verification, from the anticipation and confirmation of its *social profitability, economic, ideological and symbolic*. One could just as well propose that it is the spectators who invent cinema: the chain that knots together the waiting queues, the money paid and the spectators' looks filled with admiration. 'Never', say Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, 'is an arrangement-combination technological, indeed it is always the contrary. The tools always presuppose a machine, and the machine is always social before it is technical. There is always a social machine which selects or assigns the technical elements used. A tool, an instrument, remains marginal or little used for as long as the social machine or the collective arrangement-combination capable of taking it in its *phylum* does not exist.'² The hundreds of little machines in the nineteenth century destined for a more or less clumsy reproduction of the image and the movement of life are picked up in this 'phylum' of the great representative machine, in that zone of attraction, lineage, influences that is created by the displacement of the social co-ordinates of analogical representation.

The second half of the nineteenth century lives in a sort of frenzy of the visible. It is, of course, the effect of the social multiplication of images: ever wider distribution of illustrated papers, waves of prints, caricatures, etc. The effect also, however, of something of a geographical extension of the field of the visible and the representable: by journees, explorations, colonisations, the whole world

becomes visible at the same time that it becomes appropriable. Similarly, there is a visibility of the expansion of industrialism, of the transformations of the landscape, of the production of towns and metropolises. There is, again, the development of the mechanical manufacture of objects which determines by a faultless force of repetition their ever identical reproduction, thus standardising the idea of the (artisanal) copy into that of the (industrial) series. Thanks to the same principles of mechanical repetition, the movements of men and animals become in some sort more visible than they had been: movement becomes a visible mechanics. The mechanical opens out and multiplies the visible and between them is established a *complicity* all the stronger in that the codes of analogical figuration slip irresistibly from painting to photography and then from the latter to cinematography.

At the very same time that it is thus fascinated and gratified by the multiplicity of scopic instruments which lay a thousand views beneath its gaze, the human eye loses its immemorial privilege; the mechanical eye of the photographic machine now sees in its place, and in certain aspects with more sureness. The photograph stands as at once the triumph and the grave of the eye. There is a violent decentring of the place of mastery in which since the Renaissance the look had come to reign; to which testifies, in my opinion, the return, synchronous with the rise of photography, of everything that the legislation of the classic optics – that geometrical *ratio* which made of the *eye the point of convergence and centring of the perspective rays of the visible* – had long repressed and which hardly remained other than in the controlled form of anamorphoses: the massive return to the front of the stage of the optical aberrations, illusions, dissolutions. Light becomes less obvious, sets itself as problem and challenge to sight. A whole host of inventors, lecturers and image showmen experiment and exploit in every way the optical phenomena which appear irrational from the standpoint of the established science (refraction, mirages, spectrum, diffraction, interferences, retinal persistence, etc.). Precisely, a new conception of light is put together, in which the notion of wave replaces that of ray and puts an end to the schema of rectilinear propagation, in which optics thus overturned is now coupled with a chemistry of light.

Decentred, in panic, thrown into confusion by all this new magic of the visible, the human eye finds itself affected with a series of limits and doubts. The mechanical eye, the photographic lens,

while it intrigues and fascinates, functions also as a *guarantor* of the identity of the visible with the normality of vision. If the photographic illusion, as later the cinematographic illusion, fully gratifies the spectator's taste for delusion, it also reassures him or her in that the delusion is in conformity with the norm of visual perception. The mechanical magic of the analogical representation of the visible is accomplished and articulated from a doubt as to the fidelity of human vision, and more widely as to the truth of sensory impressions.

I wonder if it is not from this, from this lack to be filled, that could have come the extreme eagerness of the first spectators to *recognise* in the images of the first films – devoid of colour, nuance, fluidity – the identical image, the double of life itself. If there is not, in the very principle of representation, a force of disavowal which gives free rein to an analogical illusion that is yet only weakly manifested by the iconic signifiers themselves? If it was not necessary at these first shows to forcefully deny the manifest difference between the filmic image and the retinal image in order to be assured of a new hold on the visible, subject in turn to the law of mechanical reproduction...

I. THE CAMERA SEEN

The camera, then.

For it is here indeed, on this *camera-site*, that a confrontation occurs between two discourses: one which locates cinematic technology in ideology, the other which locates it in science. Note that whether we are told that what is essential in the technical equipment which serves to produce a film has its founding origin in a network of scientific knowledges or whether we are told that that equipment is governed by the ideological representations and demands dominant at the time it was perfected, in both cases – discourse of technicians on the one hand, attempts to elaborate a materialist theory of the cinema on the other – the example given is *always* that which produces the cinematic image, and it *alone*, considered from the sole point of view of *optics*.³

Thus what is in question is a certain *image* of the camera: metonymically, it represents the whole of cinema technology, it is the part for the whole. It is brought forward as the *visible part* for the *whole of the technics*. This symptomatic displacement must be

examined in the very manner of posing the articulation of the couple Technology/Ideology.

