10.

CinemaScope

The Modern Miracle You See Without Glasses

The brand name conjures up a time when Hollywood bet on overstuffed spectacle—harem cuties, beefcakes wrapped in togas, and hoofers with Ipana smiles, all splashed across screens the size of billboards. For film buffs, the very word (double-capped) spurs misty nostalgia and murmurs about mise-en-scène. But you could reasonably ask, What's all the fuss? Despite Twentieth Century Fox's aspirations, the wide-screen process known as CinemaScope never dominated the industry's output. Some studios ignored it; others abandoned it quite quickly. Major older directors like Alfred Hitchcock and Cecil B. DeMille never worked with it, and those who tried it, like Howard Hawks (*Land of the Pharaohs*, 1955) and John Ford (*The Long Gray Line*, 1955; *Mister Roberts*, 1955), weren't enthusiastic. In Jean-Luc Godard's *Contempt* (1963), Fritz Lang, who made *Moonfleet* (1955) in Scope, famously pronounced it as good only for filming snakes and funerals.

Nor was Scope a proven money spinner. Granted, the first 1953 features, especially *The Robe* and *How to Marry a Millionaire*, caught fire at the box office. But soon each year's top five hits included only one or two Scope titles. Of the 10 top-grossing movies of the 1950s, only 3 (*Lady and the Tramp*, 1955; *The Robe*; and *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, 1957) were in Scope.[1] Scope pictures claimed a share of Academy

Awards, mostly technical ones, but only two films ever won Best Picture honors. Most remarkably, CinemaScope had a short life. Introduced in late 1953 as a prestigious brand, it was generally out of favor 5 years later. Ten years after it appeared, it was most widely used in low-end output like *Take Off Your Clothes and Live* (1964) and *Prehistoric Women* (1967).

So why still speak of it? Why devote book chapters to a technology that flourished about as long as laserdiscs? Why does the prospect of seeing a Scope print in 35mm draw cinephiles to repertory houses and art centers? Why do so many devotees, mostly middle-aged men, fill lovely websites with arcana about this defunct format? Why do judicious historians speak of a CinemaScope revolution? And why are students of film style fascinated by the look of Scope movies?

Some answers are apparent. CinemaScope didn't catch on as quickly as sound or as widely as color, but the emergence of the format signaled that widescreen film was here to stay. Once Scope was announced, all the major studios and production companies abandoned the 4:3 aspect ratio that had been in place since the silent era. The immediate stimulus to the switch was the 1952 success of Cinerama, a vast three-panel process for specialized venues, but the simpler Scope technology demonstrated that any movie could swell to awesome proportions. Most films would be made in still cheaper formats, usually yielding less overbearing visuals, but Fox's all-out push for Scope surely accelerated the changeover to widescreen cinema as an industry standard.

Although Scope faded fairly quickly, its physical premise, anamorphic optics, has remained an important filmmaking resource. Scope's innovations were the basis of the more robust and versatile widescreen system established by the Panavision company. Today many films are designed to be seen in the very wide proportions established by CinemaScope; the very wide ratio is considered a cool way for images to look. And cinematographers still casually call any image-squeezing system a "scope" format.

Granted, claims for a CinemaScope revolution were oversold at the time. Fox President Spyros Skouras called his new gadget "the greatest medium of improvement to the screen to date" and "one of the most remarkable feats in all the annals of industrial and artistic endeavor."[2] No less modestly, Fox producer Jerry Wald considered it "the greatest boost the picture business has gotten since it discovered sex."[3] But calmer minds have argued that Scope did significantly change cinema. John Belton, the foremost CinemaScope historian, suggests that Scope was "a reinvention of sorts of the cinema," returning it to its original state of overpowering visual spectacle. The peepshow and fairground gave cinema its initial appeal, which was sustained on increasing scale in the 1920s picture palaces. For Belton, CinemaScope becomes the last installment in film's effort "to recapture, through the novelty of its mode of presentation, its original ability to excite spectators."[4]

There are plenty of other reasons to study Scope. It's hard to understand the auteur theory as it developed in Paris and London without understanding the grip that Scope films had on young critics. The format—at once deep and flat, dense with realistic detail and yet as geometrically stylized as a frieze—epitomized the artistic possibilities of the contemporary cinema. After André Bazin had taught the younger generation the virtues of pictorial depth in the work of Jean Renoir, Orson Welles, and

Figure 10.1 In situations when some actors were sitting and some were standing, Cinema-Scope close views posed problems, and some directors opted to chop out a body, leaving a head at the lower frame line (*The Hunters*, 1957).

Figure 10.2 Godard seems to take this schema as the visual premise for this shot from *Pierrot le fou* (1965), which features one head at far left and a clone (actually a sculpted head) at far right.

William Wyler, the Young Turks of *Cahiers du cinéma* ventured to differ from their mentor. They sang the praises of width. Jacques Rivette discovered that the greatest directors of the past had laid the foundations of widescreen imagery by seeking

> a perfect perpendicular to the spectator's look. From *The Birth of a Nation* to *Le Carrosse d'or*, from the Murnau of *Tabu* to the Lang of *Rancho Notorious*, this extreme use of the breadth of the screen, the physical separation of the characters, empty spaces distended by fear or desire, like lateral units, all seems to me to be—much more than depth—the language of true filmmakers, and the sign of maturity and mastery.[5]

In a parallel gesture, François Truffaut's and Godard's anamorphic work can be seen as creative responses to the American Scope films they admired (Figures 10.1–10.2).[6]

Whereas a ponderous movie feels elephantine in Scope, many excellent films were made in the format, and it enhanced their quality. If some leading directors resisted it, others explored it. George Cukor, Vincente Minnelli, Douglas Sirk, Samuel Fuller, Elia Kazan, and Nicholas Ray, along with less celebrated filmmakers like Richard Fleischer, Delmer Daves, John Sturges, Joshua Logan, and Jack Webb, made superb use of it. (It seems that directors who began their careers in sound filming did better with Scope than those who started in the silent era.) We can learn a great deal about cinematic technique, particularly staging and composition, by studying how talented directors managed this distended image.

Just as important, Scope cinema illustrates how stylistic continuity and change can interact during a period of technological overhaul. When a new tool is introduced into U.S. studio filmmaking, it's usually shaped to fit existing routines. Filmmakers try to exploit the new device's unique features while still integrating it into standard work practices and stylistic functions. For example, when synchronized sound was innovated, it was quickly absorbed into the overarching system of spatial and temporal continuity that we call "classical" stylistics. The problems of filming sync sound—camera noise, unselective microphones, and breaking a scene into shots—were solved by an interim tactic, that of multiple-camera shooting. By filming with several cameras poised at distant spots, the director could retain some editing

options. Improvements in sound recording soon permitted a return to single-camera shooting, but in the meantime classical scene dissection was preserved.

The ripple effects following from sync sound affected visual style in subtle ways. The dollies and cranes designed for shifting the heavy camera around the set enabled filmmakers to use more traveling shots. Multiple-camera shooting relied on reframings, those slight nudges of the frame left or right, and even after single-camera shooting returned, reframings achieved a new prominence. Eventually the experience of multiple-camera shooting proved valuable for television. Today, most sitcoms and soaps are shot with three cameras, a routine stemming from compromises of the early sound era. Still, we shouldn't expect that a new technology promotes steady improvement, because each new benefit exacts a cost. The strengths of orthochromatic film stock were lost because filmmakers switched to panchromatic, which was better suited to the types of illumination required for sound recording. Nonetheless, the dynamic of innovation, recovery, and discovery allows new technical devices to be adjusted to traditional visual schemas, even while they yield unanticipated payoffs.

Like 1920s sound recording, CinemaScope challenged some established methods of making movies. We might say that there were both technological and aesthetic problems, but it turns out that in general many aesthetic problems spring from technological ones. One lesson of the Scope era is that the physical constraints of a new technology have stylistic consequences. At the same time, problems don't admit of only one solution. The "classical style" isn't an iron rule but a set of principled options, adaptable to different situations. By spelling out the range of craft choices that CinemaScope yielded, we can better understand how directors used the new format for storytelling purposes.

The Big Picture

Efforts at widescreen film date back to the earliest years of cinema, but it wasn't until the 1950s in the United States that the wide image became more or less standardized, yielding the formats we know today.[7] All widescreen systems alter the "aspect ratio" of the image. Most silent film images fill a 4:3 rectangle, yielding a 1.33:1 ratio. After the coming of sound, the U.S. ratio was standardized at very close to this (1.37:1, to leave room for an optical soundtrack). From 1954 onward, though, most U.S. films were designed to be shown wider than 1.33.[8]

There are three basic ways to widen the traditional film image. The least common is the multiprojection system, seen most famously in Cinerama. The system employed three side-by-side cameras to record a wide view, with three synchronized projectors being required to show the film (at an aspect ratio of 2.59:1). Cinerama made filmmakers appreciate the potential of widescreen cinema, but the process remained a novelty confined to few theaters. Although most Cinerama features were travelogues, two fiction features were shot in the format, *The Wonderful World of the Brothers Grimm* (1962) and *How the West Was Won* (1962).[9] Multiprojector systems survive today in theme park attractions such as the 360-degree wraparound screen in Florida's Walt Disney World.

Another way to create a wide image is to employ a film gauge wider than the normal 35mm. Though several formats were tried, 70mm came to be the standard wide gauge. (The film would actually be shot in 65mm, with the extra width used to accommodate the soundtrack on the release prints.) The first successful 70mm process was Todd-AO, launched with *Oklahoma!* (1955). This remarkable system employed unusually wide-angle lenses for shooting and ran the film through the camera at 30 frames per second (as opposed to the usual 24). The result was an image of stunning sharpness, with an aspect ratio of about 2.2:1. The other major wide-gauge system of the era was Super Panavision 70 (first used on *The Big Fisherman*, 1959). 70mm virtually vanished as a capture medium after 1970; only the USSR's Sovscope 70 kept it alive into the 1980s.[10] American films shot in 35mm continued to be released in 70mm blowups partly because of the superior sound quality offered by the format. Before their demise in the 1990s, 70mm release prints were usually meant to be shown at an aspect ratio of 2.0:1. Wide film survives principally in the IMAX format, which uses the 70mm gauge and the squarish aspect ratio of 1.435:1.

The usual way to create a widescreen image is by manipulating the image on traditional 35mm film. Most simply, the picture area can be masked. If it's masked during filming or during printing, the result is a letterboxed image on the film strip, with black bars at top and bottom. Or the image may be shot and printed full-frame, in which case it's up to the theater projectionist to crop the picture by slotting the correct aperture plate into the projector. In screening full-frame prints, projectionists have to watch out for microphones, incomplete sets, and other intrusions. In the unmasked 35mm frames of *The Godfather Part II* (1974), you can see the actors' marks laid out in tape on the floor.

When an image is masked, the aspect ratio can vary. In the early 1950s different studios and producers opted for various proportions, but eventually 1.85:1 became the more or less official "Academy ratio." It isn't always honored. My local multiplex has apparently decided to show everything at 2:1. Overseas filmmakers continue to employ 1.66:1 and 1.75:1 ratios as well.

Less common than masking is the use of anamorphic lenses to widen the image. During filming, the anamorphic lens squeezes a wide field of view onto the film strip; the result is a squashed image, showing abnormally skinny people. A corresponding lens attached to the projector unsqueezes the picture. CinemaScope was the most famous anamorphic system, but kindred systems were developed in France, Sweden, England, Italy, Russia, Japan, and Hong Kong. American variants included Naturama (developed at Republic), Vistarama (at Warner Bros.), and WarnerScope.[11]

Initially the CinemaScope aspect ratio was planned to be 2.66:1, exactly twice the width of the standard image, but engineering considerations reduced it to 2.55:1.[12] In adopting this ratio, the Fox staff sought to maximize the picture area by eliminating the optical soundtrack and putting stereophonic sound information on magnetic striping running along both edges of the film. But most theater owners didn't want to install stereo playback equipment, so some CinemaScope prints began to include optical monaural soundtracks. This meant sacrificing more picture area, resulting in an aspect ratio of 2.35:1. In 1956, all Scope prints began to be released in "magoptical,"

containing both types of track, thereby making the narrower ratio the CinemaScope standard. The 2.35:1 proportion remained the default for other anamorphic systems, most notably that of Panavision. In the 1970s, a thicker splice lowered the height a bit, changing the standard anamorphic aspect ratio to 2.40:1.

The other widescreen systems that emerged in the 1950s offered variants of the basic possibilities. The wide gauge was combined with anamorphic optics in CinemaScope 55 (premiered in *Carousel*, 1956) and MGM Camera 65 (*Raintree County*, 1957), the latter of which became Ultra Panavision 70 (*Mutiny on the Bounty*, 1962). Some of these systems had aspect ratios as wide as 2.76:1. VistaVision, created at Paramount, relied on running the filmstrip horizontally through the camera, making each image twice the size of the conventional frame. The larger frame area offered excellent sharpness, and VistaVision could yield prints in ratios from 1.33 to 2.1. The Technicolor company combined a horizontal camera path with anamorphic optics to create Technirama (*The Monte Carlo Story*, 1957) and printed the image in a wider gauge for Super Technirama 70 (*Sleeping Beauty*, 1959). For Techniscope, developed in Italy, the traditional frame was split into two horizontal strips during filming, each only two perforations high. Each wide frame was printed anamorphically as a single image at the standard four-perforation height, then unsqueezed in projection.[13]

Wider movies needed mammoth screens. In a period when many theaters housed screens no bigger than 16 by 20 feet, Cinerama's three-projector system induced shock and awe. Its minimum screen area was 3,000 square feet, and a width of 75 feet was common. CinemaScope aimed at an impressive scale as well; 24 feet by 64 feet was the recommended size for its high-reflectance "Miracle Mirror" screen. Even the compromise formats like 1.85 looked more imposing on bigger screens (although blowing up the standard image introduced new problems of illumination and graininess). With the new widescreen systems, studios and exhibitors offered a cinematic fresco that made the living room TV monitor look minuscule.

