projection) is nothing but a technical detail, which does not concern the nature of the procedure. There is, then, a difference in principle between the recording of visual motion and the immobile images of photography, painting, or sculpture. Film is more than a variation of the immobile image, obtained by multiplication: it is fundamentally new and different.

1934

MOTION

The motion picture specializes in presenting events. It shows changes in time. This preference is explained by the nature of the medium. A motion picture in itself is an event: it looks different every moment, whereas there is no such temporal progress in a painting or sculpture. Motion being one of its outstanding properties, the film is required by aesthetic law to use and interpret motion.

The technically most characteristic motion of the cinematographic process, however, must not be counted among the means of expression of which the motion picture profits: the displacement of the film strip in the camera and in the projector is not experienced directly by the audience. It is simply the mechanical means of creating the illusion of motion on the screen; also, the speed of the film strip in the camera as compared with the speed of projection indirectly determines the speed of the movements seen by the spectator. But the beat of the intermittent motion in the camera and the projector has no bearing upon the aesthetic rhythm of the picture.

Motion as it is actually experienced by the audience relies on the following factors: (1) the movements of the objects, alive or dead, that are photographed by the camera; (2) the effect of perspective and of the

distance of the camera from the object; (3) the effect of the moving camera; (4) the synthesis of individual scenes, accomplished by montage, in an over-all composition of motion; (5) the interaction of movements that are put next to each other by montage.

Motion not only serves to inform the audience of the events that make up the story. It is also highly expressive. When we watch a mother putting her child to bed we not only understand what is going on but also learn from the calm or hasty, smooth or fumbling, energetic or weak, sure or hesitant gestures of the mother what kind of person she is, how she feels at the particular moment, and what her relationship is to her child. The contrast between the irrational struggling of the infant and the controlled behavior of the mother may produce a counterpoint of visual motion, which determines the expression of the scene at least as effectively as do the more static factors of how mother and child look and in what kind of setting the action takes place.

It is the task of the actors and the director to emphasize the expressive qualities of motion and thereby to define the character of the entire film as well as that of the single scene and the single shot. In the same manner the various personalities in their similarities and differences will be defined visually. Even on the stage, motion is thus exploited artistically; but this is all the more true for film, where things appear closer and sharper and where the direction and speed of each motion is set off clearly by the narrow rectangular frame of the image. If a given character or a given scene can be embodied in a musically articulate, impressive theme of movement, the gain for the picture

will be twofold: the content will be interpreted to the eye, and the appearance of the moving objects will acquire artistic shape.

On the stage as well as in film, the great actor is distinguished by a simple, characteristic melody of movement all his own. This is most easily seen in extreme cases, such as those of Chaplin or Keaton, where the particular dynamic theme can be defined with the precision of musical terms. (Compare here, for instance, the acting of their fellow comedian Harold Lloyd, who, not being a great artist, has no such personal melody of movement.) The common narrative film cannot stress the form qualities of gesture and gait to the same extent since this would not be in keeping with a realistic style of performance; but even there a good actor will clearly distinguish, by his motion, strength from weakness, straightforwardness from guile, beauty from ugliness. When in *Grand Hotel* Greta Garbo walked through the lobby with a springy, dynamic gait, she produced not only the most beautiful moment of the film but also perhaps the most telling characterization of the dancer, whose part she was playing. At the risk of doing an injustice to the most animated face in the history of film art, it may be said that Greta Garbo could give equally strong expression to the human soul by the rhythm of her gait, which, depending upon the occasion, was victorious and energetic, transfigured, or tired, broken, anxious, and feeble.

The films of the early years were less realistic and therefore expressed the various dramatic types by motions of graphic simplicity. There was musical purity and beauty in the graceful leaps of Douglas Fairbanks

and the heavy stamping of Paul Wegener's Golem. Unquestionably the greater "lifelikeness" of the later style has robbed the film play of much of its melodic shape. There was, in those early pantomimes, a dance-like quality, which was most filmic and should not remain lost forever.

Motion is not limited to the actor. In film, man is always an inextricable part of his environment. The environment shares in the acting and produces motion that can be more impressive than that of the human body. The stubborn resistance of a strong man to a storm is effectively underscored when at the same time trees are seen to bend, and the inexorable rotations of the windmill, which not only cannot be interrupted by Don Quixote but defeat him by carrying him off, symbolize the rigid course of the world, against which human rebellion is powerless. In *Shanghai Express*, the teeming crowds in a Chinese railway station serve as a contrasting foil to the quiet intensity of a love scene. The drifting of clouds, the waves of the wind over a wheat field, the onrush of a waterfall, the swing of a pendulum, the up and down of pistons have lent more impact to many a film scene than all the gestures of the actors. This is not surprising for the actions of the inorganic world have a grandiose simplicity, which is not easily matched by the complex instrument of the human mind.