To elect the camera as 'delegated' representative of the whole of cinematic equipment is not merely synecdochical (the part for the whole). It is above all an operation of reduction (of the whole to the part), to be questioned in that, *theoretically*, it reproduces and confirms the split which is ceaselessly marked in the technical practice of cinema (not only in the practice of film-makers and technicians and in the spontaneous ideology of that practice; but also in the 'idea', the ideological representation that spectators have of work in cinema: concentration on shooting and studio, occultation of laboratory and editing) between the *visible* part of the technology of cinema (camera, shooting, crew, lighting, screen) and its '*invisible*' part (black between frames, chemical processing, baths and laboratory work, negative film, cuts and joins of editing, sound track, projector, etc.), the latter repressed by the former, generally relegated to the realm of the unthought, the 'unconscious' of cinema. It is symptomatic, for example, that Lebel, so concerned to assert the scientific regulation of cinema, thinks to deduce it only from geometrical optics, mentioning only once retinal persistence which nevertheless is what brings into play the specific difference between cinema and photography, the synthesis of movement (and the scientific work which made it possible); at the same time that he quite simply forgets the other patron science of cinema and photography, photochemistry, without which the camera would be no more precisely than a *camera obscura*. As for Pleyne's remarks, they apply indiscriminately to the quattrocento *camera obscura*, the seventeenth century magic lantern, the various projection apparatus ancestors of the *cinématographe* and the photographic apparatus. Their interest is evidently to indicate the links that relate these diverse perspective mechanisms and the camera, but in so doing they risk not seeing exactly what the camera hides (it does not hide its lens): the film and its feed systems, the emulsion, the frame lines, things which are essential (not just the lens) to cinema, without which there would be no cinema.

Hence it is not certain that what is habitually the case in practice should be reproduced in theory: the reduction of the hidden part of technics to its visible part brings with it the risk of renewing the domination of the visible, that *ideology of the visible* (and what it implies: masking, effacement of work) defined by Serge Daney:

Cinema postulated that from the 'real' to the visual and from the visual to its filmed reproduction a same truth was infinitely reflected, without distortion or loss. In a world where 'I see' is readily used for 'I understand', one conceives that such a dream had nothing fortuitous about it, the dominant ideology—that which equates the real with the visible—having every interest in encouraging it But why not, going further back still, call into question what both serves and precedes the camera: a truly blind confidence in the visible, the hegemony, gradually acquired, of the eye over the other senses, the taste and need a society has to put itself in spectacle, etc. The cinema is thus bound up with the Western metaphysical tradition of seeing and vision whose photological vocation it realizes. What is photology, what could be the discourse of light? Assuredly a teleological discourse if it is true, as Derrida says, that teleology 'consists in neutralizing duration and force in favour of the illusion of simultaneity and form'.⁴

Undeniably, it was this 'hegemony of the eye', this specularisation, this ideology of the visible linked to Western logocentrism that Pleyne was aiming at when stressing the pregnancy of the quattrocento perspective code in the basic apparatus: the image produced by the camera cannot do otherwise than confirm and reduplicate 'the code of specular vision such as it is defined by the renaissance humanism', such that the human eye is at the centre of the system of representation, with that centrality at once excluding any other representative system, assuring the eye's domination over any other organ of the senses and putting the eye in a strictly divine place (Humanism's critique of Christianity).

Thus is constituted this situation of *theoretical paradox*: that it is by identifying the domination of the camera (of the visible) over the whole of the technology of cinema which it is supposed to represent, inform and programme (its function as *model*) that the attempt is made to denounce the submission of that camera, in its conception and its construction, to the dominant ideology of the visible.

If the gesture privileging the camera in order to set out from it the ideological chain in which cinema is inscribed is theoretically grounded by everything that is implied in that apparatus, as in any case by the determining and principal role of the camera in the production of the film, it too will nevertheless remain caught in the same chain unless taken further. It is therefore necessary to change

perspective, that is, to take into account what the gesture picking out the camera sets aside in its movement, in order to avoid that the stress on the camera—necessary and productive—is not reinscribed in the very ideology to which it points.

It seems to me that a materialist theory of the cinema must at once disengage the ideological 'heritage' of the camera (just as much as its 'scientific heritage', for the two, contrary to what seems to be stated by Lebel, are in no way exclusive of one another) and the ideological investments in that camera, since neither in the production of films nor in the history of the invention of cinema is the camera alone at issue: if it is the fact that what the camera brings into play of technology, of science and/or ideology is determining, this is so only in relation to other determining elements which may certainly be secondary relative to the camera but the *secondariness* of which must then be questioned: the status and the function of what is covered over by the camera.

To underline again the risk entailed in making cinema function theoretically entirely on the *reduced model* of the camera, it is enough to note the almost total lack of theoretical work on the sound track or on laboratory techniques (as if the sight of light—geometrical optics—had blocked its work: the chemistry of light), a lack which can only be explained by the dominance of the visible at the heart of both cinematic practice and reflection. Is it not time, for example, to bring out the ideological function of two techniques (instruments + processes + knowledges + practice—interdependent, together to realise an *aim*, an objective which henceforth constitutes that technique, founds and authorises it), both of which are on the side of the hidden, the cinematic unthought (except by very few filmmakers: Godard, Rivette, Straub): *grading* and *mixing*?