Cinerama was not the only technical innovation steering producers toward widescreen systems. The success of the cheaply made *Bwana Devil* (1952) briefly persuaded many studios that 3-D was the next big thing. The 3-D boom fizzled in less than a year, but the idea of immersing the audience was promoted by the backers of widescreen systems too. The screens designed for Cinerama and Todd-AO were deeply curved, and viewers found their peripheral vision stirred by these enveloping images. The CinemaScope screen was curved less pronouncedly, but Fox's publicity encouraged the impression that its images somehow attained high relief. "From its panoramic screen . . . actors seem to walk into the audience, ships appear to sail into the first rows."[14] Trailers and newspaper ads announced "The Modern Miracle You See without Glasses!" Fox soon gave up this fiction, but to this day, if a film isn't shot "scope" (i.e., anamorphically), cinematographers say it's shot "flat," an echo of a time when CinemaScope was felt to compete with 3-D in its power to engulf the audience.

Hollywood Cadillac

The industry's eagerness to embrace 3-D, Cinerama, Scope, and other novelties stemmed from immediate pressures. In the late 1940s the Supreme Court declared the U.S. film industry guilty of monopolistic practices. The studios could no longer own theaters, which were important not only for their box office receipts but also for the metropolitan real estate they occupied. Nor could studios rent films in blocks, demanding that exhibitors take the middling items along with the sure-fire ones. Now every film would have to be sold on its own. Meanwhile, war-weary consumers discovered cars, bowling, barbecues, suburban child-rearing, and television. In 1946, 90 million Americans went to the movies each week, but by 1952 weekly attendance had plummeted to 51 million. This translated into $300–400 million in lost ticket sales annually.[15] As operating costs rose, the studios' profits were sinking by 50 to 75%.[16] Producers were convinced that the industry needed fresh attractions to win back moviegoers. The success of *This Is Cinerama* in September 1952 suggested that big-screen spectacle was worth gambling on.

Even before the postwar crisis, producers had been seeking ways to enhance presentation. From the early 1940s, studios dramatically increased their commitment to color film production, while also researching stereophonic sound, wide film, and television broadcasts direct to theaters.[17] But Cinerama's success tipped the balance. In December 1952, Twentieth Century Fox president Spyros Skouras acquired Henri Chrétien's anamorphic lens system. The first tests of the lens convinced Darryl F. Zanuck, head of Fox production, to adopt the system immediately. Chrétien's best lens was assigned to *The Robe*, already in production, and a second lens went to *How to Marry a Millionaire*. Bausch & Lomb quickly revised the Chrétien design, and in the spring more lenses were available for three other productions: *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef*, *King of the Khyber Rifles*, and *Knights of the Round Table* (MGM). Remarkably, all were ready for release in the last 4 months of 1953.[18]

Skouras financed CinemaScope boldly, borrowing heavily from banks and mortgaging the studio, the backlot, and Fox real estate holdings.[19] The firm launched a massive publicity campaign. In the spring, demonstration footage was screened for the industry and short films toured Europe.[20] Studios, convinced that the future lay with widescreen, scrambled to release their remaining 1953 titles in masked versions.[21] Zanuck announced that all Fox-produced films would be in color and Scope, and in a memo to studio staff he declared that for the next year and a half, "intimate comedies or small-scale, domestic stories should be put aside." Every film would contain elements that "take full advantage of scope, size, and physical action."[22] This policy led Zanuck to withdraw his commitment to make *On the Waterfront*, a decision he regretted even before it won an armful of Academy Awards. Soon he conceded that the success of *Three Coins in the Fountain* (1954), a more or less "intimate" story shot in Scope, had changed his mind about what scripts were suitable for the widescreen.[23]

CinemaScope might have gone the way of 3-D if *The Robe* had flopped. It did not. Opening in Manhattan's Roxy theater in September 1953, the film took in over $3.5 million in its first 12 days, a New York record. Eventually *The Robe* garnered

Figure 10.3   Richard Egan suffers Cinema-Scope mumps in *Love Me Tender* (1956).

$25 million worldwide, making it the top grosser of the year and one of the highest-earning films of the decade. The other CinemaScope pictures released in late 1953 also did very well. Although Scope was estimated to add an average quarter of a million dollars to a production budget, producers came to believe that the expense was worth it. The no-star adventure *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef* took in almost $6 million internationally. By the end of 1954, all studios except Paramount (home of VistaVision) had licensed the format from Fox.[24]

The Robe opened in friendly territory, for the Roxy was a flagship venue of National Theatres, Inc. This chain of some 500 houses, headed by Skouras' brother Charles, had once been Fox's exhibition arm, and it had invested in the Scope system.[25] Although some exhibitors resisted the conversion to Scope, most circuits signed on. By 1955, when Scope was available in over half of U.S. theaters, it seemed likely to become the high-end industry standard.[26] "We want the public to say there never was a bad CinemaScope picture," Skouras declared, "just like they'd say there was never a bad Cadillac."[27]

For a couple of years, Scope enjoyed fairly broad support from studios. In 1955 Scope films made up nearly 20% of the majors' feature releases. Columbia released 8 titles, Warner Bros. 13, United Artists 17, and MGM 18. Many of these—*Mister Roberts*, *Battle Cry*, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, and *The Seven Year Itch*—scored big box office returns. The number of annual Scope releases hit a peak (about a hundred) in 1957. But problems were already emerging.

Some were technical. The earliest Chrétien lens had been mounted in front of the prime camera lens, and various Bausch & Lomb improvements, including housing both lenses in a single rather monstrous unit, didn't alter that arrangement. This severely cut down on light-gathering power. In addition, the "squeeze ratio" of Chrétien's lens design varied across the horizontal axis.[28] These optical tics created distortions and patches of soft focus. The most embarrassing flaw, created by faults in magnification and the uneven compression of the visual field, made central figures look oddly bloated. In close-ups, the result was "CinemaScope mumps" (Figure 10.3). Not all of the films credited to Scope were shot with Bausch & Lomb lenses, but other brands of anamorphic lenses tended to cause the same problems.

Enter Panavision, which began as a supplier of anamorphic projection lenses. Panavision's engineers solved the mumps problem by using counterrotating cylinders that adjusted image compression smoothly. Although anamorphic optics in themselves weren't patentable—hence the several Scope clones—Panavision did patent

its method of correcting lens astigmatism.[29] In addition, for some focal lengths, Panavision lenses had the anamorphosing element placed behind, rather than in front of, the prime lens, an arrangement that increased sharpness and light-gathering power.[30] First developed for MGM's wide-gauge Camera 65, Panavision's optical system crept into other projects. Most of MGM's anamorphic releases of the late 1950s were shot with Panavision lenses, although the credits still bore the CinemaScope trademark and Panavision was not always credited as a supplier. After Panavision's energetic 1958 marketing campaign, other studios took up the system.[31] In 1959, the Auto Panatar photographic lens won an Academy Scientific and Technical Award, and the staggering success of *Ben-Hur* (1959), shot in anamorphic 70mm with Panavision lenses, secured the company's reputation. By 1961, Panavision anamorphic lenses were said to be employed on a third of all the films made in Hollywood.[32]

Even before Panavision surpassed Scope, rival formats had won important market shares. In many venues, major releases looked better in VistaVision or Panavision. The emerging roadshow market, with its luxuriously outfitted theaters and steep ticket prices, favored the sharp, luminous images that VistaVision, Technirama, and Todd-AO could deliver. *The Robe*'s grosses were outstripped by returns for *The Ten Commandments* (1956, VistaVision) and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1956, Todd-AO). And the box office returns of *From Here to Eternity* (1953), *The Caine Mutiny* (1954), and *Giant* (1956) proved that serious drama in the flat format could earn more than virtually any Scope extravaganza. Did producers really need Scope to bring in customers?

Fox was in a weak position to recover the initiative. The studio was plagued by financial problems, and in 1956 a discouraged Zanuck left. His successor as head of production, Buddy Adler, cut expenses drastically. Adler forbade location shooting, permitted directors to print only one take, and insisted that producers reuse sets rather than build new ones. One of his economies rescinded Zanuck's commitment to color: now Scope films could be in black and white. Adler contracted with independent producer Robert Lippert's Regal Pictures to turn out cheap films shot with Bausch & Lomb lenses.[33] Lippert released 20 RegalScope films in 1957 alone. Adler's new policy also attracted Universal and marginal independents looking to add a touch of class to routine product. The 1957 uptick in Scope usage is largely attributable to the diffusion of black-and-white Scope.

Like Sony with Betamax videotape, Fox suffered early-mover disadvantage. Skouras and Zanuck had shown the way toward bigger screens and anamorphic image displays, but now Fox was saddled with an attraction that was no longer anything special; the Cadillac had become a Ford. By going down-market with black-and-white films and the RegalScope line, Fox further cheapened its brand. Most major studios withdrew their support. In 1958 Columbia released five Scope titles, United Artists merely two, and Warner none. Only two Scope films released after 1956 (*River Kwai* and *Peyton Place*, 1957) earned slots in the 60 top-grossing films of the decade.[34] By the time that films in Scope won Best Picture Oscars (with *River Kwai* and *Gigi*, 1958), it was a dying format.[35]

Figure 10.4 *The Last Action Hero* (1993): A micro-close-up gag that would have been almost impossible in traditional CinemaScope.

For the industry as a whole, 3-D, widescreen, roadshows, and stereophonic sound amounted merely to holding actions. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s attendance and box office receipts continued to plummet, eventually leveling off at around 20 million viewers a week. Those exhibitors who remained in business chopped up their theaters, offering patrons tiny screens, dim projection, and monaural sound. Most studios suffered financial crises, despite the cash coming in from TV production and the sales of film rights to broadcast networks. Hemorrhaging money, and bought and mismanaged by conglomerates, the Hollywood studios were beached behemoths by the early 1970s.

They were resuscitated by tax breaks and a new generation of filmgoers and filmmakers. Steven Spielberg, Francis Ford Coppola, and George Lucas had grown up on the overwhelming spectacle of the waning studio years. Sharing a gearhead sensibility, the Film Brats yearned for movies on a colossal scale. They embraced anamorphic imagery, 70mm presentation, and multitrack sound. *Jaws* (1975), *Star Wars* (1977), *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), and other box office triumphs paved the way for the multiplex of the 1980s and 1990s, shrines that fulfilled the showmen's ambitions of 3 decades before, but in a package fitted to the tastes of suburban adolescents.

A Lack of Scope

Today's anamorphic movies give us wildly canted angles, complicated tracking shots, and extreme close-ups (Figure 10.4). It wasn't always so. *The Robe*, *How to Marry a Millionaire*, and innumerable other Scope items look lumbering and archaic, largely because of constraints built into the first wave of the technology. The films looked just as stiff to professionals of the time, and they eyed the new format with suspicion. Delmer Daves recalled a panicky meeting of directors called by Zanuck at which CinemaScope was unveiled. Daves had deep reservations.

> Was this the end of the close shot or the two shot? What could you do about all of that out-of-focus space when you're on someone two feet away from the camera? Was all the intimacy of filmmaking going to be lost? Darryl didn't have any answers.[36]

There was no hiding the optical drawbacks of the system, especially on *The Robe*. It was shot with only one lens, a 50mm prime that had to be focused separately from

Figure 10.5   Steps that should be parallel are bulging in this shot from *The Young Lions* (1958).

Figure 10.6 CinemaScope made classic columns look bloated, although some set designers tried to disguise the distortion by adjusting the curve on the set (*Alexander the Great*, 1956).

Figure 10.7   *The Man Who Never Was* (1956): The officer on the right is made abnormally thin by the anamorphic distortion.

the anamorphic attachment in front. Director Henry Koster recalled that in looking at the rushes, about half the shots showed actors out of focus. Immobility was the best solution: "If we kept the actors in the same spot, the focus was all right."[37] Scope sets were bigger than usual, and the Chrétien lenses, even modified by Bausch & Lomb, were poor at gathering light, so cinematographer Leon Shamroy had to flood the *Robe* sets with intense arc illumination.

Early anamorphic lenses offered very limited depth of field (that is, the range within which objects would appear well focused), and they were at their sharpest when filming from far back.[38] Directors were recommended to put the camera no closer than 7 feet from the subject. Worse, the picture yielded some startling distortions. The central horizon line might appear straight, but other horizontals were bowed (Figure 10.5). On the vertical axis, columns, walls, and fence posts bulged (Figure 10.6).[39] In close-ups, faces in the center of the frame contracted Scope mumps, whereas in long shots, figures on the sides were pinched rail-thin (Figure 10.7). Areas that should have been in focus proved not to be.[40] For *Brigadoon* (1954), Joseph Ruttenberg used two men just to handle focus.[41] Because no U.S. studio cameras had reflex viewing, operators had traditionally lined up their shots with viewfinders mounted on the side of the camera. These suffered from parallax problems, especially at close distances: What the cameraman saw was not exactly what the lens took in. Scope made parallax problems far more severe, so cinematographers were advised not to track forward or back because the viewfinder couldn't "toe in" or "toe out" sufficiently to show what the lens was centered on.[42]

Bausch & Lomb improved Chrétien's design in 1954, particularly with respect to focus,[43] but the system remained inferior to the spherical lenses used for "flat" cinematography. Most anamorphic lenses remained subject to distortions and mysterious dropouts. As late as 1956, a cinematographer was advising Scope filmmakers to avoid horizontals, to block off verticals on the screen edges, and to minimize close-ups and wide-angle shots.[44]

Audiences didn't seem to mind the flaws, but the professional community boiled with complaints about anamorphic widescreen. Cinematographers hated it, and several directors found its proportions ridiculous. "If the CinemaScope size had been any good," Hawks remarked, "painters would have used it more—they've been at it a lot longer than we have."[45] Directors who used Scope skillfully, like Minnelli and Cukor, admitted a dislike for it.[46] Even those reconciled to the format complained about having to fill in the stretches around the actors, especially in close-ups.[47] Scope films included jokes about their slightly freakish dimensions. In *Gentlemen Marry Brunettes* (1955), Jeanne Crain wakes up wailing from "nightmares in CinemaScope," and when Jane Russell tips her head, from her point of view we see the Eiffel Tower fitted sideways into the frame. The prologue of Frank Tashlin's *The Girl Can't Help It* (1956) mocks the ratio, and so does a musical number in *Silk Stockings* (1957), in which Fred Astaire and Janis Paige assure us that to attract moviegoers, "You've gotta have Glorious Technicolor, Breathtaking CinemaScope, and Stereophonic Sound."