The expressive quality of any movement is dependent on its speed, and by changing the speed of natural movements film can modify their character. Within narrow limits the cameramen of the old school, who operated their cameras by turning the crank, would subtly correct movements by slowing them

down or speeding them up according to the wishes of the director. A hasty gesture could be made smoother, a fast action more clearly visible; and on the other hand, vigor could be added to a sluggish thrust. This flexibility of the camera speed was lost when the sound film standardized the number of frames to be exposed per second; and ever since, this opportunity of correcting the shape of motion has been neglected. More fundamental changes are, of course, accomplished through the special devices for slow motion and acceleration.

Movement that looks natural in reality tends to be too fast on the screen—presumably because film shows most of the action from relatively close quarters. The nearer we are to the motion, the larger is the area of our visual field that it crosses and the faster it appears correspondingly. The experienced actor in the studio seems unnaturally slow, and close-ups in particular must be acted at reduced speed. This psychological requirement was not acknowledged in the early days: things happened with theatrical velocity, and the haste of the gestures tends to look ludicrous now. The effect of distance upon the speed of perceived motion can also be studied from the front rows of the motion-picture theater: when the screen covers a large area of the visual field, movements extend over relatively long distances and therefore look fast.

Rhythm is closely related to motion. Repetition, for example, exerts its spell in the movies as it does in nature, witness the visual intensity of scenes showing marching soldiers, men at work, engines, or kicking choruses. But it is not sufficient to discuss only the motions of objects in themselves. The way these mo-

tions appear on the screen is considerably influenced by the technique of recording and combining them. The particular angle at which the camera captures the object will influence movement, not only because speed depends upon distance but also because perspective foreshortening will diminish the path of the movement, that is, increase visual speed. Oblique shots, therefore, will often intensify movement, thus adding the dynamics of velocity to that of slanted position.

Furthermore, any displacement of the camera produces and modifies movement. Traveling shots show objects in illusory movement, even though reason tries to remind us that they actually are immobile. Objects that are at different distances from the camera appear displaced with regard to each other when their picture is taken, for instance, from a moving train; and objects will appear to go faster, more slowly, or stand still, depending on the direction and speed of the moving camera.

After a scene has been taken, the motions it records undergo further modifications in the cutting room. A section of a movement, cut from its original context, is likely to change its quality, and the combination of movements in montage causes a good deal of mutual interference. Movements that oppose and thus balance each other are often shown together: in the first scene a train travels from the left to the right, in the second a door closes from the right to the left. Or the parallel directions of two movements are used to suggest a comparison between the two scenes. Again, an action seems slowed down when it is flanked by faster ones; and vice versa. Excessive contrast may break the continuity. Good editing will provide enough variety of speed, direction, and location of movement, but at the same time preserve the necessary unity. Any sequence should have a clearly defined pattern of movement, be it that the increasing speed of the scenes that follow each other builds up a crescendo, or that the controlled succession of fast and slow units creates a definite rhythm.

Montage influences speed in that motion looks the faster, the shorter the time of its exposure. When short pieces follow each other in rapid succession, intense dynamics result, which may suit a dramatic episode but may have to be smoothed by dissolves otherwise.

Since visual movement is action that takes place in the course of time it has an affinity with music and is influenced by it. Music can underscore the dynamic character of movement on the screen most effectively, as shown, for instance, in the whistles, signs, and thuds of the animated cartoon. Music also tends to give wings to motion and therefore may help to recapture some of the dancelike stylization that got lost when the pictures began to emulate nature too closely.

cense; but no one will miss the stimulus. Sensations of smell, equilibrium, or touch are, of course, never conveyed in a film through direct stimuli, but are suggested indirectly through sight. Thence arises the important rule that it is improper to make films of occurrences whose central features cannot be expressed visually. Of course a revolver shot might occur as the central point of a silent film; a clever director could afford to dispense with the actual noise of the shot. It is enough for the spectator to see the revolver being fired and possibly to see the wounded man fall. In Josef von Sternberg's *The Docks of New York* a shot is very cleverly made visible by the sudden rising of a flock of scared birds.

2 *The Making of a Film*

It has been shown above that the images we receive of the physical world differ from those on the movie screen. This was done in order to refute the assertion that film is nothing but the feeble mechanical reproduction of real life. The analysis has furnished us with the data from which we can hope to derive now the principles of film art.

By its very nature, of course, the motion picture tends to satisfy the desire for faithful reports about curious, characteristic, exciting things going on in this world of ours. The first sensation provided by film in its early music-hall days was to depict everyday things in a lifelike fashion on the screen. People were greatly thrilled by the sight of a locomotive approaching at top speed or the emperor in person riding down *Unter den Linden*. In those days, the pleasure given by film derived almost entirely from the subject matter. A film art developed only gradually when the movie makers began consciously or unconsciously to cultivate the peculiar possibilities of cinematographic technique and to apply them toward the creation of artistic productions. To what extent the use of these means of expression affects the large audiences remains a moot question. Certainly box-office success depends even now much more on what is shown than on whether it is shown artistically.