II. COVERING OVER AND LOSS OF DEPTH OF FIELD

No more than in the case of the 'close-up' is it possible to postulate a continuous chain (a filiation) of 'depth-of-field shots' running through the 'history of cinema'. No more than in the case of the 'close-up' (or of any other term of cinematic practice and technical metalanguage) is the history of this technical disposition possible without considering determinations that are *not exclusively technical* but economic and ideological: determinations which thus go beyond the simple realm of the cinematic, working it over with

series of supplements, grasping it on other scenes, having other scenes inscribe themselves on that of cinema. Which shatter the fiction of an autonomous history of cinema (of its 'styles and techniques'). Which effect the complex articulation of this field and this history with other fields, other histories. Which thus allow the taking into account, here for the particular technical procedure of depth of field, of the regulation of the functions it assumes – that is to say, of the *meanings* it assumes – in filmic signifying production through codes that are not necessarily cinematic (in this instance: pictorial, theatrical, photographic), allow the taking into account of the (economic/ideological) forces which put pressure for or against the inscription of this regulation and these codes.

For historian – aestheticians like Mitry and theoreticians like Bazin to have let themselves fall for a determination of filmic writing and of the evolution of cinematic language by the advances of technology (development and improvement of means), to fall, that is, for the idea of a 'treasure house' of techniques into which filmmakers could 'freely' dip according to the effects of writing sought, or, again, for an 'availability' of technical processes which located them in some region outside of systems of meaning (histories, codes, ideologies) and 'ready' to enter into the signifying production, it was necessary that the whole technical apparatus of cinema seem so 'natural' to them, so 'self-evident', that the question of its utility and its purpose (what is it used for) be totally obscured by that of its utilisation (how to use it).

It is indeed of 'strength of conviction', 'naturalness' – and, as a corollary, of the blindness on the part of the theoreticians – that we must talk. Mitry, for example, who notes the fact that deep focus, almost constantly used in the early years of cinema, disappears from the scene of filmic signifiers for some 20 years (with a few odd exceptions: certain films by Renoir), offers strictly technical reasons as sole explanation for this abandonment, hence establishing technology as the last instance, constituting a closed and autonomous circuit within which technical fluctuations are taken as determined only by other technical fluctuations.

From the very first films, the cinematic image was 'naturally' an image in deep focus; the majority of the films of Lumière and his cameramen bear witness to that depth which appears as constituent of these images. It is in fact most often in out-of-doors shooting that depth in the period finds its field. The reason is indisputably of a technical nature: the lenses used before 1915 were, Mitry stresses,

'solely f35 and f50', 'medium' focal lengths which had to be stopped down in order to produce an image in depth, thus necessitating a great deal of light, something to be found more easily and cheaply outside than in the studio.

One must then ask why, precisely, these 'medium' focal lengths only were in use during the first 20 years of cinema. I can see no more pertinent reason than the fact that they restore the spatial proportions corresponding to 'normal vision' and that they thereby play their role in the production of the impression of reality to which the *cinématographe* owed its success. These lenses themselves are thus dictated by the codes of analogy and realism (other codes corresponding to other social demands would have produced other types of lenses). The depth of field that they permit is thus also that which permits them, that which lays the ground for their utilisation and their existence. The deep focus in question is not a supplementary 'effect' which might just as well have been done without; on the contrary, it is what *had* to be obtained and what it was necessary to strive to produce. Set up to put its money on, and putting its money wholeheartedly on, the identification – the desire to identify, to duplicate, to recognise specularly – of the cinematic image with 'life itself' (consider the fantastic efforts expended over decades by hundreds of inventors in search of 'total cinema', of complete illusion, the reproduction of life with sound and colour and relief included), the ideological apparatus cinema could not, in default of realising in practice the technical patent for relief, neglect the production of effects of relief, of effects of depth. Effects which are due on the one hand to the inscription within the image of a vanishing perspective and on the other to the movements of people or other mobile elements (the La Ciotat train) along vanishing lines (something which a photograph cannot provide, nor *a fortiori* a painting; which is why the most perfect *trompe-l'oeil* minutely constructed in conformity with the laws of perspective is powerless to trick the eye). The two are linked: in order that people can move about 'perpendicularly' on the screen, the light must be able to go and take them there, it requires a depth, planes spaced out, in short the code of artificial perspective. Moreover in studio filming, where space was relatively tight and lighting not always adequate, the backgrounds were often precisely painted *trompe-l'oeil* canvases which, while unable to inscribe the movement in depth of the characters, at least inscribed its perspective.

We know what perspective brings with it and thus what deep

focus brings into the cinematic image as its *constitutive codes*: the codes of classic Western representation, pictorial and theatrical. Méliès, specialist in 'illusion' and interior shooting, said as early as 1897 of his Montreuil 'studio': 'in brief, it is the coming together of a gigantic photographic workshop and a theatrical stage'. No more exact indication could be given of the double background on which the cinematic image is raised, and not fortuitously but explicitly, deliberately. Not only is deep focus in the early cinematic image the mark of its submission to these codes of representation and to the histories and ideologies which necessarily determine and operate them, but more generally it signals that the ideological apparatus cinema is itself produced by these codes and by these systems of representation, as at once their complement, their perfectionment and the surpassing of them. There is nothing accidental, therefore, or specifically technical in the cinematic image immediately claiming depth, since it is just this depth which governs and informs it; the various optical instruments are regulated according to the possibility of restoring depth. Contrary to what the technicians seem to believe, the restoration of movement and depth are not effects of the camera; it is the camera which is the effect, the solution to the problem of that restoration.