Fox anticipated complaints early on. Before *The Robe*'s premiere, the studio launched a publicity campaign spearheaded by directors and cinematographers who worked on the earliest Scope films. For a 1953 promotional book, *New Screen Techniques*, a string of articles signed by the craftsmen (but probably authored by publicists) sought to turn the system's limitations into advantages. Henry Koster didn't confess that he'd had to fasten his *Robe* stars into place; indeed, an article bearing his name claims that in Scope the director "has an unparalleled chance to demonstrate his ability to move actors logically and dramatically."[48] Are close-ups of single players impossible? Yes, usually, but Koster's essay notes that the big screen provides constant close-ups—"and close-ups not of a single person, but of two, three, or half a dozen simultaneously."[49] Are camera movements restricted? Yes, but now they're unnecessary. "Instead of moving the camera in to the actor to get a close-up, I stage their movements so that they walk into the close-up."[50] Do Scope films minimize cutting, as Delmer Daves feared? Yes, and that's a good thing. An article signed by Jean Negulesco claimed that now directors can't hide behind flashy cuts and must learn to dramatize good dialogue and performances more honestly.[51] In shooting *The Robe*, cinematographer Leon Shamroy discovered, even action scenes can be handled in "one smoothly flowing, life-like scene [i.e., shot]."[52] Although shots would run longer in Scope, Shamroy judged that "this won't be apparent to most audiences because any well-edited film seems like one long uninterrupted strip of film anyway."[53] The campaign succeeded with some film critics and theorists, who argued that CinemaScope fostered cinematic realism by minimizing the need for editing and by emphasizing what happened within the shot.[54]

Figure 10.8 Massive warping of space in the opening of *Around the World in 80 Days* (1956). The aberrations were less noticeable on the huge, steeply curved Todd-AO screen.

As filmmakers began to discover the format's drawbacks, it needed more defending. For a 1955 issue of *American Cinematographer*, the erudite director of photography Charles G. Clarke provided a guide for shooting in Scope. Fox republished the piece as a pamphlet to be given to workers at other studios.[55] Acknowledging that people have voiced reservations, Clarke's essay tries to revise the official line. He points out that the equipment has improved; there are now single-unit lenses in five focal lengths (from 35mm to 152mm). Longer lenses make close-ups more feasible, because the camera doesn't need to be moved close to the actors, but (perhaps granting the focus problems with the long lens) Clarke recommends other options. Instead of big close-ups, two shots are quite adequate in Scope: "The figure size of the 'two-shot' is larger than was the 'big head' on the older, smaller screen."[56] If you feel the need for a close-up, an over-the-shoulder (OTS) shot favoring the character will do the trick.

Clarke goes on to recommend how to shoot a typical scene, moving from establishing shot to medium shot, with the characters maneuvered so that the person with the most important dialogue is seen to best advantage. Instead of depth, use breadth.

> No longer must we confine the actors to areas forward and backward from the camera, but may now also use lateral movement. Spreading out of the action is what is done in stage productions, and indeed CinemaScope technique is like that of the theatre.[57]

Nonetheless, some untheatrical effects, such as views straight ahead from moving vehicles, can heighten the sense of "participation" (echoes of Cinerama and 3-D again). Clarke reiterates the 1953 line about cutting as well. Because the big picture approximates human vision, scenes can be staged with minimal editing. "I believe that it is more comfortable, interesting, and natural to the spectator if scenes [i.e., shots] are sustained and a minimum number of cuts are made."[58] In arguing for technological innovations, Hollywood's artisans have often recommended best practices, and Clarke's article provided a reassuring message that Scope could easily fit into established work routines.

Scope caught most of the blame for shortcomings in widescreen technology generally, with critics overlooking the fact that, for instance, Todd-AO provided distortions more warped than anything in Scope (Figure 10.8). In addition, as John

Belton points out, Scope began as an effort to imitate the shock-and-awe effects of Cinerama, and in that enterprise close views and cutting were of less concern than immersive spectacle.[59] Probably Scope's technical problems were exaggerated as well. As we'll see, close-ups and a degree of depth weren't completely off-limits in Scope, and late 1950s work shows a distinct lessening of edge distortion. The multichannel sound could assign dialogue, music, and effects to different areas of the image, so that the words spoken by a character on screen left would come from the left speaker behind the screen. This sound localization, quite alien to us today, could direct the audience's attention within the wide frame.[60] Nonetheless, in 1955 the Fox team took a conservative approach. It's likely that they weren't laying down an ironclad set of rules for shooting Scope but rather suggesting the safest approach; if people followed their recommendations, they wouldn't encounter great problems.

Undeniably, however, the new restrictions seemed to take away some essential tools. Directors and producers valued the freedom to track the camera into and out from the set, to use the crab dolly to turn in short arcs. Such "fluid camera" shots added production values, and if efficiently executed, they could save shooting time, replacing separate setups. Filmmakers didn't like being told to restrict themselves to certain movements, such as panning shots (careful ones) and diagonally tracking back with walking actors. Close-ups were an even bigger issue. Since the silent era, all directors wanted facial close-ups in order to provide an emotional accent, to punch up a drab scene, or to cover continuity gaps. Producers wanted close-ups because they showed off the cast and allowed scenes to be recut in postproduction. Actors wanted close-ups because they were actors. The industry remained skeptical of a camera process that couldn't get within 7 feet of a star. Who wanted "close-ups" of several actors at once?

One might expect that filmmakers would have been more receptive to Fox's championing of lengthy shots, because the 1940s had seen a long-take vogue. Although most films remained within U.S. sound cinema's traditional 8–11-second range, some relied on extended takes virtually without parallel over the previous 2 decades. At all levels of production, it isn't hard to find 1940s films with average shot lengths (ASLs) falling between 15 and 20 seconds.[61] Sometimes prolonged shots were flaunted as signs of showmanship or virtuosity. *Citizen Kane* (1941) and *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942) called attention to their long takes, as did *The Lady in the Lake* (1946) with its 24 shots, and Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948) with its 11. But in these latter two films, and in most others of the 1940s, the long take achieved variety through fluid camera movements. *Citizen Kane* had been criticized for its static single-shot sequences, and most directors preferred to extend their takes by tracking and panning. But no, said Scope's defenders; in obedience to this "theatrical" technology, the camera had to give up the fluidity of the past few years.

If the camera was to sit still, a great deal of a scene's import would depend on ensemble staging, and Clarke, like other Fox defenders, had recourse to the comparison with theatrical blocking. But his recommendations are characteristically silent on exactly how to arrange the actors in the scene, and for good reason. In addition

Figure 10.9 Although lining up characters in a row perpendicular to the camera was the most common staging strategy of the 1910s, *Assunta Spina* (1915) exemplifies one sort of depth that was also employed. The foreground plane is fairly far from the camera, making the action in the background quite distant. For other examples, see Figures 1.1–1.2 and 9.1–9.5.

Figure 10.10 A standard medium two shot from *The Mark of Zorro* (1920).

to restricting close-ups and camera movement, Scope initially induced a crisis in Hollywood staging practices.

Hollywood's visual style has its roots in the silent era. In the years from 1906 to 1915 or so, filmmakers in various countries refined a "tableau" cinema based in long takes. Usually the characters were arranged in a horizontal line across the frame, but sometimes the blocking moved them diagonally into the distance. Either way, there might well be intricate blocking to carry the drama across the tableau (Figure 10.9). By 1920, this system had been transformed by a standardized approach to editing. Cuts broke the scene into smaller bits and varied the camera angle. At the same time, though, the horizontal array of players remained the dominant staging technique. Although the actors might face each other, their bodies tend to be pivoted somewhat toward the viewer (Figure 10.10). The various close-ups, reverse angles, over-the shoulder shots, and the like took the viewer around this lateral layout, and the characters might be spread out further in the set, but even in long-shot framings the most common layout remained fairly shallow (Figure 10.11). Depth staging became rarer than it had been in the 1910s cinema.

Lining up the actors like clothes on a line is well suited to the building block of most narratives, the dialogue exchange between characters. The flow of conversation is presented with clarity and point, showing faces and bodies so as to highlight expressions, gestures, and bits of business that nuance the situation. OTS shots and singles of each player stress particular lines or facial reactions. This schema prevailed throughout the early sound era. Players are arrayed in the classic two shot (in the knees-up framing known as the *plan-américain*, or in a medium shot, as in Figure 10.12). When more than two characters are involved, the camera either shoots from somewhat farther back or crowds the actors closer together (Figure 10.13). Sometimes the actors stand

Figure 10.11   Even in a long shot, characters line up more or less in clothesline formation (*The Mark of Zorro*).

Figure 10.12   The linear two shot persists as a staple of sound cinema (*Jezebel*, 1938).

Figure 10.13   Several characters grouped so that their bodies, facing us, fill out the frame on a single plane (*Little Women*, 1933).

Figure 10.14   Stacking rows: A crowded scene in *The Thin Man* (1934) still obeys the clothesline principle, in layers.

in not one but two rows, one behind the other but still more or less 90 degrees to the lens (Figure 10.14). These "clothesline" arrangements, spreading several players across a perpendicular plane in profiled or fairly frontal views, became a basic technique for dialogue scenes of 1930s cinema.

I'm not saying that 1930s cinema was excessively static or "theatrical." Some directors exploited depth behind the main plane and explored the changing angles afforded by camera movement. During the 1920s, Ernst Lubitsch and other directors explored a more complex version of continuity, with the camera at the center of the characters' dialogue exchange.[62] In other films, large-scale scenes did allow the camera to penetrate the space more fully. In ballroom dances, sporting events, and courts of law, the drama unfolds in several zones, and the camera tends to be positioned in a space within those fields; we get a sense that the action is taking place all around us. Passages of physical action likewise display great freedom of angle (high, low) and depth. This is especially true of outdoor work, as we'd expect, because an exterior set yields greater choice of camera position than an interior one, and natural light permits greater depth of field. Even in big scenes and outdoor filming, however, the clothesline schema tended to be the default staging.

Figure 10.15   In the 1940s, recessional staging became more common, setting characters into considerable depth (*Caught*, 1949).

Figure 10.16   *Citizen Kane* (1941) made extreme depth staging central to its aesthetic; here Mrs. Kane signs her son away to a guardian while the boy plays outside unawares. This shot, like several in the film, was achieved through a rear-projected film of the boy seen through the window.

Figure 10.17   Depth-oriented directors could take advantage of the nearly square proportions of the Academy ratio to build up vertical compositions (*The Little Foxes*, 1941).

Another set of options appears sporadically during the silent era and the 1930s, but it becomes more prominent in the 1940s. Employing what art historian Heinrich Wölfflin calls "recessive" composition, a scene could be staged along diagonals.[63] Recessive staging activates depth, placing one character notably closer to the camera than the others (Figure 10.15). The depth can be relatively shallow or quite steep. Sometimes the diagonal option gives us two or more distinct playing areas. We may have independent actions taking place in both foreground and background (Figure 10.16). The layout may be lateral (foreground on left or right, and background on the opposite side) or vertical (foreground at bottom, and background on top; Figure 10.17).

This schema poses problems of visibility—if the foreground character is facing the distant one, then she's turned from us and we can't clearly see her face—so some compensations are called for. The most common fix is to let shot/reverse-shot cutting favor first one character, then the other, creating "stretched" OTS shots. Another

Figure 10.18   A shot from *Gun Crazy* (1949) exemplifies the extremes to which the deep-space staging of the 1940s could go.

Figure 10.19   The "baroque" side of recessional staging (*The Killers*, 1946). Such compositions can be found throughout world cinema in earlier decades, but they became far more common during the 1940s.

compensating maneuver is to turn the foreground actor toward us, motivating this as the character's refusal to face the other figure. The frontally positioned foreground character became a common device in 1940s dramas, allowing us to see what the background character can't. In either type of staging, the action can develop along the diagonal, with characters moving toward or away from one another, perhaps in zigzag paths as well. This schema is well suited to building suspense and heightening tension, so it's not surprising that thrillers and psychological dramas are its natural home.

Does recessive staging signal a return to the tableau schemas of the 1910s? No, because directors of the 1940s typically kept the foreground figure much closer to the camera than in the earlier era. In many shots the foreground figure is presented in looming close-up, and the background figures can be either distant or fairly close, packing the frame (Figure 10.18). In the recessive strategy, the amount of playing space is greater than in the horizontal arrangement. Because the camera captures an optical pyramid far deeper than it is wide, distance between characters can increase with depth. This yields the "baroque" extremes of size and position that we sometimes find in 1940s cinema (Figure 10.19).

As directors began experimenting with recessive staging in the 1930s and early 1940s, it became clear that planes so far from one another could not be kept easily in focus, especially if the foreground needed to be quite close. Most directors learned to live with this, either letting one plane drift a little out of focus or keeping the foreground fairly far from the camera. The "deep-focus" style heralded by *Citizen Kane* (1941) provided technical solutions: lots of light, faster film, coated lenses, exact diaphragm stops, and special effects trickery. Now one could have very deep shots and full focal range. Welles' flamboyant staging schemas would be toned down and normalized throughout the 1940s and 1950s.[64]

Once filmmakers started exploring diagonal staging schemes, they seemed to have realized that standard establishing shots became less obligatory. A scene could start right on a deep composition, then reveal the set as necessary. Although depth staging is

Figure 10.20   Small and rather cheap Warner Bros. sets are well concealed by recessive layouts of figures in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941).

Figure 10.21   A tight composition from *The Purple Heart* (1944). The precise alignment of props and players, particularly the foreground judge's head, is typical of post-*Kane* American cinema.

Figure 10.22   John Ford favored bold depth compositions from the very beginning of his career. Here Wyatt Earp in the foreground is about to slide his pistol down the bar to his brother under the nose of Doc Holliday (*My Darling Clementine*, 1946).

Figure 10.23   Films shot on color stock, which needed more light and didn't allow for great depth of field, continued to favor the clothesline layout (*Leave Her to Heaven*, 1945).

usually associated with big sets, having the camera hug the axis of action also permitted sets to be more compact (Figure 10.20). In general, 1940s compositions became tighter, as the urge to fill the frame created layouts that click neatly into place (Figures 10.21–10.22). Because the 1.33 frame was firmly established as the standard, directors could count on their clenched compositions being retained in most movie houses.

