

PAGES 070-124

MABEL PALACÍN

The best way to explain an image is by another image. In *The Right Distance* we see the idea of a fragmented imaginarium embodied by the character who weaves the images he is presented with into his actions. Because the narrative thread cannot be separated from its subject, each of us individually reconstructs our own imaginaria.

Through the readings of the images as interpretations incorporated into speech, gesture and relationships, collective and individual imaginaria insert themselves into reality. In the case of audio-visual media it would be – it is – the case of unconscious, involuntary, sometimes induced, readings; yet this iconic presence is incorporated into the actions and vital continuum of each individual who performs a (more or less intense) lucid or pertinent reading of the said imaginarium.

In *The Right Distance* and *Sur l'autoroute* a large screen is at the centre of the theme: our relationship with images. But while *Sur l'autoroute* places the spectator at the site of the production, *The Right Distance* transfers the production to the site of its interpretation, to the site where the images are viewed and experienced.

The function of the Chinese shadows in *Sur l'autoroute* is to make a clear differentiation between two types of images; On one side is the white screen, on the other the dark night. This is a technique of shadows as cinema's original model: its Protohistory. The work speaks to us of fiction and of the mechanisms of fiction. While the fiction narrates one thing, its mechanism reveals another. Two images of a different nature yet highly imbricated, for a shadow is intimately related to the body projecting it.

This then is the possibility of relating things by depicting them so that this depiction is able to express an idea: the possibility of being out of joint with one's immediate universe. But its very depiction it is also a reconciliation. There is a relationship between the characters and objects behind the screen, but this relationship is portrayed on-screen, so that the two categories of images are not separable.

There is an element of indecision when we approach the question of whether the images on the screen are there because they are the most real images or if, on the contrary, the most real images determine those that we see. The relationships between characters and objects is uncertain. This however is not a case of lack of communication nor the impossibility of meaning but of the provisional nature of the space occupied by relationships and the images' resistance to stable interpretation. Fiction as a means of negotiating with reality.

In *Sur l'autoroute* a house is the images' location, a house with neither roof nor walls where the relationship between the characters and the objects that make up their immediate universe is described in the form of a story. The house is configured by the objects as a whole and its limits are defined by where the objects finish. However, as the house does not have walls, these limits are blurred; it is not possible to say where the house ends and where the outside world

begins. The fact that some objects are outside the limits of what we term as the house adds to the idea that neither of the two spaces (the world of images and the real world) exist in a pure state.

Sometimes the children are boys and other times they are girls because the overriding interest is to emphasise the fact that they are children and are not determined by sex. Their great ability to adapt to changing circumstances relegates their being a boy or a girl to second place.

The children play the role of two, not four, characters. The fact that they are sometimes boys and sometimes girls further enhances their somewhat subversive characteristics. The best thing about them is that they can be both.

The objects help to define a space while simultaneously performing the function of being construction elements of the mechanism. In *Sur l'autoroute* the objects blur the limits of the house and enable the characters to establish relationships between themselves because such relationships can only occur through the shared objects and utensils.

In *The Right Distance* furniture and objects describe a garage, basement or storeroom converted into a dwelling. Some of them extend the screen, like pieces of images that have accumulated in the store room while others (a service lift, a radio) are only present as the noise they produce, thus forming part of the mechanism as a whole. Moreover, some objects function as signifiers, cognitive indicators: the goldfish bowl and the fishes' submerged life; the timer counting down in seconds and stills, measures time in images.

Like the images, some, occasionally rectified, objects become part of the explosive device that the character is making. As he makes the device, he experiences distances with regard to the images that appear on the rear-projected screen and thus recomposes the shot. He makes it possible to extract an image from its context and transfer it to another so that it seem to be something else, revealing contents hidden up to that moment.

The actor seeks the best possible position in the line of the camera facing the objects. In fundamental terms, if the angle seen on the screen is a close-up, the actor and the camera, which is an accomplice in the learning process, are forced to move away from the screen in order to obtain a credible scale and, on the contrary, the actor approaches the screen while the camera keeps its distance when the angle is a general one. Scale is thus conditioned by the background object, but it is also conditioned by the movements of the camera on the projection.

The camera learns from the movement that it sees on the screen. In the first sequence the character arrives in a city and a sort of garage converted into a dwelling; the camera is motionless and it is circumscribed with regard to the screen. After a time it responds to the movements of the screen camera and it begins to move from left to right upon its axis, yet without moving in space. Later it begins to move in space from left to right and it progressively moves further back.

In the sequence where the character gathers together the elements he will use to produce the bomb, the three fundamental elements (actor-camera-images) extend their behaviour to the two screens and begin to reveal a method that will enable them to travel around the space and progressively present where we are: movements of the camera on the screen give rise to movements of the camera on the set, movements of the camera on the set provoke movements of the camera on the screen. Furthermore the movements of the screen characters provoke movements of the character on the set and vice versa.

As we move thorough this space, the soundtrack reveals the real distance between the actor, camera and screen at each instant. The sound provides us a with description of space; it enables us to deduce, for example, that the character is in a basement below ground level with a window on the upper right hand side giving onto a street. We can hear sounds from the outside when the character approaches the window and when it begins to rain we hear over everything else the wheels of a passing car seemingly overhead and the footsteps, louder than the voices, of people passing by in the outside world. The soundtrack, a theme divided into two, needs both stereos to be heard to the full in order for the spectator to find the threads that connect this fragmented universe.

The actor seeks to strike the best attitude, the best interpretation possible..., an interpretation that expands the relationship and that adds a speculative dimension to the images, one that gives us no respite and does not give us a definitive position. He gives sense to the images while managing to take them for what they are: images. However he is not unaware that his actions will be interpreted in the light of the images, that the immense offscreen world of the images will provide readings of his actions. Fiction confronts reality, but reality also confronts fiction.

The Right Distance regards "distance" as a problem that is inseparable from the image presented: the right distance between the camera, actor or model and between them and the background, the relationship between the figure and the set, the relationship between technique and ideology, the distance between fiction and reality, creator and public etc. Yet what is the correct distance for linking each of these elements? Is there a right distance between them? There are several possible distances, but is there one distance that we can regard as being more right than another? And if there is, then... why? *The Right Distance* experiments with places and distances, occasionally with infradistances between fiction and reality, between the author and the spectator.

What happens when the people lodged at the two extremes of image creation are not exclusively author and spectator? There is also the chance that the interpretation of the images in their irreducible uniqueness is shared by both, even without the presence of the director or spectators, will open up a reflexive dimension, something that would broaden the living space.

In *Un/balanced* three groups of characters experiment with a strange network of connections that do not respect spatial limits, broadening the living space through close ups. The space that they construct seems more real than that in which they live.

Like the construction of the bomb, the construction process of the audio-visual mechanism has its foundations in the images' essential instability. This instability is heightened by the actor's presence as he places the unbalanced images between the continuum where they belong and the space of what is real. In transferring the images from the screen, the actor reduces them to a human scale.

We can talk of memory with regard to the screen on the right. Memory in the sense of flash-backs since it begins with the last shot and it is accompanied by a countdown. We know we are looking at the final shot because it is the shot where the actor is furthest away from the screen and also because the camera, which has learnt from the images that made it move, moves in sync. repeating the framing of the image on the screen.

The flash-back scatters the various elements of the story into so many other pieces that must be brought together to draw an image.