Deep focus was not 'in fashion' in 1896, it was one of the factors of credibility in the cinematic image (like, even if not quite with the same grounds, the faithful reproduction of movement and figurative analogy). And it is by the transformation of the conditions of this credibility, by the displacement of the codes of cinematic verisimilitude from the plane of the impression of reality alone to the more complex planes of fictional logic (narrative codes), of psychological verisimilitude, of the impression of homogeneity and continuity (the coherent space-time of classical drama) that one can account for the effacement of depth. It will not then be a question merely of technical 'delays': such 'delays' are themselves caught up in and effects of the displacement, of this replacement of codes.

It seems surprising indeed (at least if one remains at the level of 'technical causes') that a process which 'naturally' dominated a large proportion of the films made between 1895 and 1925 could disappear or drop into oblivion for so long without – leaving aside a few exceptions, Renoir being one – film-makers showing the slightest concern (so it seems).

Everything, Mitry assures us, stems from 'the generalisation of panchromatic stock round about 1925'. Agreed. But to say that –

offered with the weight of the obvious – and to pass on quickly to the unsuitability of the lighting systems to the spectrum of this emulsion is exactly *not to say* what necessity attaches to this 'generalisation', what (new) function the new film comes to fulfil that the old was unable to serve. It is to avoid the question as to what demands the replacement of an emulsion in universal use and which (if we follow Mitry) did not seem so mediocre by another which (still according to Mitry) was far from its immediate equal. As far as we know, it is not exactly within the logic of technology, nor within that of the economics of the film industry (in the mid-twenties already highly structured and well-equipped) to adopt (or impose) a new product which in an initial moment poses more problems than the old and hence incurs the expense of adaptation (modification of lighting systems, lenses, etc.) *without somewhere finding something to its advantage and profit*.

In fact, it is a matter not simply of a gain in the sensitivity of the film but also of a gain in *faithfulness* 'to natural colours', a *gain in realism*. The cinematic image becomes more refined, perfects its 'rendering', competes once again with the quality of the photographic image which had long been using the panchromatic emulsion. The reason for this 'technical progress' is not merely technical, it is ideological: it is not so much the greater sensitivity to light which counts as 'being more true'. The hard, contrasty image of the early cinema no longer satisfied the codes of photographic realism developed and sharpened by the spread of photography. In my view, depth (perspective) loses its importance in the production of 'reality effects' in favour of shade, range, colour. But this is not all.

A further advantage, that is, that the film industry could find 'round about 1925' in imposing on itself – despite the practical difficulties and the cost of the operation – the replacement of orthochromatic by panchromatic stock depends again on the greater sensitivity of the latter. Not only did the gain in sensitivity permit the realignment of the 'realism' of the cinematic image with that of the photographic image,⁵ it also compensated for the loss of light due to the change from a shutter speed of 16 or 18 frames per second to the speed of 24 frames per second necessitated by sound. This 'better' technical explanation, however, can only serve here to re-mark the coincidence of the coming of the talkie and the setting aside of depth, not to provide the reason for it. Although certain of its effects are, that reason is not technical. More than one sound film before *Citizen Kane* works with depth; the generalisation of large

aperture lenses even does not exclude its possibility: with the sensitivity of emulsions increasing and the quantity of light affordable, there was nothing to prevent – technically – the stopping down of these lenses (if indeed, as Renoir did, one could not find any others). So it is not as final ‘technical cause’ that the talking picture must be brought into the argument; it is in that in a precise location of production – distribution (Hollywood) it re-models not just the systems of filmic writing but, with them and directing this bringing up to date, the ideological function of the cinema and the economic facts of its functioning.

It is not unimportant that it be – in Hollywood – at the moment when the rendering of the cinematic image becomes subtle, opens up to the shades of greys (monochrome translation of the range of colours), thus drawing nearer to a more faithful imitation of the photographic images promoted (fetishised) as the very norms of realism, that Speech and the speaking Subject come onto the scene. As soon as they are produced, sound and speech are plebiscited as the ‘truth’ which was lacking in the silent film – the truth which is all of a sudden noticed, not without alarm and resistance, as having been lacking in the silent film. And at once this truth renders no longer valid all films which do not possess it, which do not produce it. The decisive supplement, the ‘ballast of reality’ (Bazin) constituted by sound and speech intervenes straightaway, therefore, as *perfectionment and redefinition of the impression of reality*.