For all its popularity, recessive staging remained a secondary option for 1940s filmmakers. Most films continued to use variants of clothesline arrangements (especially in color, which did not permit great depth of field; Figure 10.23). Many directors adopted a moderate approach to depth, avoiding the most outré compositions and blending depth staging with more lateral layouts within a single shot. A film shot predominantly in the clothesline manner might include a few deeper compositions. Even directors who began in the 1920s and 1930s became accustomed to diagonal staging options, if only as an occasional resource (Figure 10.24).

Figure 10.24   Alfred Hitchcock experimented with recessional compositions after coming to America; this striking shot is from *Lifeboat* (1944).

Figure 10.25   The classic two shot remains a basic resource into the 1950s, as shown here in George Cukor's *The Marrying Kind* (1952).

Such was the menu of staging options in force when Scope appeared in 1953, and the ultra-wide format made mischief with several of them. By 1950, directors had grown accustomed to having the recessive staging option available. But CinemaScope seemed to take it away. No more deep-focus shots taken at vivid angles, with heads dotting the frame high and low. Now the entire frame couldn't be grasped as a single forceful totality. Criticizing widescreen processes, cinematographer Boris Kaufman asserted a classic 1940s premise: "The space within the frame should be entirely used up in composition."[65] It seems likely that Fox's staging recipe worried filmmakers because they had mastered the 1940s recessive schemas, and now those options were banished.

Instead, Scope seemed to push staging practices back to the 1920s and 1930s—the planar option of two figures facing one another, perpendicular to the camera. In shooting *A Star Is Born*, George Cukor complained, "Everything had to be played on a level plane—if someone were too much upstage, they would be out of focus."[66] Evidently referring to Clarke's recommendations, Cukor's art director Gene Allen recalled,

> Fox had given us this whole list of rules, like lining up your actors in a straight row, because of perspective problems, focus problems, and all. Well, Cukor said, "I don't know how the hell to direct people in a row. Nobody stands in rows."[67]

What's fascinating here is that Cukor and his peers knew very well how to direct actors in rows. He started doing it in the 1930s and continued right up to the advent of Scope (Figures 10.13 and 10.25). But he had also exploited recessive staging (Figure 10.26), and Scope threatened to banish that tool from his kit.

Worse, filmmakers couldn't easily return to the planar layouts because now these looked a little silly. Lining up two or more bodies in the 1.33 frame permitted, at the very least, an unobtrusive encounter of two or more characters at close quarters. But how do you compose the same encounter in Scope? Put them in the center of the frame, and suddenly this traditional array looks awkward (Figure 10.27). There's acreage stretching out on either side of the figures, violating Kaufman's rule of thumb about the composition utilizing the entire frame. But if you move the couple apart, you're

Figure 10.26   In *Adam's Rib* (1949), Cukor also accedes to the new impulse: A wife trailing her husband is caught in a sharply angled depth shot on location.

Figure 10.27   The "intimate" two shot in *Demetrius and the Gladiators* (1954). Compare Figures 10.10, 10.12, and 10.25.

Figure 10.28   A first meeting, rendered in another two shot (*Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing*, 1955) that leaves large areas to be filled with props and décor.

Figure 10.29   Clothesline staging with a vengeance in the soda-fountain epilogue to *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953).

creating a gulf in the center and turning an intimate encounter into a more detached one (Figure 10.28). Add more characters, and you're likely to follow the line of least resistance: an almost comical clothesline composition (Figure 10.29). The clumsiness of such shots is implicit in Cukor's worry about directing strings of people. Having taken away the deep-space schemas of the previous decade, Scope also made the traditional planar arrangements look embarrassingly artificial. "Nobody stands in rows."

Scope, then, seemed to limit camera movement and close-ups, reduce cutting rates, ban deep focus, and expose as artificial one of the most basic staging tactics. The new process seemed to have taken away virtually all of a director's visual resources. What were filmmakers to do?

Taming a New Technology

Directors responded to the advice of Clarke and his colleagues in ways as various as we might expect, given the cussedness of human nature. Some followed the guidelines, and some didn't. In the first couple of years particularly, many directors avoided close-ups and kept the camera well back. Others accepted CinemaScope mumps (did the audience notice, or care?) or somehow cured them. The climax of Joshua Logan's *Bus Stop* (1956) includes surprisingly undistorted "choker" close-ups that look forward

Figure 10.30   An unusually big close-up for early Scope (*Bus Stop*, 1956).

Figure 10.31   *Bus Stop*: A more typical ensemble shot from the same film.

Figure 10.32   The bank robbery in *Violent Saturday* (1955) makes ambitious use of edge framing. As a bank officer dives under his desk and a customer shrieks, one of the thieves stands poised at the right side of the frame.

Figure 10.33   The telltale eyeglasses in *Compulsion* (1959) sit at the very bottom edge of the shot. No director today would dare try this, because film projection varies so much from theater to theater.

Figure 10.34   As the officer in the center realizes that his rival has been promoted, we're expected to notice the new star on the man's shoulder, at extreme left (*D-Day the Sixth of June*, 1956).

Figure 10.35   Aboard the airplane in *The High and the Mighty* (1954), the characters are framed by the seat on the left and the stewardess's body on the right.

to today's monstrous faces (Figure 10.30). These have a powerful impact in a scene that otherwise relies largely on distant shots and deep space (Figure 10.31). Likewise, directors who worried about edge distortion placed their action in the central half or three fifths of the image. Now and then, though, key elements would be thrust to the very side of the frame, to create dramatic tension or to induce the viewer to scan the shot actively (Figures 10.32–10.33). Even Koster, once out from under *The Robe*, tried his hand at edge framing (Figure 10.34).

As Delmer Daves' recollection of Zanuck's briefing of the Fox troops indicates, directors were particularly worried about directing attention in the Scope frame. "We have spent a lifetime," Hawks remarked, "learning how to compel the public to concentrate on [a] single thing. Now we have something that works in exactly the opposite way, and I don't like it very much."[68] The most defensive reaction was to deemphasize the empty stretches of the frame. Filmmakers filled the holes with props or flanking figures, and blocked off chunks altogether (Figure 10.35). Fred

Figure 10.36 The lines of rowing sailors create vectors that culminate in Paris and Aeneas, lounging in the foreground (*Helen of Troy*, 1956).

Figure 10.37 The Scope frame broken into two symmetrical chunks by windows framing the characters in *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957).

Figure 10.38 Recessive anamorphic compositions could be built around tables and other set elements (*Battle Cry*, 1955).

Figure 10.39 In *Brigadoon* (1954), the shots spread out the mythical Scottish town in a fresco of dance and color.

Figure 10.40 *Brigadoon*: Once the adman protagonist is back in New York, however, the compositions are cramped and closed-off, suggesting stifling metropolitan life.

Zinnemann recalled spending most of his time "inventing large foreground pieces to hide at least one-third of the screen."[69] Other traditional devices might highlight an item. Lines in the set could link or lead to characters (Figure 10.36). Actors could be framed within corners, columns, and doorways, which broke the big screen into more readable modules (Figure 10.37).[70]

Some directors set up recessive compositions despite Scope's depth of field problems. Often sets create diagonals along which the players arrange themselves (Figure 10.38). Because horizontals warped considerably in Scope (Figure 10.5, above), filmmakers tended to shoot rectilinear solids from a 3/4 angle, which makes the distortions of parallel lines less apparent and also creates a deeper space, though not all of it might be used for dramatic purposes.[71] Minnelli's *Brigadoon* (1954) assigns thematic weight to alternative stylistic schemas, using very frontal clothesline compositions for the fantasy world of the Scottish village but presenting claustrophobic depth shots for the modern Manhattan to which the hero returns (Figures 10.39–10.40).

Cutting rates also indicate how differently filmmakers responded to Scope's proclaimed limitations.[72] Early on, several directors accepted the challenge of the anamorphic long take. Three Scope films from the inaugural year of 1953 boast longish ASLs: 13.2 seconds for *King of the Khyber Rifles*, 15 for *The Robe*, and 21.2 for *How to Marry a Millionaire*. This trend continued for a little while. Of the 68 Scope films I surveyed from 1954 and 1955, about a third have ASLs falling between 12.0 and 19.9 seconds, and this is a higher proportion than we find in flat films of those years. Nine more films have ASLs running over 20 seconds, a proportion not seen since the early silent years.[73]

Evidently, directors who had made the long take integral to their style found no reason to change. Otto Preminger had already become Hollywood's principal long-take director with *Laura* (1944), 21 seconds ASL; *The Fan* (1949), 21.8 seconds; and *Fallen Angel* (1945), 33 seconds. George Cukor, Vincente Minnelli, Joseph Mankiewicz, and Billy Wilder also favored fairly long takes during the pre-Scope era. So it's not surprising that several Scope films by these directors tend to have lengthy ASLs, coming in between 16 seconds (Cukor's *A Star Is Born*, 1954; Minnelli's *Lust for Life*, 1956) and 34 seconds (Minnelli's *Brigadoon*, 1954). Preminger's *Carmen Jones* (1954), running 35 seconds per shot, may well be the longest-take CinemaScope film ever made. Significantly, in their Scope long takes, these directors often make use of extensive camera movements, regardless of Fox's warnings to the contrary. The lateral tracking in the mess hall of *Carmen Jones* is only one instance of many.

Yet Scope didn't oblige all directors to give up rapid editing. Two titles released in 1953 are cut fairly fast: a 9.1-second ASL for *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef* and a startling 6.9 seconds for *Knights of the Round Table*. For 1954–1955, between 30 and 40% of the ASLs I examined run between 8 and 12 seconds. Most surprisingly, nearly a fifth of the films sampled for these years have ASLs shorter than 8 seconds. If quick cutting on the big screen made viewers uncomfortable, nobody told Henry Hathaway (*Prince Valiant*, 1954, 6.6 seconds ASL), Robert Wise (*Helen of Troy*, 1956, 5.4 seconds), or the animators of *Lady and the Tramp* (1955, 4.5 seconds).[74]

The dynamic of recovery continued during Scope's life span, as directors absorbed the format into more normal cutting rhythms. Really long takes become increasingly rare. For the 1956–1960 period, the center of gravity in my sample shifts, and two thirds of the films' ASLs fall between 7 and 13 seconds. Fewer films average longer takes than 13 seconds, but more ASLs come in at less than 7 seconds.[75] It seems that when Scope was introduced, long takes offered a line of least resistance, particularly given all the other problems of filming with the system, but from the start any filmmaker from any studio who preferred to cut frequently could do so. The same options, incidentally, were available in most other widescreen systems.[76] As the years passed, filmmakers working in both flat and anamorphic formats tended to accelerate their editing pace. In the 1960s, double-digit shot lengths began to become almost extinct in all Hollywood movies.[77]

As in the early sound era, artisans struggled to normalize the new technology, to throw off new constraints and restore earlier options. For many directors, this entailed recovering the look they had come to prize in the 1940s: tightly composed images, taken from high or low angles and yielding striking differences of scale

Figure 10.41   The brilliant southwest sunlight of *Bus Stop* permits striking depth compositions, such as this one showing the cowpoke protagonist tying on the scarf of the woman he loves, while she watches, in frame center, from the stands.

Figure 10.42   Elia Kazan cants the Scope frame throughout *East of Eden* (1955). Here it creates a dynamic depth composition, with Cal outside while his father and Abra wait at the party inside.

Figure 10.43   A low-key, low-angle framing recalling film noir for *Jubal* (1956).

Figure 10.44   *Tarnished Angels* (1957): A wide-angle composition reminiscent of 1940s style made possible by black-and-white Scope.

between planes. These were easiest to accomplish outdoors, where brilliant sunlight permitted even Bausch & Lomb lenses to achieve robust depth of field. Many of the most remarkable shots in Scope can be found in Westerns, in adventure yarns, in ancient world sagas shot in Italy or Spain, and in contemporary dramas set in the blasting daylight of the Southwest (Figure 10.41). Even under studio illumination, though, some depth was achievable. In the canted framings in *East of Eden* (1955), shot both on location and in the studio, Elia Kazan seemed to be trying to become the Orson Welles of Scope (Figure 10.42). More discreetly, Delmer Daves relied on the deep-focus look in both exteriors and interiors for his Western *Jubal* (1956), built out of deep shots reminiscent of film noir (Figure 10.43).

   Two other factors helped directors recover the 1940s depth aesthetic. One was Buddy Adler's decision to permit Scope films to be shot in black and white. Because black-and-white film required much less light than color, cinematographers could stop down the lens diaphragm and get sharper images with better depth of field. With color, Scope filmmakers shot most close-ups with long, shallow-focus lenses, but black and white allowed freer use of wide-angle lenses. The crisp, wide-angle imagery of Douglas Sirk's *The Tarnished Angels* (1957; Figure 10.44) would have been virtually impossible in color (as his *Interlude*, 1957, shows). The bivouac scenes of Edward Dmytryk's *The Young Lions* (1958) present compositions as tensely jammed as anything from the 1940s (Figure 10.45). Black-and-white Scope has a special following among cinephiles, perhaps because images like these announce the triumph of aggressive style over the academic blandness promoted by Fox's spokesmen.[78]

Figure 10.45 A composition even more tightly articulated than Figure 10.21, in black-and-white Scope (*The Young Lions*).

Figure 10.46 Elvis gets Scope mumps (*Love Me Tender*).

Figure 10.47 Elvis is cured, thanks to Panavision optics (*Jailhouse Rock*, 1957).

Figure 10.48 Panavision lenses permit a close and full-frame composition in *Underwater Warrior* (1958).

Figure 10.49 *Strangers When We Meet* (1960): Panavision renders good focus, in close-up and color.

A second pressure toward normalization has already appeared in our story: the emergence of Panavision. The new system was sold largely on its ability to provide acceptable close-ups (Figures 10.46–10.47). Panavision's president had claimed that stars would soon refuse to appear in Scope films because the lens made them look fat.[79] In winning an Academy Award for Scientific or Technical Achievement in 1958, the process was praised for its ability to "substantially reduce photographic lateral distortion and thereby improve close-up quality and overall definition."[80] A bonus, however, was the ability of Panavision lenses to handle recessive staging without loss of focus. Early (and uncredited) Panavision films, mostly black-and-white projects, display remarkable close-ups and depth of field (Figure 10.48). Soon Panavision was offering a range of specially made lenses that could render depth of field far more crisply, and when the process was used for color, the results were impressive as well (Figure 10.49). By the early 1960s, the big-foreground wide-angle look was attainable in widescreen, and Panavision was in the driver's seat.