The film producer himself is influenced by the strong resemblance of his photographic material to reality. As distinguished from the tools of the sculptor and the painter, which by themselves produce nothing resembling nature, the camera starts to turn and a likeness of the real world results mechanically. There is serious danger that the film maker will rest content with such shapeless reproduction. In order that the film artist may create a work of art it is important that he consciously stress the peculiarities of his medium. This, however, should be done in such a manner that the character of the objects represented should not thereby be destroyed but rather strengthened, concentrated, and interpreted. Our next task will be to bring examples to show how the various peculiarities of film material can be, and have been, used to achieve artistic effects.

ARTISTIC USE OF PROJECTIONS UPON A PLANE SURFACE

In an earlier section I showed what conditions arise from the fact that in a photographic representation

three-dimensional bodies and spaces are projected on a two-dimensional plane, that is, the surface of the picture. It was first demonstrated that an object can be reproduced characteristically or otherwise according to what view of it is chosen. When film art was in its infancy, nobody paid much attention to the subleties of these problems. The camera was stationed well in front of the people to be photographed in order that their faces and movements might be easily seen. If a house was to be shown, the cameraman placed himself straight in front of it at such a distance that nothing would be left out of the picture. It was only gradually that the particular effects that can be achieved by means of perspective projection were realized.

In Chaplin's film *The Immigrant* the opening scene shows a boat rolling horribly and all the passengers being seasick. They stagger to the side of the ship pressing their hands to their mouths. Then comes the first shot of Charlie Chaplin: he is seen hanging over the side with his back to the audience, his head well down, his legs kicking wildly—everyone thinks the poor devil is paying his toll to the sea. Suddenly Charlie pulls himself up, turns round and shows that he has hooked a large fish with his walking stick. The effect of surprise is achieved by making use of the fact that the spectator will be looking at the situation from a certain definite position. The idea underlying the scene is no longer "a man is doing such and such a thing, for example, he is fishing or being sick," but "a man is doing this and that, *and* at the same time the spectator is watching him from a particular station point." The element of surprise exists only when the

scene is watched from one particular position. If the scene had been taken from the waterside, the audience would have realized at once that Charlie was not being sick but was fishing; and hence the wrong idea would not have first been implanted. The invention is no longer concerned merely with the subject matter but is cinematographic inasmuch as a definite feature of film technique is being used as a means to secure an effect.

It is in the nature of such a scene that what is happening should not be obvious to the audience. In order to obtain a special effect the artist works exactly contrary to the principle of "the most characteristic view." In Dupont's *Vaudeville* the first appearance of the central character is planned on much the same principle. The convict Jannings is seated opposite the examining magistrate; his face is not yet visible, only his broad back can be seen with a large numeral sewed to his coat. Thus with the help of a pictorial symbol an idea which in itself is abstract, purely intellectual, and unvisual—"This is only one of a crowd, not an individual but simply a number"—is made manifest. In a film planned on more fantastic lines the convict might have been shown without a head and in place of the head a number floating above the trunk—as is sometimes done in caricatures (a businessman's body surmounted by a dollar sign instead of a human head). What is arresting, however, in Dupont's scene is that in order to symbolize the abstract it was not found necessary to interfere with reality. An entirely natural view, justified by the action, was chosen, and the desired effect was obtained purely by taking the shot from a particular angle—an unforced, specific occur-

rence, the view so chosen and so recorded that it was typical and symbolic.

Thus the conditions under which the picture is taken (in our example, the choice of a particular angle of approach) are not treated as negligible quantities or necessary evils, but are consciously brought into relief as factors contributing to the composition of the picture. The artistic effect is, indeed, achieved precisely by using them. The episode "Conversation between magistrate and convict" in itself is distinguished from the reproduction of this episode by the particular standpoint from which the reproduction was made. It had to be selected definitely out of a hundred visual possibilities. But this very "limitation" yields the artistic opportunity of making the particular pictured event convey an idea.

The present attempt to make a systematic analysis must not be taken as a psychological description of how this scene was invented. In other words, it must not be taken to mean that Dupont's mental process was something like this: "I must have a symbolic representation of a convict as nothing but a number. What method shall I use to produce this effect? Ah! The camera angle . . . let me think . . ." It may have happened the other way around. The director may accidentally have seen the convict from the back and thus have lit on the happy idea. We are here concerned only with analyzing the finished work and studying its effects.