It is at the cost of a series of blindneses (of disavowals) that the silent image was able to be taken for the reflection, the objective double of ‘life itself’: disavowal of colour, relief, sound. Founded on these lacks (as any representation is founded on a lack which governs it, a lack which is the very principle of any simulacrum: the spectator is anyhow well aware of the artifice but he/she prefers all the same to believe in it), filmic representation could find its production only by working to diminish its effects, to mask its very reality. Otherwise it would have been rejected as too visibly factitious: it was absolutely necessary that it facilitate the disavowal of the veritable sensory castrations which founded its specificity and that it not, by remarking them, prevent such disavowal. *Compromises* were necessary in order that the cinema could function as ideological apparatus, in order that its delusion could take place.

The work of suturing, of filling in, of patching up the lacks which ceaselessly recalled the radical difference of the cinematic image was not done all at one go but piece by piece, by the *patient*

accumulation of technical processes. Directly and totally programmed by the ideology of resemblance, of the ‘objective’ duplication of a ‘real’ itself conceived as specular reflection, cinema technology occupied itself in improving and refining the initial imperfect *dispositif*, always imperfect by virtue of the ideological delusion produced by the film as ‘impression of reality’. The lack of relief had been immediately compensated for (this is the original impression of reality) by movement and the depth of the image, inscribing the perspective code which in Western cultures stands as principal emblem of spatial relief. The lack of colour had to make do with panchromatic stock, pending the commercialisation of three-colour processes (1935–40). Neither the pianos nor the orchestras of the silent film could really substitute for ‘realistic sound’: synchronised speech and sound – in spite of their imperfections, in truth of little weight at a time when it is the whole of sound reproduction, records, radios, which is affected by background noise and interference – thus considerably *displace the site and the means (until then strictly iconic)* of the production of the impression of reality.

Because the *ideological* conditions of production – consumption of the initial impression of reality (figurative analogy + movement + perspective) were changing (if only in function of the very dissemination of photo and film), it was necessary to tinker with its technical modalities in order that the act of disavowal renewing the deception could continue to be accomplished ‘automatically’, in a reflex manner, without any disturbance of the spectacle, above all without any work or effort on the part of the spectator. The succession of technical advances cannot be read, in the manner of Bazin, as the progress towards a ‘realism plus’ other than in that they accumulate realistic supplements which all aim at reproducing – in strengthening, diversifying, rendering more subtle – the impression of reality; which aim, that is, to reduce as much as possible, to minimise the gap which the ‘yes-I-know/but-all-the-same’ has to fill.

What is at stake in deep focus, what is at stake in the historicity of the technique, are the codes and the modes of production of ‘realism’, the transmission, renewal or transformation of the ideological systems of recognition, specularity, truth-to-lifeness.

III. 'MORE REAL' OR MORE VISIBLE?

The reinforcement of 'effects of the real' is the first and foremost reason for Bazin's interest in deep focus. In a number of famous texts (notably *The evolution of cinematic language* and *William Wyler or the Jansenist of mise en scène*) and with reference essentially to the films of Orson Welles and William Wyler (a choice which is not without overdetermining Bazin's discourse), he makes deep focus the means and the symbol of the irreversible accomplishment of the 'realist vocation of the cinema', of the 'realist rejuvenation of narrative'.

A series of principles are set up which follow from what is for Bazin a truly *first principle*: 'the immanent ambiguity of reality', which montage and even classic Hollywood editing had reduced to a single meaning, to a single discourse (that of the film-maker), 'subjectivising the event to an extreme, since every element is owing to the decision of the *metteur en scène*'; whereas filming with deep focus safeguards the ambiguity because it participates in 'an aesthetic of reality' and offers the spectator 'the possibility of carrying out at least the final stage of the editing him or herself'.

Thus 1) the real is ambiguous; 2) to give a representation of it that is fragmented (because of montage or the work of the writing) is to reduce this ambiguity and replace it with a 'subjectivity' (a meaning: a 'view of the world', an ideology); 3) because deep focus brings the cinematic image closer to the 'normal' retinal image, to 'realist' vision, and shows literally *more* things, *more 'real'*, it allows the reactivation of that 'ambiguity' which leaves the spectator 'free'; aims, that is, at abolishing the difference between film and reality, representation and real, at confirming the spectator in his or her 'natural' relationship with the world, hence at reduplicating the conditions of his or her 'spontaneous' vision and ideology. It is not for nothing that Bazin writes (not without humour) in the course of a discussion of *The Best Years of our Lives*: 'Deep focus in Wyler's film is meant to be liberal and democratic like the consciousness of the American spectator and the film's heroes.'

On the one hand, duplication of the ideological effects of the impression of reality, of the 'normality' of specular representation; on the other, *revelation* (in its exact Christian sense) of 'the natural ambiguity and unity' of the world.

To this 'revelation' according to Bazin of 'the immanent ambiguity of reality' by deep focus, Mitry opposes 'the fact that the real of film is a mediated real: between the real world and us, there is

the film, the camera, the representation, in the extreme case where there is not in addition an author'. He writes: 'It is supremely naive to think (as Bazin does) that because the camera automatically records an element given in reality, it provides us with an objective and impartial image of that reality . . . By the very fact that it is *given in an image*, the real captured by the camera lens is structured according to formalising values which create a series of new relations and therefore a new reality—at very least a new appearance. The *represented* is seen via a *representation* which, necessarily, transforms it.'