In all, despite its peculiarities and constraints, Scope was absorbed into the norms of classical continuity. Almost from the start, the new screen format was displaying the

Figure 10.50   *Guys and Dolls* (1955): Rows of figures fill out the frame and highlight the central information as Nathan Detroit challenges Sky Masterson to date Salvation Army Sarah.

Figure 10.51 The "Glorious Technicolor" sequence of *Silk Stockings* (1957) mocks the impossible ratio.

cutting rates and some of the image schemas that had become familiar in the 1940s. The goal—to make cinema in the 2.35 ratio as much like that in the 1.33 ratio as possible—was being achieved. Even Charles G. Clarke gave in. His cinematography on *Flaming Star* (1960) yields plenty of singles, close shots, and camera movements, and the average shot length is a brisk 6.8 seconds. Clarke's tacit repudiation of the Fox aesthetic is one sign that traditional techniques of cutting and framing had absorbed Scope.

But was this all there was to the CinemaScope revolution? Did it contribute nothing of aesthetic value in itself? To answer this, I think we can profitably look more closely at staging practices. Promoters of the Fox aesthetic were partly right: Moving the actors around the frame was a crucial part of Scope aesthetics. But it was not to be "theatrical" in exactly the sense that Koster, Negulesco, and company probably had in mind.

Some Virtues of Clotheslines

Scope movies, of course, rely on clothesline staging. Shot after shot presents, at various scales, a pair of characters facing each other on the same plane (Figures 10.27–10.28). Bars, lunch counters, and other horizontal settings encourage directors to string several characters across the frame. As in 1930s films, the schema also accommodates horizontal layers of figures, as well as flanking figures to fill in the sides (Figure 10.50). The perpendicular layout is the foolproof Scope default, the main source of our sense that early Scope films are rather uninteresting, and the object of Zanuck's undying love. "The greatest kick I get is when one person talks across the room to another person and when both of them are in the scene and near enough to be seen without getting a head closeup."[81] He ordered his directors to place characters a good distance apart, because the stereophonic sound was more pronounced that way.[82] This practice is parodied in the "Glorious Technicolor" number of *Silk Stockings* (Figure 10.51).

Once lateral staging supplies a baseline, the filmmaker can move in for standard OTS framings, as Clarke's suggestions indicated. Heavy reliance on shot/reverse-shot editing is a major source of brief average shot lengths in early Scope films. To complete the package, framings presenting only one character are rare but not forbidden. These singles avoid exact centering and leave an open area on the right or left, usually to imply something offscreen that is the object of the character's look (Figure 10.52).

Figure 10.52 The off-center single shot, implying action taking place off frame (*The Robe*, 1953).

Figure 10.53   *Pat and Mike* (1952): The cop cut off at frame left restages the scene in which Pat rescues Mike from the thugs.

Figure 10.54   *Pat and Mike*: As the reenactment starts, the changed positions reveal a waiter in the back tier . . .

Figure 10.55   . . . and he slips into a gap between characters to put in his version of events.

Shot with a long lens, such a "single" risked losing focus, but at least an off-center face was less likely to contract CinemaScope mumps.

Yet Scope didn't simply replicate the clothesline layout of previous decades; it added something too. What Scope initiated wasn't horizontal staging as such, but *spacious* horizontality. Consider a shot from *Pat and Mike*, released in 1952, a year before CinemaScope was introduced. Here Cukor presents a fairly distant long take by skewing the row of people slightly into depth, shooting from a slightly high angle, and moving figures gracefully through apertures and a central zone of emphasis (Figures 10.53–10.55). An equally packed shot is rare in early CinemaScope: The same number of characters would be spread out more widely. The new format tended to push people apart, forcing more air between them. In *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955), a composition showing four people flanking a priest (Figure 10.56) leaves a fairly wide aperture available for a new character to enter (Figure 10.57). Compare the tinier, more angular slot that the face of the excitable white-coated waiter enters in *Pat and Mike* (Figure 10.55).

The greater distances between figures in turn became sources of expressive effect. The most common example is emotional separation. Conflicting or estranged charac-

Figure 10.56 *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing*: A clothesline array leaves a vacancy on the right . . .

Figure 10.57   . . . to be filled.

Figure 10.58 *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1956): Scope breadth to dramatize a couple's fraying marriage.

Figure 10.59 *A Star Is Born* (1954): Television versus cinema, balanced at opposite ends of the frame.

ters can be stationed at opposite edges of the image (Figure 10.58). Other filmmakers use the horizontal sweep more delicately, as Jacques Rivette predicted:

> The director will learn how he can sometimes claim the whole surface of the screen, mobilize it with his own enthusiasm, play a game that is both closed and infinite—or how he can shift the poles of the story to their opposites, create zones of silence, areas of immobility, the provoking hiatus, the skilful break. Quickly wearying of chandeliers and vases brought into the edges of the image for the "balance" of the close-ups, he will discover the beauty of the void, of free, open spaces swept by the wind.[83]

In *A Star Is Born* (1954), horizontality combines with edge framing to create shots that oblige us to scan the full stretch of the image. When the fading star Norman Maine talks with his producer at home, other guests are watching a film in the screening room. Cukor presents the two men fixed between the film image on the right and the upstart medium of TV on the left (Figure 10.59). The shot is echoed later when Norman's wife, Vicki Lester, receives her Oscar. A vast long shot shows her stranded in the middle of the stage, but a big-screen TV image of her is pasted in at the upper right (Figure 10.60). Suddenly her face starts to get larger, and we must shift our eye leftward to detect the cause: a TV camera coasting slowly in from offscreen (Figure 10.61). The effect doesn't feel forced because the shot remains plausibly spacious; a 1940s film would have had to pack the frame more tightly, perhaps having the TV camera nose into the frame from lower left and fill the foreground.

Rivette's precepts can be honored even in shots that aren't rigidly horizontal. In Ronald Neame's *The Man Who Never Was* (1956), a low-angle, 3-minute take shows a grieving father deliberating whether to let his dead son's corpse be used in a spy

Figure 10.60   *A Star Is Born*: Later, when Vicki Lester receives her award, her image on the television monitor swells. Why?

Figure 10.61   *A Star Is Born*: The TV camera coasts in at frame left, recalling the earlier scene's interplay of film and television.

Figure 10.62   A father decides whether to give his son's remains to the war effort (*The Man Who Never Was*).

Figure 10.63   *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) puts Judy in the center, framing Jim outside in the left window and revealing Plato and the family maid on the far right.

Figure 10.64   Geometric background elements frame characters in medium shot (*The Badlanders*, 1958).

mission rather than given a decent burial. The officer who has proposed the mission has turned discreetly away (Figure 10.62). The angled depth recalls the 1940s, but in the 1.33 era, the players would have to be jammed together, and the result would seem airless and perhaps overwrought. The 2.35 proportions allow Neame to create "zones of silence" that respect the solitude of each man while still letting us see the father's agonizing choice play out over his face.

Although filmmakers in the 1.33 ratio have long used architecture to segregate areas of the frame, Scope's width invited—demanded, some directors felt—a partitioning of the visual field. This creates a strip of modules, and these can be juxtaposed in breadth or depth, in order to isolate characters or to establish relationships. We see this already in our *Star Is Born* scenes and many others I've invoked in this essay. Nicholas Ray's frames-within-frames in the opening of *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) highlight the three main characters for us, and the partitioned setting connects them before they even know each other (Figure 10.63). Closer views can be subjected to the same rhythmic division and repetition (Figure 10.64).

Figure 10.65   Abstract masses in *Land of the Pharaohs* (1955), with the toiling masses as verticals balanced by striated horizontals.

Figure 10.66   Bracing for a hit, the German submarine crew is fanned out like a poker hand (*The Enemy Below*, 1957).

Figure 10.67   The Scope frame as an abstract slice of space (*Picnic*, 1955).

The partitioning strategy tends to treat the screen not as a wraparound window on a large chunk of reality but rather as a surface to be broken into rhythmic units. This tendency can be heightened when the director emphasizes shapes, color contrasts, and other pictorial features. The result comes close to an abstract configuration of elements. Even the tiresome biblical spectacular can be assigned a majestic geometry (Figure 10.65). *The Enemy Below* (1957) largely treats the interiors of its submarine as a nest of rectangles cradling its crew, but just before impact the men's bodies are fanned out like the fingers of a hand (Figure 10.66). *Picnic*, one of the most arresting 1955 Scope releases, has many points of interest, including daring close-ups and flamboyant depth staging, but it's also noteworthy for its commitment to pictorial abstraction. Joshua Logan and master cinematographer James Wong Howe provide bold compositions outside and inside Midwestern grain elevators (Figure 10.67).

Such shots show that in a sense, Scope didn't expand the visual field; it cropped it. "I never felt the screen was truly wider," Minnelli recalled. "It just tended to cut off the top and bottom of the picture."[84] This tank-turret slit, by hiding so much, can yield abstract imagery. Once the shot becomes an arbitrarily chopped-out strip of space, it can be vividly decorative or expressive. In Kazan's long-lens portrait of rednecks plotting against the Tennessee Valley Authority, with tattered posters balancing them in the wide frame (*Wild River*, 1960), one can glimpse the sort of stylization that Godard would accentuate further in *Made in USA* (1966) (Figures 10.68–10.69). In *Bonjour Tristesse* (1958), one of the most painterly of Scope films, one scene begins with only heads and shoulders, ends with only legs, and in the middle features an abstract swoosh of blue to punctuate a moment of passion (Figures 10.70–10.73). The pure wash of color underscores Cécile's erotic outburst, but once the umbrella is grounded it becomes a prop again, masking off the couple's faces and forcing us to watch their urgently moving hips and legs.

Figure 10.68   A planimetric composition for a late Scope film (*Wild River*, 1960).

Figure 10.69   Once more, Jean-Luc Godard takes anamorphic matters a step further, creating a Picasso-like collage of ragged strips of space (*Made in USA*, 1966).

Figure 10.70   *Bonjour Tristesse* (1958): Cécile and her new boyfriend are talking about Anne, who has started a romance with Cécile's father.

Figure 10.71   *Bonjour Tristesse*: Carried away by the idea of Anne's happiness, Cécile flings herself into a kiss with Philippe.

Figure 10.72   *Bonjour Tristesse*: The beach umbrella he's holding drops forward, momentarily filling the frame with brilliant blue before revealing the couple behind.

Figure 10.73   *Bonjour Tristesse*: They tumble to the floor, with the umbrella now masking their faces and throwing all the emphasis on their writhing legs.

Reinventing the Tableau

Such quasi-abstract images (and we have to imagine them projected on a screen over 60 feet wide) confirm the *Cahiers* critics' faith in the horizontal power of the image. Rivette again: "Wouldn't great *mise-en-scène*, like great painting, be flat, hinting at depth through slits rather than gaps?"[85] Yet he and his colleagues probably went too far in seeing the anamorphic format as a step beyond the baroque deep-focus of the 1940s. Just as CinemaScope forced directors to revise horizontal schemas that had emerged in earlier years, so it obliged a rethinking of the 1940s depth schemas, gaps and all. And it pushed some directors back to a mode of deep-space staging that had preceded the development of classical continuity.

    Scope's initial problems with distortion, focus, parallax, and depth-of-field prevented filmmakers from achieving the big foregrounds and wire-sharp focus that they had come to prize. The fact that early CinemaScope films were in color intensified

Figure 10.74   Midrange depth in *Demetrius and the Gladiators*, with characters at different distances from the camera.

Figure 10.75   *The Robe*: Demetrius, near death from, lies in Marcellus' family home, with characters dotted around the frame. Initially the drama plays out on frame left, with Marcellus and Diana at the window as he's tormented by guilt.

Figure 10.76   *The Robe*: After a cut-in to Marcellus and Diana, we return to the master shot as Simon Peter comes in. The doctor in the foreground swivels as Marcellus greets John, clearing a space for him . . .

Figure 10.77 . . . which allows Peter to stride to frame center as other characters rearrange themselves.

the difficulty, because Eastman stock was relatively slow and required a great deal of light to get even moderate depth of field. For all these reasons, directors typically brought the nearest figures no closer to the camera than 8 or 10 feet, and most shots placed them quite a bit farther away. Yet the playing space was not as utterly flat as clothesline staging might have made it seem. A cinematographer obeying Clarke's recommended exposure (f/4.5) could have focused the standard 40mm and 50mm Scope lenses at various distances, some of which would create playing areas between 10 and 30 feet. A playing area 20 feet deep allows considerable flexibility in staging.[86] Despite warnings about depth of field, many filmmakers freely checkerboarded their figures in midrange layers (Figure 10.74).

Within this midrange playing space, a resourceful director could revive the Hollywood tradition of graceful group dynamics within a general shot. This technique, virtually vanished today, involves inconspicuously highlighting first one player, then another. A character takes up a spot, then shifts to another place just as a second character moves to fill the gap. Despite focus problems in *The Robe*, for instance, Koster can sometimes move his players smoothly into and out of central zones of attention (Figures 10.75–10.77). This choreography is made more felicitous when characters cross each other's path, or rhythmically compensate for each other's change of position (Figures 10.78–10.80). A much emptier set, the dusty hotel lobby in *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955), allows John Sturges to coordinate the ominous movements of Reno Smith's men as they plan to put pressure on the mysterious

Figure 10.78   In *Island in the Sun* (1957), the colonial family argues about their family secrets, now exposed in the newspaper. The brilliant daylight allows many planes of distant depth to be activated.

Figure 10.79   *Island in the Sun*: As they quarrel, characters advance, cross the paths of others, and turn from the camera . . .

Figure 10.80   . . . before a servant, after quietly tending to her duties in the far distance, steps into a gap to announce the meal.

Figure 10.81   The hotel lobby in *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955) is used imaginatively in each scene set there. Here the doctor tries feebly to challenge Reno's authority.

Figure 10.82   *Bad Day at Black Rock*: Soon Hector comes into frame center to bully the old man as Coley leaves the window and moves to the middle ground.

Figure 10.83   *Bad Day at Black Rock*: Reno goes outside as the men rearrange themselves. Throughout the film, the lobby windows create another zone of space for us to notice.

stranger, Macreedy, while the town doctor feebly protests. When a character speaks a crucial line, he tends to come forward or mask off others, moving and occupying a spot with the precision of chessplay (Figures 10.81–10.83). Sometimes the onlookers swap places silently on the fringes of the action, resetting the composition in ways at once subtle and transparent. These small adjustments may rebalance the frame, or clear space for new characters to come into the shot.