In the Russian films—other people have copied the idea—the domineering forcefulness of a character is often expressed by taking the shot from the worm's-eye view. An iron captain of industry or a general—the

camera looks up at him as at a mountain. Here again the fact that the actor has to be taken from some particular point of view is not handled perfunctorily but is consciously exploited: the perspective angle acquires meaning, a virtue is made of necessity.

A twofold effect can be produced by a clever position of the camera. If an artistic impression is to be achieved, this double effect is necessary; and must not only show the subject in characteristic fashion but must at the same time satisfy the spectator's sense of form. To photograph an autocrat from below not only points the effect which the figure is to have upon the audience, but, if cleverly executed, it also results in an arresting play of form. It is unusual—or was until a few years ago—consciously to perceive such a distorted view of the human body. The hugeness of the body, the head—appearing very small because of the foreshortening—far away on top of the figure, the curious displacement of the facial structure (the way the tip of the nose with its two black caverns juts out over the mustache; the chin seen from below)—all this possesses a strong formal interest which need not imply anything with regard to the content. The strangeness and unexpectedness of this view have the effect of a clever *coup d'esprit* ("to get a fresh angle on a thing"), it brings out the unfamiliar in a familiar object. René Clair's film *Entr'acte* contains a picture of a ballet girl dancing on a sheet of glass. The photograph has been taken from below through the glass. As the girl dances, her gauze skirts open and close like the petals of a flower and in the middle of this corolla comes the curious pantomime of the legs. The pleasure derived from so curious a shot is at first purely formal and is

divorced from all meaning. It arises solely from the pictorial surprise. If in addition it had some significance, its value would be all the greater. The erotic element of the dance, for instance, might be brought into prominence at will by such a position of the camera.

Camera angles are often chosen solely on account of their formal interest and not for their meaning. A director has perhaps discovered some ingenious viewpoint which he insists on using even though it signifies nothing. In a good film every shot must be contributory to the action. Nevertheless, directors very often allow themselves to be led into violating this principle. They will show two people in conversation; they will take the picture from the level and then suddenly from the ceiling, looking down onto the heads, even though the shift in viewpoint brings out or proves or explains nothing. All that these directors have succeeded in accomplishing is the betrayal of their art.

In Carl Dreyer's beautiful film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* long discussions take place between priests and the Maid. This is an unfruitful theme for the camera. The real interest of these scenes lies in the spoken word. Visually there is little variety to be extracted from the endless confrontations of arguing speakers. The solution of the difficulty is surely to avoid putting scenes like this into a silent film. Carl Dreyer decided otherwise, and mistakenly. He tried to animate these cinematographically uninspiring episodes by variety in form. The camera was most active. It took the Maid's head obliquely from above; then it was aimed diagonally across her chin. It looked up the ecclesiastical judge's nostrils, ran rapidly toward his forehead,

took him from the front as he put one question, from the side as he put the next—in short, a bewildering array of magnificent portraits, but lacking in the slightest artistic meaning. This byplay contributes nothing to the spectator's comprehension of the examination of the Maid; on the contrary, the spectator is irrelevantly entertained to prevent his being bored by what should be exciting. Form for form's sake—this is the rock on which many film artists, especially the French, are shipwrecked.

The curious camera angles to be found in many recent films—adopted either with artistic intent or merely for their own sake—were looked upon as malpractices in the early days of photography and film. In those days anyone would have been ashamed to present an audience with an oblique camera angle. What are the reasons for this change?

The fascination of the early films lay in the movement on the screen of objects which exactly resembled their originals in real life and behaved like them down to the minutest detail. This attitude toward film naturally determined the position from which shots were taken. Whatever was to be shown was taken from the angle which most clearly presented it and its movements. The task of the camera was in fact considered to be merely that of catching and registering life. The idea that the manner in which this was done might be of value in itself or do the job of recording information even more efficiently was not yet considered. People were not in those days dealing with film as an art but merely as a medium of recording. "Distortion" was obviously wrong since it was not yet intentional.

Only gradually, and at first probably without con-

scious intention, the possibility of utilizing the differences between film and real life for the purpose of making formally significant images was realized. What had formerly been ignored or simply accepted was now intelligently developed, displayed, and made into a tool to serve the desire for artistic creation. The object as such was no longer the first consideration. Its place in importance was taken by the pictorial representation of its properties, the making apparent of an inherent idea, and so forth.