Secure in his insistence against Bazin on the distinction film/real, Mitry fails to see how, far from acknowledging the difference, film tends to reduce it by proposing itself as adequate to the norms of perception, by ceaselessly restoring the illusion of the homogeneous and the continuous, which is precisely the basis of Bazin's error—the postulation as the same value of the unifying functions of both perception and film representation. It was then inevitable that Mitry should end up sharing Bazin's view of deep focus. Against Bazin, he stresses the otherness of film to the real but fails to recognise the process of repression of which that otherness is the object and the place of the spectator in that process. The film is abstracted from its social inscription into an absolute realm where the 'truth' of its nature ('fragmentation of the real into shots and sequences') takes precedence over that of its reading (reconstitution, saturation). Like Bazin—though not, of course, without shades of difference—he then comes to consider that, because it reduces such fragmentation, deep focus is indeed productive of an 'increase in realism': it is seen as (ontological realism) capturing, as the classic shot does not, 'the event globally, in its real space-time', restoring 'to object and setting their density of existence, their weight of presence' (Bazin's formulations taken over by Mitry) and as (psychological realism) replacing 'the spectator in the true conditions of perception'; that is to say, coherence, continuity and finally 'ambiguity'. On condition that deep focus does not become an omnivalent principle substitutive for every other formula of *mise en scène*, Mitry declares himself 'perfectly in agreement with Bazin'.

Nothing is less certain than that deep focus is in this way—particularly in the films of Welles and Wyler, the obligatory example since Bazin—responsible for an 'increase in realism'; and this exactly in that it inscribes in the image, more successfully than any other filming process, the *representational code of linear perspective*.

We are thus faced with a contradiction: for Bazin the intervention of deep focus increases the realist coefficient of the cinematic image by completing the virtues (the virtualities) *already* inscribed in that image, by perfecting it, by giving literally *more field* to its 'ontological realism'. For Mitry this cannot be the case since by stressing the artificiality (the otherness) of the cinematic image, it is just such a 'realism' that he refuses, merely conceding that deep focus – because it produces a 'more global' and relatively less discontinuous space – comes closer to certain effects of ordinary perception; that is to say, it brings back and reinscribes in the image the (at least psychological) *conditions* of an increase in realism. For the first, this *more* is *added*; for the second, it tends to cancel out a *less*, to fill a lack. The contradiction between Bazin and Mitry is also a contradiction in Mitry, since the system of differences and specificities which constitutes the cinematic image as an other of the world, offered as its double, does not abolish the particular case of the deep focus image. In his illusion, Bazin is *more coherent* than Mitry, the person who denounces the illusion as such, for the stress on the constitutive differences and specific codings of the image must, as deep focus demonstrates, be accompanied by a simultaneous stress on the *work* of these codings (their *raison d'être* and their goal), which is to produce their own miscognition, to give themselves over as 'natural' and hence to mask the play of differences.

It is from the basis of this *positive* contribution accorded deep focus by both Bazin and Mitry that the *double game* of the coding of the cinematic image (its 'transparency', since it is not by being remarked as such that it functions) operates, *insofar* as the 'supplement of realism' that deep focus is held to produce cannot be produced without *distorting and emphasising* the codes of 'realism' already 'naturally' at work in the image: a supplement that is *excessive* in relation to the system of (perspective/cultural) norms which ground the impression of reality and maintain the category of 'realism'.

IV. DENATURALISING DEPTH

The theatre in *La Cecilia* as tipping over of the fiction, as superimposition, disphasing, dislocation of two representations, one over the other, one against the other.

This doubling-splitting of the scene that the inscription of the theatre produces in the film is produced in the shot by deep focus.

The decision was taken with the cameraperson Yann Le Masson, to use almost throughout short focal length lenses which give a field that is sharp in its distance, a space divided into planes set out in depth, backgrounds as legible as foregrounds. Paradoxically, this was not in order to strengthen the realism of the image (deep focus as 'more real') but in order to make the shot theatrical: to act along the verticality of the image in the same way that in the theatre one can perform along the vertical axis of the stage, in its depth, making dramatic use of what is the central condition of the Italian stage (governed by linear perspective): a theatrical space that is immediately and totally perceptible, a set given over straightaway and entirely to vision. With the proviso that what is arranged on the theatrical stage in the real depth of the given space necessarily becomes in the filmic image a spacing out in the plane of the frame, a lateral-vertical decentering of the 'subjects' (otherwise what is in the foreground would always mask what comes behind). With the proviso also that the short focal lengths, which alone allow the apprehension of this depth, which do so with a forceful emphasis on perspective, bring with them at the same time as the background depth a more or less considerable deformation of the lateral edges of the field. This is why cinematic deep focus does not slip into the 'naturalness' of linear perspective, but inevitably stresses that perspective, accentuates it, indicates its curvature, denounces the visual field it produces as a construction, a composition in which there is not simply 'more real' but in which this more visible is spatially organised in the frame, dramatised. Deep focus does not wipe out perspective, does not pass it off as the 'normality' of vision, but makes it readable as coding (exteriorisation of the interiorised code); it de-naturalises dramatises it. The relationship which is established within the frame and in the duration of the scene between the actions or figures in the foreground and those in the backgrounds functions not only as a 'montage within the shot' (opposed by Bazin to classic Hollywood editing) but also as the reinscription of a theatrical space and duration, in which the legibility of meanings goes via a movement of the eye, in which the playing of the actors is a playing of *relationship* to the others and to the elements of the décor, in which the bodies are always held in space and time, never abstract. (The abstraction is the method and the result of the analysis of the concrete contradictions: a body in a space, in relation to other bodies; speech first of all as accent, delivery, diction; a discourse as mode of behaviour, symptom,