Scope proved very amenable to cramped choreography too, and it becomes the source of comedy in *Kiss Them for Me* (1957). In the party scenes, Stanley Donen uses several strategies to shift attention from one line of action to another. He constantly breaks up his clothesline arrays by having people intrude from the sides or the rear, exploiting what depth of field he can get (Figure 10.84). Donen also pivots the clothesline array slightly into depth to allow for other sorts of interruptions (Figures 10.85–10.86), or just lets partygoers in the foreground pass between the camera and the principals

Figure 10.84   Somewhat like Jacques Tati's restaurant scene in *Play Time* (1967; Figure 7.15), the party in *Kiss Them for Me* (1957) creates layers of distinct actions.

Figure 10.85   *Kiss Them for Me*: When newcomers arrive, the clothesline layers become slightly more recessive.

Figure 10.86   *Kiss Them for Me*: And as the group breaks into conversing pairs, their mild recession is broken by a woman towing a man through along a slightly opposing diagonal.

Figure 10.87   At the end of one shot of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954), all look off, awaiting the entrance of Captain Nemo.

Figure 10.88   *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*: After a cut, we follow him stepping into the frame and halting in the prime location, with faces on different levels surrounding him. Conseil (Peter Lorre) obligingly turns from us to favor Nemo.

to block our view momentarily. Similar shallow-space maneuvers occur in Richard Fleischer's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954). Fleischer claims to have taken to Scope "like a duck to water," because it encouraged lengthier takes.[87] At 8.5 seconds, the average shot length of this film is reasonably short, but some shots are precisely choreographed long takes—in a submarine, no less. Fleischer lines up his characters, but never in obtrusive clothesline arrays: Usually a slope or slant will skew the line of figures, or a foreground body will close the composition, incidentally reinforcing the cramped quarters of Captain Nemo's *Nautilus* (Figures 10.87–10.88).

Such choreography in fairly shallow space isn't the only way depth could be used in Scope. If a director wanted a deeper playing space and reasonably sharp focus across that, he was obliged to set the foreground plane fairly far from the camera. This tactic makes the foreground element relatively small within the vast screen. The result is

Figure 10.89   Distant depth reminiscent of the 1910s in *Demetrius and the Gladiators*. Compare Figure 10.9.

Figure 10.90   A distant silhouette framed for saliency (*Ride Lonesome*, 1959).

Figure 10.91   *The Great Locomotive Chase* (1956): A busy foreground and partial views through apertures, another strategy characteristic of 1910s cinema as well.

Figure 10.92   Fuller combines modular composition, edge framing, and distant depth in *Forty Guns* (1957).

Figure 10.93   *The Bridge on the River Kwai*: Saito's order is passed down the chain of command, farther and farther into the distant buildings.

perhaps the most striking invention—or perhaps we should say rediscovery—facilitated by Scope: a kind of return to the 1910s, when filmmakers exploited the rich possibilities of midrange foregrounds and remarkably remote background planes. (See Figures 1.1–1.2.) For example, in *Demetrius and the Gladiators* (1954), the devious Messalina comes into the (already quite distant) foreground while her husband and Demetrius study her from the terrace fairly far back (Figure 10.89).

But if the foreground plane is set quite far back, how to highlight relevant information? The partitional tactic comes in handy here. A break in a ruined wall in *Ride Lonesome* (1959) encloses the very distant woman while two cowboys watch her yearningly (Figure 10.90). Some directors seek a much more cluttered foreground and a middle ground with many apertures (Figure 10.91). Samuel Fuller's *Forty Guns* (1957) presents a face-off from inside a gun shop, with each gunslinger framed in a different window (Figure 10.92). During the British officers' briefing on how to build a proper bridge over the Kwai, Colonel Saito calls for tea, and his order is relayed among staff members visible in the buildings far behind them (Figure 10.93).

Figure 10.94   *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef* (1953): As the policemen thread their way through the bar, a young Greek boldly dances with his rival's girlfriend.

Figure 10.95   *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef*: The dancing couple drifts further back, and the jilted fisherman steps to frame center, turned from us.

Figure 10.96   *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef*: Our view of the couple is blocked first by a cop, then by the rival's brawny back, but then we see them moving toward the faraway doorway as he reaches for his knife.

Figure 10.97   *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef*: The couple rush outside in the distance, but when the fisherman rushes to pursue them down the left aisle, the boy's father halts him in the foreground.

Figure movement in the foreground can be designed to block and reveal faraway niches of action. In *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef* (1953), sponge fishermen in their local bar are about to fight, but the arrival of the police makes them fake comradeship. To take advantage of it, a young Greek dances out the door with another man's girlfriend, and the drama develops in striking depth (Figures 10.94–10.97). Our vision has to shift from the foreground to a small, out-of-focus background region and then back to the foreground again, in about 3 seconds—and across several feet of screen space, in the original theatrical setting. Putting this sort of demand on the viewer helps energize the experience of long-shot views. *King Richard and the Crusaders* (1954) shows that as in the 1910s, even a small slot between two players can be activated for dramatic purposes (Figures 10.98–10.102). The technique of wedging story points into the crevices of a dense visual field, all but forgotten today, became reinvigorated in the Scope era.

These are fairly brief moments of foreground–background interplay, but suspense can be built through a nagging suggestion about what's going on in the distance. In *Bad Day at Black Rock*, Macreedy visits the café for a bowl of chili, and Coley is determined to pick a fight. As he harasses Macreedy in the foreground, we are uneasily aware that Coley's boss Reno is hovering around behind—sometimes at the pinball machine on the left, sometimes hidden by Coley, and sometimes watching warily from the edge of the doorway (Figures 10.103–10.104). Our vigilance about what happens in the rear is eventually rewarded when Macreedy's judo flips hurl Coley through the same doorway (Figure 10.105). Today's director would put the camera at

Figure 10.98   *King Richard and the Crusaders*
(1954): After an attempt on the king's life, his
subordinates are gathered around his sickbed.
Sir Kenneth of Huntington studies the nearly
fatal arrow and looks up and offscreen.

Figure 10.99   *King Richard and the Crusad-
ers*: A cut to a new angle shows Sir Giles, whom
we know is behind the assassination attempt.

Figure 10.100   *King Richard and the Crusad-
ers*: Meeting Sir Kenneth's gaze, the conspira-
tors leave, passing behind the crowd in the
middle of the frame . . .

Figure 10.101   . . . before stopping in a gap to
confront Sir Kenneth's suspicions.

Figure 10.102   *King Richard and the Crusad-
ers*: When they turn and leave, the camera
pans with Kenneth as he follows them out,
revealing new layers of men outside.

Figure 10.103   *Bad Day at Black Rock*: Coley
douses Macreedy's food with ketchup, with
Reno barely visible over his shoulder.

Figure 10.104   *Bad Day at Black Rock*: As
Coley provokes Macreedy, they advance to
the middle ground, Reno now warily closer
to the door's edge.

Figure 10.105   *Bad Day at Black Rock*: In
a new composition, Macreedy has thrown
Coley out the door and confronts Reno, now
retreating to the corner.

Figure 10.106   A tight Scope two shot, but in the center, there is some out-of-focus movement in the doorway behind (*Pete Kelly's Blues*, 1955).

Figure 10.107   *Pete Kelly's Blues*: Pete and Ivy turn, creating a very unusual shot for Hollywood anamorphic, one more reminiscent of the opening of Godard's *Vivre sa vie* (1962).
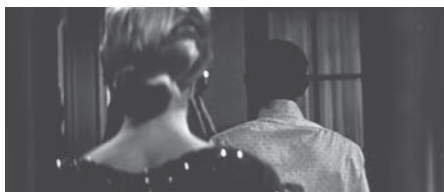

Figure 10.108   *Pete   Kelly's   Blues*:   Pete advances,   with   the   composition   still   not revealing why.

Figure 10.109   *Pete Kelly's Blues*: The camera creeps forward, and Ivy moves slightly aside to reveal George the cop.

Figure 10.110   *Pete   Kelly's   Blues*:   George questions Pete, who refuses to cooperate. The shot has peeled away a layer of space in a suspenseful gesture.

exactly the opposite point in space—letting Coley be flung out from the doorway into the audience's face—but Sturges' arrangement activates our awareness more keenly, forcing us to attend to a small parcel of the screen surface.

A more overt instance of "spatial suspense" is exploited by Jack Webb in *Pete Kelly's Blues* (1955). Pete and his girlfriend Ivy are on the club's balcony, where they discuss marriage in a prolonged, profiled two shot. They kiss, but then they separate abruptly (Figure 10.106). Why? There is a dim, out-of-focus figure shifting behind them. They turn from us in a startlingly Godardian planar shot (Figure 10.107) as Pete says, "What'd you get, a bleacher seat?" Pete walks straight to the rear, and the camera moves forward, throwing Ivy gradually out of focus (Figure 10.108). She steps aside to reveal the terminally disheveled cop George, who has been pressuring Pete to give details on the shooting of his young drummer (Figure 10.109). As Pete draws up to George, the cop tells Pete that another of his friends may have been killed by the mob (Figure 10.110). The forward tracking shot and Ivy's sidestep flout the Fox aesthetic, but Webb treats the entire scene as an exercise in overt, purely visual teasing.[88]

Figure 10.111   *River of No Return* (1954): Matt, the gun, and its holster.

Figure 10.112   *River of No Return*: Later, in a scene with the gambler Harry, the gun is gone, but we're unlikely to notice.

Figure 10.113   *River of No Return*: Only when Matt reaches for it out of habit . . .

Figure 10.114   . . . does Preminger reveal that Harry has taken it in case Matt won't cooperate.

At the opposite extreme, the tactic of distant depth can put something important plainly in the background and *not* call our attention to it. The best instance of this I know occurs in Preminger's *River of No Return* (1954). Early in the film, it's established that Matt keeps his rifle in a holster near the cabin door (Figure 10.111). Later, while relaxing after dinner, the gambler Harry offers to pay Matt to accompany him through Indian territory (Figure 10.112). Matt refuses. He rises, Harry leaves the shot, and Matt reaches mechanically for his rifle (Figure 10.113). Abruptly the rifle protrudes into the frame from the right foreground, in the hands of Harry (Figure 10.114). Preminger has played fair with the audience by keeping the empty holster prominently centered during the whole scene. Those who notice the rifle is missing will experience some suspense, whereas those who do not notice will be startled by Harry's gesture.

Just as Scope horizontal choreography draws upon skills cultivated in the early sound era, the use of distant depth brings a 1910s technique up to date, with fresh and engaging results. Assimilation of a new technology has led to not only recovery but also discovery—or, rather, rediscovery.

The End of Screen Ratios?

Filmmakers, then, had several staging strategies available. They could treat the wide screen as *more*—a horizontal expansion of the standard ratio, demanding to be filled up in ways that modified clothesline staging or depth composition. They could treat the new format as *less*, a slice of the old frame that blew up details and created quasi-abstract compositions. Or they could investigate depth in a tactful way, activating the remote reaches of the shot so that the spectator had to be alert for slight changes.

Figure 10.115 California sunshine allows Nicholas Ray to produce one of the most exciting compositions in early CinemaScope, as the gang member's switchblade rises ominously up from the lower frame edge (*Rebel Without a Cause*).

Figure 10.116 *House of Bamboo* (1955): The climax on the slowly spinning rooftop globe.

All these payoffs couldn't have been foreseen in the "theatrical" agenda promoted by Fox. Yet Scope permitted, and to some degree encouraged, them. By the end of the 1950s, these impulses coexisted with several more traditional schemas, often combining within a single film. Some scenes relied upon the default schemas—little depth of field, clotheslines or shallow staging, partitioning of the frame, and standard OTS shots. Others presented edge framing or surprisingly big close-ups. And any scene might rely on long takes or rapid cutting. For those few years during which Cinema-Scope was in the ascendant, it was adjusted to the demands of the classical style, but in the hands of imaginative filmmakers, it also yielded uniquely valuable results.

Some historians have argued that cinema benefited from originating as a silent medium; creators were forced to develop distinctly pictorial storytelling traditions. Similarly, CinemaScope's initial drawbacks spurred filmmakers to work around them or find creative alternatives. The sheer variety of stylistic choices available in the first anamorphic era is exhilarating. Hathaway and Preminger, Minnelli and Fleischer, Cukor and Jack Webb all used Scope in ingenious and powerful ways. As often happens, energetic pulp proves more exhilarating than high-minded kitsch. The ballyhooed productions (*The Robe*, *How to Marry a Millionaire*, *The King and I*, *Anastasia*, and *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*) usually look pachydermous, whereas more modest genre efforts like *Violent Saturday* (1955) and *The Enemy Below* bristle with pictorial intelligence. Apart from some brilliant "big pictures" in Scope—*A Star Is Born*, *Rebel Without a Cause* (Figure 10.115), and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954)—the most intriguing explorations of the format are to be found in Westerns, adventure movies, thrillers, war pictures, and melodramas. (One rule holds firm: If a Scope film runs longer than 100 minutes, it's likely to be visually uninspiring.) Samuel Fuller's efforts in workaday genres illustrate what could be done with nearly all the items on the menu. His first Scope film, *Hell and High Water* (1954), relies on straightforward lateral playing in zones of a submarine set. In *House of Bamboo* (1955), Fuller imaginatively uses the gridded layout of Japanese rooms to segregate figures in layers, and by cutting to various angles, Fuller turns the climax on a rotating globe into an angular play of curves and ellipsoid shapes (Figure 10.116). Once Fuller moves to black-and-white Scope, eccentricities rule. *Forty Guns* (1957) gives us

Figure 10.117   A Leone-like extreme close-up in *Forty Guns*.

Figure 10.118   Griff steps out into the back yard of a mortuary, with a rifle visible in the window above: an outlandishly low and deep angle from *Forty Guns*.

Figure 10.119   *China Gate* (1957): The squad gathers around a wounded soldier.

flamboyant close-ups of eyeballs and steep low-angle shots with overpowering depth (Figures 10.117–10.118). *China Gate* (1957) includes simply staged long takes, rhythmically cut jungle skirmishes, posterlike abstraction, and looming wide-angle shots that plunge the camera into the center of the action (Figure 10.119). Fuller's films alone suggest that the Scope era may have been the last period of genuine stylistic variety in Hollywood.