Another aspect remains to be touched upon. An unusual camera angle (such as those mentioned above) has still another result apart from characterizing the object in a particular sense and introducing an attractive element of surprise by the unexpected shapes which a familiar object can assume. Pudovkin has said that film strives to lead the spectator beyond the sphere of ordinary human conceptions. For the ordinary person in everyday life, sight is simply a means of finding his bearings in the natural world. Roughly speaking, he sees only so much of the objects surrounding him as is necessary for his purpose. If a man is standing at the counter of a haberdasher's shop, the salesman will presumably pay less attention to the customer's facial expression than to the kind of tie he is wearing (so as to guess his taste) and to the quality of his clothes (so as to know what his requirements are likely to be). But when the same man enters his office his secretary will doubtless pay less attention to his tie than to his facial expression (so as to know what sort of temper he is in). It is a well-known fact that many married couples do not know the color of each other's eyes; that people are ignorant of the very

pictures hanging on the walls of their dining rooms; that they do not know what the carpet on their floors is like; and that they have never noticed how their servants are dressed. It is indeed exceptional—apart from persons of aesthetic tastes and training—for anyone suddenly to lose himself in gratuitous contemplation, to watch his neighbor's hands, to examine the telephone for its shape, to observe the play of shadows on the pavement.

In order to understand a work of art, however, it is essential that the spectator's attention should be guided to such qualities of form, that is, that he should abandon himself to a mental attitude which is to some extent unnatural. For example, it is no longer merely a matter of realizing that "there stands a policeman"; but rather of realizing "how he is standing" and to what extent this picture is characteristic of policemen in general. Notice how well the man is selected; what a characteristic movement that one is in comparison with another, more obvious movement; and how the forcefulness of the figure is brought out by the shot being taken from below!

There are also certain artifices by which the spectator may be induced to assume such an attitude. If an ordinary picture of some men in a rowing boat appears on the screen, the spectator will perhaps merely perceive that here is a boat, and nothing further. But if, for example, the camera is suspended high up, so that the spectator sees the boat and the men from above, the result is a view very seldom seen in real life. The interest is thereby diverted from the subject to the form. The spectator notices how strikingly spindle-shaped is the boat and how curiously the bodies of

the men swing to and fro. Things that previously remained unnoticed are the more striking because the object itself as a whole appears strange and unusual. The spectator is thus brought to see something familiar as something new. At this moment he becomes capable of true observation. For it is not only that he is now stimulated to notice whether the natural objects have been rendered characteristically or colorlessly, with originality or obviously, but by stimulating the interest through the unusualness of the aspect the objects themselves become more vivid and therefore more capable of effect. In watching a good shot of a horse I shall have a much stronger feeling that "here is an actual horse—a big beast with a satiny skin, and with such and such a smell . . ." That is to say, therefore, not only form but also objective qualities will impose themselves more compellingly. It must, however, be mentioned that if this method is applied unskillfully it leads to the opposite result and may produce a view of the object which makes it quite unrecognizable, or which shows it so much out of character that the effect is not strengthened but lost.

It may be convenient to summarize briefly here what has been said in the above paragraphs:

It is a property of photography that it must represent solids "one-sidedly" as plane pictures. This reduction of the three-dimensional to the two-dimensional is a necessity of which the artist makes a virtue. It is the means by which he achieves the following results:

1) By reproducing the object from an unusual and striking angle, the artist forces the spectator to take a keener interest, which goes beyond mere noticing or

acceptance. The object thus photographed sometimes gains in reality and the impression it makes is livelier and more arresting.

2) The artist, however, does not direct the attention merely toward the object itself, but also to its formal qualities. Stimulated by the provocative unfamiliarity of the aspect, the spectator looks more closely and observes (*a*) how the new perspective shows up all sorts of unexpected shapes in the various parts of the object, and (*b*) how the solid which has been projected onto a plane surface now fills the space as a flat picture with a pleasing arrangement of outlines and shadow masses—thus making a good and harmonious effect. This design is achieved without any distortion or violation of the object, which appears simply as "itself." Hence the striking artistic effect.

3) Guiding the attention to the formal attributes of the object has the further result that the spectator now feels inclined to consider whether the object has been chosen characteristically and whether its behavior is characteristic; in other words, whether it is a representative example of its genus (for example, "a typical official") and whether it moves and reacts in conformity with its species.

4) The novel camera angle, however, serves not only as an alarm and decoy. By showing the object from a particular point of view, it can interpret it, more or less profoundly ("The convict as a number"). Here too, there is a special charm in that to obtain this result the object has in no way been changed or touched up, but has been left exactly as it appears in real life.

The projection of solids upon a plane not only implies that each individual object must be shown from

a particular angle, but the relative positions of various bodies, the way they cut into one another, must also be discussed. Physical bodies occupy a position in space; one can walk about amongst them, look at each separately. But if a film camera is placed in a particular spot—the traveling camera will not at present be considered—it sees the objects one behind the other exactly as does the human eye (when the observer is standing still), one object obstructing the view of another. And this limitation again helps the artist to achieve quite special effects. Let us take a notable example:

In Alexander Room's *The Ghost That Never Returns* the following fine scene occurs. A convict has been released from prison. He is seen going away from the audience down a long road between two enormously high stone walls. In a crack in the wall he finds something which he has probably not seen for years—a little flower. The flower serves as the (somewhat banal) symbol of nature and freedom, which he has been obliged to forgo for so long. He picks the flower. Then he suddenly loses his temper, turns about to face the camera, raises his fists threateningly, and shakes them in the direction from which he has been coming. And at this moment the camera leaps to a different position. The direction of view is exactly the same, but the camera is moved a few yards back and now is unexpectedly placed behind the bars of the prison from which the prisoner has just gone out to freedom. The bars now occupy the foreground, very large, covering the whole area of the picture. And through them the same scene appears as before—the road with the ex-convict raising his arms threateningly. This trick on

the part of the director is extraordinarily impressive—and most instructive.