relational crisis; political conflicts as dramatic conflicts – the political, in other words, not as (autonomous, free floating) discourse or (magisterial) lesson, but as movement, as trace, mark on faces, gestures, words; in short, theatre).

V. NOTES ON REPRESENTATION

The most analogical representation of the world is still not, is never, its reduplication. Analogical repetition is a false repetition, staggered, disphased, deferred and different; but it produces effects of repetition and analogy which imply the disavowal (or the repression) of these differences and which thus make of the desire for identity, identification, recognition, of the desire for the same, one of the principal driving forces of analogical figuration. In other words the spectator, the ideological and social subject, and not just the technical apparatus, is the operator of the analogical mechanism.

There is a famous painting of the English school, *The Cholmondeley sisters* (1600–10) (Plate 8), which represents two sisters side by side, each holding a baby in her arms. The two sisters look very much alike, as do the babies, sisters and babies are dressed almost identically, and so on. Confronted with this canvas, one is disturbed by a repetition that is not a repetition, by a contradictory repetition. What is here painted is the very subject of figurative painting: repetition, with, in this repetition, all the play of the innumerable differences which at once destroy it (from one figure to the other, nothing is identical) and assert it as violent effect. Panic and confusion of the look doubled and split. The image is in the image, the double is not the same, the repetition is a fiction: it makes us believe that it repeats itself just because it does not repeat itself. It is in the most 'analogical' representation (never completely so), the most 'faithful', the most 'realistic', that the effects of representation can be most easily read. One must be fooled by the image in order to see it as such (and no longer as a projection of the world).

Is it that cinema begins where *mise en scène* ends, when is broken or left behind the machinery of performance, of the actor and the scenario, when technical necessity takes off the mask of art? That is roughly what Vertov believed and what is repeated more or less by a whole avant-garde in his wake – with categories such as 'pure cinema', 'live cinema', '*cinéma vérité*' – right up to certain experimental films of today. It is not very difficult to see, however, that

what is being celebrated in that tradition of 'non-cinema' is a visible with no original blemish that will stand forth in its 'purity' as soon as the cinema strips itself of the 'literary' or 'theatrical' artifices it inherited at its birth; a visible on the right side of things, manifesting their living authenticity. There is, of course, no visible not held in a look and, as it were, always already framed. Moreover, it is naive to locate *mise en scène* solely on the side of the camera: it is just as much, and even before the camera intervenes, everywhere where the social regulations order the place, the behaviour and almost the 'form' of subjects in the various configurations in which they are caught (and which do not demand the same type of performance: here authority, here submission; standing out or standing aside; etc.; from one system of social relation to another, the place of the subject changes and so does the subject's capture in the look of others). What Vertov films without *mise en scène* (as he believes) are the effects of other *mises en scène*. In other words, script, actors, *mise en scène* or not, all that is filmable is the changing, historical, determined relationship of men and things to the visible, are dispositions of representation.

However refined, analogy in the cinema is a deception, a lie, a fiction that must be straddled – in disavowing, knowing but not wanting to know – by the *will to believe* of the spectator, the spectator who expects to be fooled and wants to be fooled, thus becoming the first agent of his or her own fooling. The spectacle, and cinema itself, despite all the reality effects it may produce, always gives itself away for what it is to the spectators. There is no spectator other than one aware of the spectacle, even if (provisionally) allowing him or herself to be taken in by the fictioning machine, deluded by the simulacrum: it is precisely for that that he or she came. The certainty that we always have, in our heart of hearts, that the spectacle is not life, that the film is not reality, that the actor is not the character and that if we are present as spectators, it is because we know we are dealing with a semblance, this certainty must be capable of being doubted. It is only worth its risk; it interests us only if it can be (provisionally) cancelled out. The 'yes, I know' calls irresistibly for the 'but all the same', includes it as its value, its intensity. We know, but we want something else: to believe. We want to be fooled, while still knowing a little that we are so being. We want the one and the other, to be both fooled and not fooled, to oscillate, to swing from knowledge to belief, from distance to adherence, from criticism to fascination.