Panavision offered greater flexibility, but it also allowed all films, whether anamorphic or flat, to be stylistically similar. In another curious historical throwback, the result was to revive much earlier norms. Once widescreen close-ups, especially singles of stars, became feasible, what director could resist? Directors of the 1960s began cutting faster and dwelling on big faces—both technical options characteristic of late silent films. Sergio Leone and others recovered the one-point-per-shot style of Lubitsch or Harold Lloyd. An assistant to Leone recalls that close-ups were problematic in the Techniscope format: "When you wanted a close-up to bring the audience's attention to a face, an entire landscape opened up behind you: an entire town could fit in, so you could forget putting the attention on your characters!"[89] As a result, Leone and his cinematographer decided to shoot his gunslingers in extreme close-ups from chin to hat brim, and this framing became his signature (Figure 10.120). Today comparable shots can be found in most Hollywood films, blockbuster or indie, flat or Scope (Figure 10.121).

At first, splashing a close-up across the gigantic screen made some critics recoil. Dwight MacDonald remarked that in Preminger's *The Cardinal* (1963), "even Romy Schneider's face is distractingly ugly when it has to fill that wide screen, while [John]

Figure 10.120 Lee Van Cleef, the man with Techniscope eyes, in *For a Few Dollars More* (1965). (But compare Figure 10.30, which anticipates this framing.)

Figure 10.121 A similarly cropped shot from *Confidence* (2002).

Figure 10.123 The two shot becomes a standard Scope composition; compare Figures 10.28 and 10.70.

Figure 10.122 A two shot from *The Thin Man*.

Huston's looks like a relief map of the Dakota badlands."[90] But complaints couldn't stop the march of a new style that featured big heads (isolated in singles), unfettered camera movement, and fast cutting. Although the clothesline layout remained the default for much Scope filming, and indeed widescreen shooting in general, into the 1960s, directors soon began to abandon the two shot and rely on recessive layouts, singles, and OTS framings. More intricate staging options began to wane, and what I've called "intensified continuity" began its long rule of Hollywood screens.[91]

The triumph of widescreen, in both 1.85 and anamorphic forms, also allows us to see how norms of earlier decades were not so much overthrown as adjusted. The information contained in the old Academy ratio was preserved and, we might say, reedited in the 1960s. In many 1920s and 1930s shots, the Scope proportions seem to lie uncannily nestled within 1.33 clothesline compositions. Take a long shot or *plan-américain* from a 1930s film and mask it to the 2.35 ratio. The result is often a recognizable Scope framing (Figures 10.122–10.123). By contrast, we can't easily recrop 1940s recessive compositions; too much information is jammed into the top and bottom of the frame (Figures 10.15–10.22, above). The vertical elements would have to be moved down and across in the wider format (Figure 10.124). But once you're given a wide frame and presuppose an aesthetic of close views, you're likely to turn traditional medium shots into close-ups and traditional close-ups into extreme close-ups. "What pulled me into shooting close-ups," Steven Spielberg admits, "was when I shifted to the widescreen format."[92]

Figure 10.124   Scope turns a vertical space—a ground floor and the stair landing above—into a horizontal one (*The Violent Men*, 1955). Compare the *Little Foxes* staircase (Figure 10.17).

Figure 10.125   The long lens already abstracts space, but in *THX 1138* (1971), George Lucas designs his anamorphic shots to flatten and compartmentalize his futuristic locale further.

Anamorphic filming never went away, and it enjoyed a resurgence in the 1990s that continues unabated.[93] Today any movie can be comfortably shot or released in 2.40:1. Indeed, any image can be repackaged in any ratio. Filmmakers working with Scope could be fairly confident that their images would be shown more or less as they wished. Many of our examples from the 1930s to the 1960s are so precisely composed that careless projection would ruin them. But today's directors must frame loosely, knowing that many shapes and sizes will be carved out of their images (megaplex projection at anything from 2.4 to 1.85, full-frame TV at 4:3, widescreen TV at 16:9, and the peephole displays on handheld devices like cell phones). The success of Super-35mm, which slices a variety of ratios out of a single square picture, is an acknowledgment that at some basic level, compositional precision is just less important.

The acreage afforded by Scope challenged directors to fill it up, and some found thrilling ways to shift bodies around the screen space. By the end of the 1960s, however, most directors had no interest in articulating a scene through staging. Cutting and camera movement were enough, aided of course by close-ups of gripping performances. There emerged a generation of talented directors who loved movies, who could spin engaging yarns and elicit memorable performances, and who had an eye for anamorphic abstraction, often aided by the long lens (Figure 10.125). But they scarcely knew how to move actors around a set.[94] To this extent, the triumph of Panavision contributed to the defeat of ensemble staging.

Put it another way: Artists struggling with problems of craft can be spurred to innovate, but the widescreen format is no longer sensed as a problem. Ratios now offer no resistance. Yes, you still have to fill the wide image, but technology allows you simply to post a head shot. The zone of facial expressivity—eyebrows, eyes, and mouth—fits rather nicely into the horizontal slit. Could a filmmaker today orchestrate several bodies moving across that expanse without looking awkward or old-fashioned? Also, of course, widescreen films will be seen on TV, either cropped or letterboxed, and a tangle of bodies doesn't command the increasingly small screens that viewers are learning to live with. Oddly, the severe constraints of CinemaScope pushed directors toward ingenious exploration, but the versatility of Panavision has fostered a lockstep style.

Figure 10.126   Filling the anamorphic frame in *Three Kings* (1999).

Figure 10.127   Getting to know her students, the hired tutor Anna spreads her vast dress across the CinemaScope screen (*The King and I*, 1956).

As with every innovation, the fact that anamorphic imagery is no longer a problem has its benefits as well as its costs. Panavision opened new possibilities for all-over composition in the anamorphic ratio, that maximal use of the screen format that Boris Kaufman valued. Many directors have taken advantage of it, assuming that their densely composed images would be displayed in full (Figure 10.126). And in fairness, I have to say that most directors today face problems no less pressing than the Scope format. How can one develop computer-driven spectacle? Or make full use of digital sound? Or endow children's fantasy, high school comedy, teenage horror, and comic book superheroics with freshness, beauty, and intelligence? Most of these tasks weren't on the agenda for filmmakers of the 1950s.

For the student of film poetics, though, the Scope era can be seen as giving a cluster of classical staging options one final run-through. A system deplored for its technical rigidity became, however briefly, a museum of quite varying achievements in mise-en-scène. Perhaps that's an underlying reason that cinephiles born before 1950 (like me) find Scope movies so intriguing. Their images invite us into realms where people have bodies and move in real time, and the shape and size of the screen encouraged sheer graphic gamesmanship as well. Who among today's filmmakers would risk the nuttiness of spreading Deborah Kerr's crinoline across 60 feet (Figure 10.127)? Screen proportions may persist, but styles can change.

Chapter 10

This essay is especially indebted to Schawn Belston, director of film preservation at the Twentieth Century Fox Film Archive, for access to films and information about CinemaScope. Thanks as well to Roy Wagner, American Society of Cinematographers, and Tak Miyagishima of Panavision. I'm also grateful to John Belton and Sheldon Hall for comments and corrections.

1. Figures from "All-Time Adjusted Domestic B.O. Champs," in *The Variety Insider* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 66.

2. Spyros P. Skouras, "CinemaScope: Industry Boon," in *1953 Yearbook of Motion Pictures* (New York: Film Daily, 1953), 157, 159.

3. Quoted in Skouras, "CinemaScope," 157.

4. John Belton, "CinemaScope and the Widescreen Revolution," *Cinegrafie*, no. 16 (2003), 244–53.

5. Jacques Rivette, "The Age of *metteurs en scène*" (1954), in *Cahiers du cinéma: The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 278.

6. For discussions of the *Cahiers* directors' enthusiasm for CinemaScope, see Marc Cerisuelo, "Au premier rang: La Nouvelle Vague des *Cahiers du Cinéma* et le Scope comme avant-garde," in *Le CinémaScope entre art et industrie / CinemaScope Between Art and Industry*, ed. Jean-Jacques Meusy (Paris: Association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma, 2003), 263–68; and Michel Marie, "Le Cinéma-Scope et la Nouvelle Vague, un parcours esthétique entre quelques film fondateurs,' in Meusy, *Le CinémaScope entre art et industrie*, 269–76.

7. There is a vast technical library on widescreen cinema. The indispensable reference book is Robert E. Carr and R. M. Hayes, *Wide Screen Movies: A History and Filmography of Wide Gauge Filmmaking* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1988). This volume has been revised by Daniel J. Sherlock; see the Film-Tech website, http://www.film-tech.com/tips/wsmc.html. See also Martin Hart's informative website, "The WideScreen Museum," http://www.widescreenmuseum.com. The most analytical and incisive history of U.S. processes is John Belton's *Widescreen Cinema* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), to which my thumbnail history here is indebted at many points. Information on the relations between CinemaScope and Technicolor is available in Richard W. Haines, *Technicolor Movies: The History of Dye-Transfer Printing* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1992), 74–81. A compact survey highlighting French contributions is Valérie Peseux, *La Projection grand spectacle: Du Cinérama à l'Omnimax* (Paris: Dujarric, 2004). See also *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 21 (Summer 1985), an issue devoted wholly to widescreen cinema.

   On CinemaScope specifically, two Ph. D. dissertations are of great value: James Spellerberg, "Technology and the Film Industry: The Adoption of CinemaScope" (University of Iowa, 1980); and Richard Emil Hincha, "Twentieth Century Fox's CinemaScope: An Industrial Organization Analysis of its Development, Marketing, and Adoption" (University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1989). See also Stephen Huntley, "Sponable's CinemaScope: An Intimate Chronology of the Invention of the CinemaScope Optical System," *Film History* 5, no. 3 (1993): 298–320. Two informative anthologies are Helga Belach and Wolfgang Jacobsen, eds., *CinemaScope: Zur Geschichte der Breitwandfilme* (Berlin: Spiess, 1993); and the Meusy collection,

Le CinémaScope entre art et industrie, cited above. CinemaScope's role in Fox's business operations is discussed in Aubrey Solomon, *Twentieth Century Fox: A Corporate and Financial History* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1988), 70–145.

8. "All of the studios are convinced that the old 3/4 picture is gone and that the wider aspect ratio is here to stay," wrote Merle Chamberlin in "Past, Present, and Future (?)," *International Projectionist* 29, no. 9 (September 1954): 23.

9. They played relatively few venues in true Cinerama, however, and were wide-released in 70mm and CinemaScope versions.

10. For information on Soviet systems, see Michael Z. Wysotsky, *Wide-Screen Cinema and Stereophonic Sound*, trans. A. E. C. York, ed. Raymond Spottiswoode (New York: Hastings House, 1971), 152–243.

11. For more on these processes, see Carr and Hays, *Wide Screen Cinema*, 67–89; and Rick Mitchell, "The Widescreen Revolution: Expanding Horizons—the Spherical Campaign," from *The Operating Cameraman*, Summer 1994, http://www.soc.org/opcam/04_s94/mg04_widescreen.html.

12. See E. I. Sponable, H. E. Bragg, and L. D. Grignon, "Design Considerations of CinemaScope Film," *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers* 63, no. 1 (July 1954): 1–4.

13. Confused about all the names of these widescreen systems? The promoters used a pretty limited vocabulary. Out of a few prefixes—*cine(ma)*, *vista*, *techni(o)*, and *pana*—and a few suffixes—*scope*, *vision*, and *rama*—ingenious companies dreamed up a baker's dozen of brand names: CinemaScope, Cinevision, Cinerama, Cinepanoramic, Vistascope, VistaVision, Vistarama, Techniscope, Technovision, Technirama, PanaScope, Panavision, and Panoram. ("Panorama," unfortunately, could not be trademarked.) To any of these, Super, Ultra, and 70 may be added as desired.

14. Anonymous, "CinemaScope—What It Is; How It Works," *American Cinematographer* 34, no. 3 (March 1953): 113.

15. Attendance figures are taken from "Average Weekly Motion Picture Attendance in U.S., 1922–1965," in Christopher H. Sterling and Timothy R. Haight, *The Mass Media: Aspen Institute Guide to Communication Industry Trends* (New York: Praeger, 1978), 352; and box office information comes from Joel Finler, *The Hollywood Story* (London: Octopus, 1988), 288.

16. "New Dimensions Perk Up Hollywood," *Business Week*, March 14, 1953, 122.

17. See Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 230–46; Kira Kistopanidou, "The Widescreen Revolution and 20th Century-Fox's Eidophor in the 1950s," *Film History* 15, no. 1 (2003): 32–56; and John Belton, "Fox and 50mm Film" (paper given at Widescreen conference, Bradford, UK, July 12, 2003).

18. Bob Mintz, "The Big Changeover," *American Cinematographer* 34, no. 10 (October 1953): 481, 497–98.

19. Tino Balio, "Retrenchment, Reappraisal, and Reorganization, 1948–," in *The American Film Industry*, 2nd ed., ed. Tino Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 431.

20. For a useful chronology, see Herbert Bragg, "The Development of CinemaScope" (1953), *Film History*, no. 2 (1988), 339–71, helpfully annotated by John Belton.

21. The ratios of these 1953 releases were 1.66:1 for Paramount, RKO, and Republic; 1.75:1 for MGM and Disney; and 1.85:1 for Allied Artists, Columbia, and Universal. Warner Bros., toying with its own anamorphic system (WarnerScope), came out

for 1.75:1 for flat films, whereas Fox released its flat films in 1.66:1. Most exhibitors seemed to favor 1.66:1, perhaps because it was the least variation from the orthodox ratio. Later (though it's not clear exactly when), the "new Academy" ratio was standardized at 1.85:1. See Rick Mitchell, "The Origins of Ratios," *American Cinematographer* 75, no. 5 (May 1994): 9–10.

22. Quoted in Aubrey Solomon, *Twentieth Century Fox*, 87.

23. Rudy Behlmer, ed., *Memo From Darryl F. Zanuck: The Golden Years at Twentieth Century Fox* (New York: Grove, 1995), 230.