The effect is achieved by skillfully making the most of the necessity of deciding upon some one "angle." Setting aside the film camera, and considering only the actual situation, it resolves itself into a barred gate, beyond it a road between two long walls, and a man walking down this road. Any number of camera angles were possible. The camera might have been put at the end of the road. The prison with its barred gate would then have been in the background. The man might have been shown going out through the gate; and the camera might have moved out to freedom with him. A bird's-eye view of the scene might have been presented which would have given a good survey of the whole episode in its surroundings. The angle which the director chose does not give any such general survey. In the first shot the prison is not visible at all. In the second, nothing of the prison is shown but the bars, notwithstanding that the convict has just emerged from the prison, which therefore is a vital element in the scene. It is nevertheless by this very means that the desired effect is achieved. Thus we see again that the artist very often chooses angles which do not at all give the clearest, most obvious, complete prospect of a scene.

Since the film director must decide upon a particular camera angle, he is able to select what objects he will allow to appear in the picture; to conceal what he does not wish to show, or does not wish to show at once (this is done by placing the camera so that the undesired objects are screened by other objects or so that they simply do not come into the picture at all);

to bring into prominence whatever he considers to be important, and very possibly would not of itself show its importance in the scene. In other words, the film director can emphasize objects—make one object conspicuous, hide another that may be disturbing or unimportant, without interfering with the objects themselves or altering them in any way. Moreover, he is able to move objects about so as to emphasize their relation to each other—a relation that may be visually obvious only by placing the camera in some one definite position.

In the first shot in Room's film nothing is seen of the grating, that is, the prison theme does not appear in the picture at all. The spectator sees the convict walking along the road at liberty, freed from the cell. And suddenly the man revolts and the object of his indignation—his imprisonment—is brought into the picture by a brilliant artifice without the necessity for a change of scene. (In many films a picture of the prison or of a cell would have been inset.) The desired effect is simply extracted from the given situation. The grating enters the scene to act as a partner to the liberated convict.

The special excellence of the invention lies not so much in that the prison theme is brought into the picture at all, as in the manner in which it is done. All at once the heavy iron bars of the grating cover the whole screen—the whole view. And these bars are gigantic compared with the man who is playing his part far back in the picture and therefore appears very small. A most convincing symbol of the tremendous power which he is threatening impotently and which still oppresses him.

The film artist who makes a virtue of necessity in taking his shots from a definite angle arranges the objects as he wishes, puts what seems to him important in the foreground, hides other things, suggests relationships. The man and the grating are actually separated by a considerable distance. If the camera had been differently placed, this distance would have been very marked; it might in fact even have proved impossible to get the two objects into the same picture. It is the particular location of the camera that produces the significant connection: man—grating. The grating, which might have remained quite unimpressive if some other angle had been chosen for the shot, and certainly would have remained unnoticed in its symbolic meaning, gains its dominant role from the fact that at first it is not there and then is added to the picture while everything else remains the same. It thereby brings itself into prominence and makes clear that it was not introduced without definite intention. It makes its entrance as if it were one of the actors. Here we see how the film artist quite definitely guides the spectator's attention, gives him directions, indicates the interpretation he is to put upon objects.

It is but seldom and only in the works of great film artists that such a deeply symbolic meaning is produced by such simple means. Usually the significance lies more superficially, sometimes there is none at all. In Pabst's film *The Diary of a Lost Girl* a pharmacist's assistant is seen kissing his employer's daughter. They are standing by the glass door of the shop. The scene is first taken from the interior. The camera is standing in the shop. The shot shows the two kissing each other and beyond them the door which leads out into the

street. Then the scene is suddenly shown from another angle—the couple remain in exactly the same position, but the camera is now outside the door and they are seen through the glass. There seems to be no point in this change of the camera's position. It signifies nothing. And things which have no significance have no place in a work of art. The reason for the sequence of the two shots is wholly superficial and decorative. It is attractive to the eye to see the same scene first from within and then from without through the glass panel—a pleasure comparable, perhaps, with that experienced when a composer presents a theme first in the major and then in the minor key. In music such a change of the mode must be justified by the total sequence, so also it must be in a film. Here the device is insufficiently motivated and therefore artistically weak. There might have been sound reason for using these two camera angles, if after the second shot someone were shown looking through the door and watching the scene from outside. This would motivate the sequence through the plot. The viewpoint of the action would have been neatly shifted by means of shot 2 from the interior of the shop to the observer outside, and the change in position of the camera would have been justified artistically. But even then the invention would be somewhat shallow inasmuch as it serves only to give a clever visual interpretation of the action and lacks symbolic depth. (This must not be taken to imply that every shot should be expected to provide the depth of the grating scene in *The Ghost That Never Returns.* On the contrary, the richness of a film composition is served by the varying degrees of profundity underlying the shots.)