Which is why realist representations are successful: they allow

this movement to and fro which ceaselessly sets off the intensity of the disavowal, they sustain the spectator's pleasure in being prisoner in a situation of conflict (I believe/I don't believe). They allow it because they lay out a contradictory, representative space, a space in which there are both effects of the real and effects of fiction, of repetition and difference, automatic devices of identification and significant resistances, recognition and seizure. In this sense, analogical fiction in the cinema is bound up with narrative fiction, and all cinematic fictions are tightened, more or less forcefully, by this knot of disavowal which ceaselessly starts and starts again with the continual *petitio principii* of the 'impression of reality'. The capturing power of a fiction, whether the fiction of the analogical reproduction of the visible or the fictions of cinematic narrative, depends always on its self-designation as such, on the fact that its fictive character is known and recognised from the start, that it presents itself as an artificial arrangement, that it does not hide that it is above all an apparatus of deception and thus that it postulates a spectator who is not easily but *difficultly* deceivable, not a spectator who is blindly condemned to fascination but one who is complicit, willing to 'go along'.

Fictional deceptions, contrary to many other systems of illusions, are interesting in that they can function only from the clear designation of their deceptive character. There is no uncertainty, no mistake, no misunderstanding or manipulation. There is ambivalence, play. The spectacle is always a game, requiring the spectators' participation not as 'passive', 'alienated' consumers, but as players, accomplices, masters of the game even if they are also what is at stake. It is necessary to suppose spectators to be total imbeciles, completely alienated social beings, in order to believe that they are thoroughly deceived and deluded by simulacra. Different in this to ideological and political representations, spectatorial representations declare their existence as simulacrum and, on that contractual basis, invite the spectator to use the simulacrum to fool him or herself. Never 'passive', the spectator, works. But that work is not only a work of decipherment, reading, elaboration of signs. It is first of all and just as much, if not more, to play the game, to fool him or herself out of pleasure, and in spite of those knowledges which reinforce his or her position of non-fool; it is to maintain – if the spectacle, its play make it possible – the mechanism of disavowal at its highest level of intensity. The more one knows, the more difficult it is to believe, and the more it is worth it to manage to.

If there is in iconic analogy as operative in cinema the contradictory work of difference, non-similitude, false repetition which at once found and limit the deception, then it is the whole edifice of cinematic representation that finds itself affected with a fundamental lack: the negative index, the restriction the disavowal of which is the symptom and which it tries to fill while at the same time displaying it. More than the representative apparatuses that come before it (theatre, painting, photography, etc.), cinema – precisely because it effects a greater approximation to the analogical reproduction of the visible, because it is carried along by that 'realist vocation' so dear to Bazin – is no doubt more profoundly, more decisively undermined than those other apparatuses by everything that separates the real from the representable and even the visible from the represented. It is what resists cinematic representation, limiting it on all sides and from within, which constitutes equally its force; what makes it falter makes it go.

The cinematic image grasps only a small part of the visible; and it is a grasp which – provisional, contracted, fragmentary – bears in it its impossibility. At the same time, film images are only a small part in the multiplicity of the visible, even if they tend by their accumulation to cover it. Every image is thus doubly racked by disillusion: from within itself as machine for simulation, mechanical and deathly reproduction of the living; from without as single image only, and not all images, in that what fills it will never be but the present index of an absence, of the lack of another image. Yet it is also, of course, this structuring disillusion which offers the offensive strength of cinematic representation and allows it to work against the completing, reassuring, mystifying representations of ideology. It is that strength that is needed, and that work of disillusion, if cinematic representation is to do something other than pile visible on visible, if it is, in certain rarer flashes, to produce in our sight the very blindness which is at the heart of this visible.

NOTES

1. See 'Technique et idéologie', *Cahiers du cinéma* no. 229 (May–June 1971), pp. 9–15; translation 'Technique and ideology: camera, perspective, depth of field', *Film Reader* no. 2 (1977), pp. 132–8.
2. Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), pp. 126–7.

3. With M. Pleyne – 'Economique, idéologique, formel' (interview), *Cinéthique* no. 3 (1969) – the focus of attention is voluntarily and *first of all* on one of the component elements of the camera, the *lens*. For J.-P. Lebel – *Cinéma et idéologie* (Paris: Editions sociales, 1971), chapter I – who cites the phenomenon of 'persistence of vision', the reference-Science, constantly invoked, is *geometrical optics*: the laws of the propagation of light.
4. Serge Daney, 'Sur Salador', *Cahiers du cinéma* no. 222 (July 1970), p. 39.
5. In the general readjustment of codes of cinematic 'realism' produced in Hollywood (according, of course, to its ideological and economic norms and objectives: for its profit and for that of bourgeois ideology) by the coming of sound, the codes of the strictly photographic 'realism' of the filmic image are re-defined specifically (but not exclusively) in relation to the increasingly important place occupied by the photographic image in bourgeois societies in relation to mass consumption. This place has something to do with that of gold (of the fetish): the photo is the money of the 'real' (of 'life') assures its convenient circulation and appropriation. Thereby, the photo is unanimously consecrated as general equivalent for, standard of, all 'realism': the cinematic image could not, without losing its 'power' (the power of its 'credibility'), not align itself with the photographic norms. The 'strictly technical' level of the improvements of optical apparatus and emulsions is thus totally programmed by the ideology of the 'realistic' reproduction of the world at work in the constitution of the photographic image as the 'objective representation' *par excellence*. Ideology system of coding, which in its turn that image renews.



PLATE 8 The Chaconadey Sisters