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PART III. Perspectives on the Centrifugal Screen

André Bazin's affirmation of cinema as the *art of reality* lays the foundations of what he would later on develop in detail as the so-called "centrifugal" force of cinema. On film, as in reality, no single moment prevails over another, because there is no ontological preference of one moment over the other: cinema and reality, as I have argued previously, are *ultimately equal*. The idea of a pregnant moment, reaching its peak in the "*catalepsie convulsive*"^{1, (i)} of baroque painting, is fundamentally alien to what Bazin describes as the "image-fait" of cinema. In his extensive enquiry into the relation between painting and cinema, Bazin pinpoints their fundamentally diverging ontologies as centripetal versus centrifugal, to which I will turn now. The world of a painting, Bazin argues, is fundamentally different from that of cinema: 'L'infinité d'un paysage de [Jean-Baptiste-Camille] Corot est une infinité intérieure à l'existence du tableau, elle ne saurait se confondre avec l'infinité de la nature sous peine (ce qui serait absurde) de s'y substituer.'^{2, ii} The space on screen is not an enclosed vacuum, but is instead fundamentally part of an 'infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.'³ Where the existence of a painting depends first on the frame and the canvas, the existence of film relies primarily on a pre-existing reality, to the point where in specific cases this principle entails the annihilation of cinema itself (cf. supra, **2.1 The Paradox of Authenticity: Bazin's Shark and Schrödinger's Cat**). In its most pure form, there is 'dans l'illusion esthétique parfaite de la réalité: plus de cinéma.'^{4, iii} Bazin's notion of

¹ Bazin, André. "Ontologie de l'image photographique." *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* Paris: Éditions du Cerf (2008): p. 14

With this oxymoronic term "*catalepsie convulsive*," or cataleptic spasms, Bazin refers to the necessity in Baroque painting to find in the instant the illusion of movement: 'sorte de quatrième dimension psychique capable de suggérer la vie dans l'immobilité de l'art baroque' (Bazin, "Ontologie," p. 11).

² Bazin, André. "A Propos de *Van Gogh*. L'Espace dans la peinture et le cinéma." *Arts*, Vol. 210 (15/04/1949): p. 7

³ Pascal, Blaise (1670). *Pascal's Pensées*. Trans. W.F. Trotter. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. (1958): p. 17

⁴ Bazin, André (1949). "Voleur de bicyclette." *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* Paris: Éditions du Cerf (2008): p. 309

the centrifugal screen, I will argue in the subsequent chapter, incorporates this dilemma between image and reality: the image is a fact (*fait*), a ‘fragment de réalité brute’^{5, iv} that exists somewhere in reality, even if it is absent from the screen. As I will argue now, this affirmation of the existence of an object regardless of its absence on screen is constitutive in Bazin’s extensive study of painting and cinema, through which he explains the ontology of film as centrifugal.

In this third part of my research, I elaborate on Bazin’s notion of the “centrifugal screen” via a selection of references to both painting and poetry in his writing. First, I will follow up on the Icarian analogy in the Myth-essay, by analysing a specific reference to Pieter Bruegel’s *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* through which I situate Bazin alongside W. H. Auden within a tradition of twentieth-century anti-war poetry. I then close-read the critiques of Alain Resnais’ *Van Gogh* (1948) as well as Vincente Minnelli’s *Lust for Life* (1956), in which Bazin develops his notion of a “new cosmology of film” and thereby aligns himself with Antonin Artaud’s conception of “mythic reality” and Georges Bataille’s studies on the painter’s supposed madness. In a second chapter, I further develop the relevance of Icarus throughout Bazin’s argument for integral realism via a scientific framework, more precisely the analogy he draws between centrifugal forces, gravity and buoyancy. In his critiques of *Le Monde du silence*, I have shown, Bazin proposes an excellent development of the Icarian origin myth of cinema (cf. supra, **4.3 Icare sous-marin: Freed from Terrestrial Chains**). Alternately subtitled “A quoi rêvent les poissons?” and “Icare sous-marin,” these writings establish direct parallels between swimming and flight, between water and air. In final chapter, I draw this analogy back to Paul Valéry’s *Le Cimetière marin* (1920), which directly informed Bazin’s views on the poetic interplay between reality and image, and subsequently his renewed conception of form versus content. If the myth of total cinema was developed out of a defence for sound cinema as a next step towards integral realism, I will here reconsider Bazin’s essay on stereoscopy, dating from 1952, from the perspective of the contemporary discourse on three-dimensional cinema as affirming the foundations of Bazin’s myth of total cinema. Rather than turning its back to realism, I will argue, recent 3-D films, *Adieu au langage* (Jean-Luc Godard, 2014) and *Every Thing Will Be Fine* (Wim Wenders, 2015) in particular, put 3-D at use to attain the integration of image with reality.

⁵ Bazin, André. “Le Réalisme cinématographique et l’école italienne de la Libération.” *Esprit*, Vol. 141 (1947): p. 79