In the two examples we have given, a connection is established by means of perspective between two features of a situation—grating and convict in one case, glass door and lovers in the other. This requires transparent objects like the grating and the glass. In other cases, having one object in front of another may serve to conceal the latter. Three examples taken from three dissimilar films will serve to illustrate this device.

The following instance is very much like that chosen from Charlie Chaplin's *The Immigrant* and is in fact taken from one of his shorter films. Charlie has been deserted by his wife because he is a drunkard. He is standing with his back to the camera by a table on which is his wife's photograph. His shoulders are heaving, he is apparently sobbing bitterly. The next moment he turns round. The heaving of his shoulders reveals itself to be the result of his manipulation of a cocktail shaker. Thus the camera angle, which at first presents the scene so that the actual occurrence cannot be seen but only inferred, is once again very skillfully used. The opacity of most physical objects, which makes one body conceal the other from sight, would seem to be a liability for the film artist. This is true, and we shall later see how film directors overcome this obstacle. On the other hand, however, skillful use of this optical fact makes possible a game of hide-and-seek resulting in an unexpected artistic denouement. The revelation is especially effective because there has been no obvious concealment beforehand, no artificial suggestion of secrecy. There is nothing particularly noteworthy about seeing the back view of a man. One feels that one knows exactly what Chaplin is doing: he is sobbing—very naturally, too, since his wife has

run away. Hence the spectator feels quite confident that he has grasped the meaning of the scene correctly; the little man then turns round and the surprise "comes off."

In the crime film *The Mysterious Lady* the following scene occurs: Greta Garbo, as a spy, has killed a Russian general in his study. She is in imminent danger of discovery. Outside the door are some soldiers waiting to come in. The general is lying dead in his armchair. The wide back of the armchair is facing the door. Thus the dead man cannot be seen from the door. His forearm is hanging over the arm of the chair and can be seen from the door. The soldiers knock peremptorily. Greta Garbo sits on the arm of the chair and says "Come in!" The camera is now placed so that the spectators see the room exactly as do the soldiers on entering—the wide back of the chair, the general's hand hanging over the arm of the chair, and Greta Garbo sitting beside him with her face turned to the door, that is, toward the audience. The soldiers salute and ask for orders. Greta Garbo turns to the dead man and apparently asks for instructions. She then turns back and communicates these instructions to the soldiers. The soldiers turn right about and march out of the room. The danger has been averted.

In Eisenstein's film *The General Line* a poor peasant woman comes to the farm of a rich man to borrow a horse. The fat kulak is lying on a couch. The woman stands before him and addresses him humbly. He sits up. The camera is then placed behind him. His broad back is seen looming large and heavy in the foreground, finally blotting out entirely the woman who

is standing in the background. The whole picture is suddenly filled and dominated by this huge elephantine back. Here again power and arrogance are expressed by means of a clever choice of position. Through being placed close to the camera the back appears particularly large, fat, space-devouring. The peasant woman in the background is very small by contrast. Then an idea is suggested—"power obliterating helplessness"—and the woman disappears from the picture altogether.

In contrast with this is a scene from *The Ghost That Never Returns,* in which one of the prison warders comes into the director's office to deliver a message. The director's high armchair is seen by his desk exactly as the general's armchair in *The Mysterious Lady,* with its back to the audience. At first there seems to be no one sitting in it. But as soon as the warder begins to speak, a little hunchback man peers round the side of the chair—the director's first appearance. Although the effect is unexpected, it is also fairly pointless. This sudden appearance is nothing more than a trick on the part of the film maker; it is not material to the action, and it has not much more significance than if the director happened to fall down off the chandelier for no reason in particular.

A cleverly chosen camera angle may produce a vivid impression not only of an isolated object but of a total setting as well. At the beginning of Jacques Feyder's *Les Nouveaux Messieurs* a rehearsal at the opera is in progress. Such scenes have often been shown before and are usually uninteresting. But here is one among many (some of which manage to be effective by other means) in which vividness is

achieved by a clever camera angle. The spectator feels as if he were himself in the very center of the bustle of the stage crowd. How is it done? The camera is placed up in the flies among the machinery and looks down upon the stage. Up above in the dark the silhouettes of two stage hands are seen large in the foreground. They lean over to let a rope down onto the stage. The floor of the stage far below is brightly lit up like the bottom of a shaft. Other stage hands are engaged below in spreading out a carpet, and being so far away give the effect of dwarf figures. The rope dangling down to them is given in great foreshortening. Thus its swinging movement appears curiously cramped and jerky. The abysmal depth, the contrast between the brightly lit stage and the dark flies, the jerking rope, the difference in size between the darkly silhouetted men up above and the others below on the illuminated stage—everything contributes to make the scene startlingly lifelike. One seems to smell the dust and the cold air of the stage.

It has already been pointed out that the need for choosing a particular camera angle, or in other words of showing the various objects one behind another, often gives rise to difficulties. If, for instance, a man is to be shown standing among a group of people and talking to them, it is very hard to find a viewpoint which will give a good survey of the whole scene. Wherever the camera is set up, the backs of the crowd hide the speaker. One way out of the difficulty is to have the camera looking onto the group from above. The speaker is then seen clearly in the center with his listeners gathered round him. A picture taken from

such an angle can be found in Arthur Robinson's *The Night after the Betrayal.*

A difficulty which arises a dozen times in every film, and is resolved in as many ways, is a scene between two persons facing each other. It is desired to show clearly the facial expression of both actors. Hence each had best be taken full face. Unfortunately that is precisely what is impossible to do, for when two people are opposite each other only one will be facing the camera, while the other will have his back to it. Both might be given in profile, but this position is seldom interesting, and, moreover, does not give a good view of the faces. Again, one might use montage and show the two figures full face in rapid alternation, thus splitting up the scene one or more times by showing it from the two "best" viewpoints. Or finally, one can risk taking the one player from the back view only. A successful example of this solution is in the Greta Garbo film *A Woman of Affairs* directed by Clarence Brown. A father is giving his son a dressing down. The father is seen in dark silhouette in the foreground with his back to the camera, very large, very near. Sitting farther back, considerably smaller and in bright light, is the son, facing his father and the camera. Hence the father's face is not visible. But what he is saying can be conjectured from his attitude and gestures and, above all, from the play of expression on the son's face. This lecture of which the spectator is thus indirectly apprised "comes over" most effectively and vividly. Here is yet another example of a virtue made of necessity.

Other and quite different solutions to this problem

are found in Jacques Feyder's *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*. Two lovers, for example, are seen in conversation, with their heads close together. Then a close-up is shown in which half the picture is covered by the dark silhouette of the back of the man's head (the camera being placed behind him), and this head partially conceals the woman's full face, of which the remainder is seen in bright light. The bisection is most expressive. One seems to see more by seeing less. Again, the same two people are in the girl's dressing room at the theater. She is sitting in front of the looking glass making herself up. Her face is seen front view in the glass, and beside it that of the man who is tinkering with something in the background and stealing covert glances at her. Thus the spectator sees both at once in full face—although the two are looking at each other—which of course could not have been achieved without the mirror.

Léon Moussinac in his very useful book *Panoramique du Cinéma* (in the chapter on Dupont's *Vaudeville*) points out that the casual succession of clever and appropriate camera angles is an accomplishment of mature film art. Formerly the camera was, as it were, nailed down in front of the actors, while the director tried to place his performers where they would be most clearly seen even at the risk of making the picture somewhat lacking in spontaneity. He says in this connection: "It is particularly important and instructive that in this film the camera has not been considered in a single scene. The camera continually changes its position. The scene, the details, the expressions on the faces of the actors, are taken from the most telling angles. One never sees, for example,

several people acting with their faces simultaneously turned to the camera, as is common in the French and in many American films. Jannings' back is as expressive as his face. If we notice a certain mannerism in this respect, one must at least admit that this mannerism serves its purpose admirably. It proves that the most important and fundamental means of expression has been understood by certain film artists—to shoot from any angle so long as it is the most telling. We know that in film the fourth wall of the room in which the action takes place is not simply left out, but that the camera is brought into the actual room and takes part in the story."

It is easy to understand that film directors only very gradually arrived at making effective use of these means. We remarked above that the motion picture derived in the first instance from a desire to record mechanically real events. Not until film began to become an art was the interest moved from mere subject matter to aspects of form. What had hitherto been merely the urge to record certain actual events, now became the aim to represent objects by special means exclusive to film. These means obtrude themselves, show themselves able to do more than simply reproduce the required object; they sharpen it, impose a style upon it, point out special features, make it vivid and decorative. Art begins where mechanical reproduction leaves off, where the conditions of representation serve in some way to mold the object. And the spectator shows himself to be lacking in proper understanding when he is satisfied to notice merely the content: this is the picture of an engine, that of a couple of lovers, and this again of a waiter in a temper.