24. Solomon, *Twentieth Century Fox*, 88–89, 113; and Hincha, "Twentieth Century Fox's CinemaScope," 221.

25. Spellerberg, "Technology and the Film Industry," 187. Another Skouras brother, George, was president of the United Artists Theatre Circuit. It should be noted that the court-decreed divestiture of the Majors' theatre holdings proceeded very slowly, with some studios taking several years to spin off their circuits. See Michael Conant, *Antitrust in the Motion Picture Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 107–11.

26. On exhibitor resistance to Scope and especially its stereophonic sound package, see Hincha, "Twentieth Century Fox's CinemaScope," 207–21.

27. Quoted in Mel Gussow, *Don't Say Yes Until I Finish Talking: A Biography of Darryl F. Zanuck* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), 176.

28. See David W. Samuelson, "The Golden Years," *American Cinematographer* 84, no. 9 (September 2003): 71.

29. See Walter Wallin, "Patent Application for Anamorphosing System," Patent no. 2,890,622, filed August 11, 1954, granted June 16, 1959, cols. 2–4. I thank Tak Miyagishima of Panavision, Inc. for providing me access to this material.

30. Hincha, "Twentieth Century Fox's CinemaScope," 263; Samuelson, "The Golden Years," 76; and interview with Roy Wagner, American Society of Cinematographers, Los Angeles, California, June 15, 2005.

31. Huntley, "Sponable's CinemaScope," 318–19. See also Rick Mitchell, "Widescreen Revolution: Fourth in a Series," *The Operating Cameraman* 7, no. 1 (July–December 1997): 53–63.

32. Bob Allen, "Wide Screen Production Picking Up," *International Photographer* 33, no. 11 (November 1961): 215. For helpful accounts of Panavision's development, see Hincha, "Twentieth Century Fox's CinemaScope," 255–85; and Ellen Shatkin, "Solid Gold: Panavision Celebrates 50 Years of Excellence," *American Cinematographer* 75, no. 11 (November 2004): 12–18. Adriaan Bijl has made his informative 1991 master's thesis, "The Importance of Panavision," available at http://www.in70mm.com/newsletter/2002/67/panavision/index.htm.

33. On Fox's history at this period, see Solomon, *Twentieth Century Fox*, 91–135.

34. See figures assembled in David Pratt, "Widescreen Box Office Performance to 1959," *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 21 (Summer 1985): 65–66.

35. Although *Gigi*'s credits carry the CinemaScope trademark, it's likely that like most late 1950s MGM releases, it used Panavision optics.

36. Quoted in Solomon, *Twentieth Century Fox*, 86.

37. Quoted in Ronald L. Davis, *Just Making Movies: Company Directors on the Studio System* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2005), 18.

38. Compare the optimistic discussion of depth of field following the October 1953 presentation of the system for professional film engineers, recorded as a follow-up discussion to James R. Benford, "The CinemaScope Optical System," *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers* 62, no. 1 (January 1954): 70.

39. These distortions were partly caused by the anamorphic squeeze being applied differentially across the visual field. See Samuelson, "The Golden Years," 71.

40. Interview with Roy Wagner, American Society of Cinematographers, Los Angeles, California, May 15, 2005.

41. Joseph Ruttenberg, "Souvenirs d'un directeur de la photographie", *Positif*, no. 142 (September 1972): 78.

42. Interview with Roy Wagner, American Society of Cinematographers, Los Angeles, California, May 14, 2005.

43. See Huntley, "Sponable's CinemaScope," 312–16; and the "CinemaScope" entry in "The Widescreen Museum," http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/widescreen/wingcs5.htm.

44. Gayne Rescher, "Wide Angle Problems in Wide Screen Photography," *American Cinematographer* 37, no. 5 (May 1956): 300–1, 322–23.

45. Quoted in Peter Bogdanovich, *Who the Devil Made It* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 356. Fritz Lang gives a similar opinion on p. 224, noting that of great paintings, only DaVinci's *Last Supper* is in CinemaScope proportions.

46. See Richard Overstreet, "Interview With George Cukor," *Film Culture*, no. 34 (Fall 1964): 7; Vincente Minnelli with Hector Arce, *I Remember It Well* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 280.

47. See Leo McCarey's remarks, quoted in Bogdanovich, *Who the Devil Made It*, 432; Sidney Lumet's remarks, quoted on 804; and Fritz Lang's, quoted on 224.

48. Henry Koster, "Directing in CinemaScope," in *New Screen Techniques*, ed. Martin Quigley Jr. (New York: Quigley, 1953), 171.

49. Ibid., 172.

50. Ibid., 173.

51. Jean Negulesco, "New Medium—New Methods," in Quigley, *New Screen Techniques*, 175.

52. Leon Shamroy, "Filming 'The Robe,'" in Quigley, *New Screen Techniques*, 178.

53. Ibid., 180.

54. This line of argument is usually associated with André Bazin and the critics of *Cahiers du cinema*. Despite the mediocrity of early Scope releases, François Truffaut believed that the new process was as important as the coming of sound in shifting cinema toward realism: "Every film is more or less the story of a man walking, and a man walks more beautifully in CinemaScope"; François Truffaut, "Le Cinéma-scope," *Cahiers*, no. 25 (July 1953): 23. Bazin was more cautious, but he did indi-cate that widescreen film would hasten the decline of cinematic "expressionism" and move closer to cinema's real vocation, that of revealing reality; André Bazin, "Le Cinémascope sauvéra-t-il le cinema?" *Esprit* 12, nos. 10–11 (October–November 1953): 683. Bazin also argued that the wide format was in accord with a general trend in world cinema to minimize editing: "[CinemaScope] has come to once and for all destroy montage as the major element of cinematic discourse"; André Bazin, "Fin du montage," *Cahiers*, no. 31 (January 1954): 43. For translations of the Bazin pieces, see André Bazin, "Three Essays on Widescreen Film," *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 21 (Summer 1985): 8–17.

In my *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), I proposed that Bazin's 1940s pronouncements on deep-focus technique had been primed by studio promotional campaigns (225). Publicity for *Citizen Kane* and other films called attention to the sharp-focus depth, the long takes, and the absence of cutting. The same thing seems to have happened with the arrival of CinemaScope, with the *Cahiers* circle taking their cue from Fox publicity. The study of film poetics can alert us to the ways in which craft innovations consciously pursued by filmmakers were announced to prepare audiences to notice them. These announcements can in turn become the basis of more abstract or theoretical discussions by critics.

The French were not the only critics to echo and recast Fox's official line on Scope. Gilbert Seldes made several nuanced comments on the subject in his *The Public Arts* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956), 46–60. The most thoroughgoing defense of the idea that Scope favored an aesthetic based on intrashot effects rather than cutting is Charles Barr's landmark essay, "CinemaScope: Before and After," *Film Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (Summer 1963): 4–24. Elsewhere, I argue that the critics around *Cahiers* and the British journal *Movie* (e.g., Barr and V. F. Perkins) revised Bazin's realist aesthetic into something more self-consciously formal. See David Bordwell, "Widescreen Aesthetics and Mise en Scene Criticism," *Velvet Light Trap*, no. 21: 18–25, http://www.davidbordwell.net/articles.

Interestingly, the Bazin–*Cahiers*–*Movie* line of argument had already cropped up during Hollywood's earlier cycle of widescreen films. King Vidor commented that thanks to the sharpness of 70mm, his Fox Grandeur production of *Billy the Kid* (1930) could clearly show in a single shot a hold-up in the foreground and a rescue party far in the distance. "The oncoming party does not know what is happening in front, but the audience observes every moment of both with more suspense than could be possible in any system of 'cut-backs' [crosscutting]"; quoted in Harry Alan Potamkin, "Reelife: Wide Screen Projection" (1930), in *The Compound Cinema: The Film Writings of Harry Alan Potamkin*, ed. Lewis Jacobs (New York: Columbia University Teachers College Press, 1977), 111. Unhappily, the version of *Billy the Kid* I've seen doesn't contain the scene Vidor describes.

55. Charles G. Clarke, "CinemaScope Photographic Techniques," *American Cinematographer* 36, no. 6 (June 1955): 336–37, 362–64; reprinted with minor alterations as *CinemaScope Photographic Techniques* (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox Studios, 1955). I'm grateful to Roy Wagner for sharing his copy of this pamphlet with me.

56. Clarke, "CinemaScope Photographic Techniques," 362.

57. Ibid., 363.

58. Ibid., 362.

59. Belton, *Widescreen Cinema*, 185–96.

60. See "CinemaScope," *International Sound Technician* 1, no. 2 (April 1953): 2–4, 22; and Lorin D. Grignon, "Sound for CinemaScope," in Quigley, *New Screen Techniques*, 159–70.

61. For example, *Angels Over Broadway* (1940), *The Fatal Hour* (1940), *The Little Foxes* (1941), *The Grand Central Murder* (1942), *A Guest in the House* (1944), *The Late George Apley* (1947), and *Manhandled* (1949).

62. See Kristin Thompson, *Herr Lubitsch Goes to Hollywood: German and American Film After World War I* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 71–89.

63. On recessive staging, see my *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 168–69.

64. See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 346–52; and ibid., 221–37.

65. Quoted in Edward L. de Laurot and Jonas Mekas, "An Interview With Boris Kaufman," *Film Culture* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1955): 5.

66. Quoted in Overstreet, "Interview With George Cukor," 7.

67. Quoted in Ronald Haver, *A Star Is Born: The Making of the 1954 Movie and Its 1983 Restoration* (New York: Knopf, 1988), 133.

68. Quoted in Todd McCarthy, *Howard Hawks: The Grey Fox of Hollywood* (New York: Grove, 1997), 532.

69. Fred Zinneman, *A Life in the Movies: An Autobiography* (New York: Scribners, 1992), 153.

70. On the patterning of the screen surface in Scope, see Marshall Deutelbaum, "Basic Principles of Anamorphic Composition," *Film History* 15, no. 1 (2003): 72–80.

71. Rescher, "Wide-Angle Problems," 301.

72. Data that follow, as well as examples used throughout this essay, come from viewing 185 English-language films released between 1953 and 1960. This set constitutes about 43% of the maximum of 431 A releases of the period carrying the Cinema-Scope trademark. I say a "maximum" because several films from 1956 to 1960, chiefly those released by MGM, bear the trademark but were shot with Panavision lenses. Where I could confidently determine that such was the case, I didn't consider the title a CinemaScope film and so did not count it here. It's likely that many more films I haven't yet seen will turn out to be "pseudo-Scope," so the percentage of true Scope films sampled here will be correspondingly higher.

    The list of Scope releases I took as a point of departure was that published in Carr and Hayes, *Widescreen Movies*, 91–103, but this list includes several Panavision titles. A slightly fuller list, and the source of my total, was culled from the American Film Institute online catalogue, http://afi.chadwyk.com. To my knowledge, a complete list of films in true CinemaScope (using Bausch & Lomb lenses or their clones) has not yet been compiled. My list does not include 38 titles listed in Carr and Hayes as RegalScope releases between 1956 and 1958.

    I aimed to see a minimum of one third of the Scope (i.e., non-Panavision) releases from each year considered. My sample runs as follows: 1953, 100% of 5 Scope releases; 1954, 77.8% of 36 releases; 1955, 53% of 76 releases; 1956, 40.6% of 64 releases; 1957, 33.8% of 80 releases; 1958, 34.3% of 70 releases; 1959, 35.7% of 56 releases; and 1960, 34% of 44 releases. RegalScope films are scarce in archives and on video, so my survey includes only three films released under that rubric.

73. Examples are *There's No Business Like Show Business* (1954), at 23.2 seconds; *Night People* (1954), 27.3 seconds; and *Pete Kelly's Blues* (1955), 26.1 seconds.

74. On this point, see also Barry Salt, *Film Style and Technology: History and Analysis*, 2nd ed. (London: Starword, 1992), 246.

75. For example, *The Badlanders* (1958), 5.9 seconds; *The Fly* (1958), 6.7 seconds; *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1959), 6.3 seconds; and *North to Alaska* (1959), 5.9 seconds.

76. *Oklahoma!* (1955), the earliest Todd-AO title, has an ASL of just over 17 seconds, but *South Pacific* of 3 years later comes in at 8.8 seconds. The ASLs of Panavision films from 1957 range from 14 seconds (*Jailhouse Rock*) down to 7.3 seconds (*House of Numbers*), a range that holds good in later years (with, predictably, the exception of Otto Preminger). VistaVision films exhibit a comparable flexibility. Technirama's

first U.S. release, *Night Passage* (1957), averages 7.8 seconds per shot; and the first live-action Super Technirama 70 production, King Vidor's *Solomon and Sheba* (1959), is cut even faster, at an ASL of 6.9 seconds.

77. On the move toward faster ASLs, see my *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 121–24, 141–47.

78. See for example Peter von Bagh, "Breadth of View," *Cinegrafie*, no. 16 (2003): 219, where he speaks of "the basic flat, non-existent style so typical of the first period of CinemaScope."

79. Hincha, "Twentieth Century Fox's CinemaScope," 266.

80. Quoted in Andy Marx, "Techie Achieves Honored by Academy," *Variety*, January 10–16, 1994, 22.

81. Quoted in Behlmer, *Memo from Darryl F. Zanuck*, 235.

82. Quoted in ibid., 236.

83. Jacques Rivette, "The Age of *metteurs en scène*," *Cahiers du cinema*, no. 31 (January 1954); reprinted in Jim Hillier, ed., *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 279.

84. Minnelli with Arce, *I Remember It Well*, 280.

85. Rivette, "The Age of *metteurs en scène*," 278.

86. It seems likely that some such focus point was what Clarke had in mind, because he remarks that setting the diaphragm at f/4.5 allows "quite extreme ranges of focus" ("CinemaScope Photographic Techniques," 363).

87. Richard Fleischer, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, DVD commentary, 1:15–1:34, 79:09–79:40.

88. Interestingly, Jack Webb initially resisted CinemaScope, refusing Warner's offer to make *Dragnet* (1954) in the format. "Normal size," he is said to have replied, "is plenty big enough for men, and besides how do you fill up the sides of that long ribbon of film?" See Michael J. Hayde, *My Name's Friday: The Unauthorized but True Story of Dragnet and the Films of Jack Webb* (Nashville, Tenn.: Cumberland, 2001), 82.

89. Tonino Valerii, "Italy on Widescreen," *Cinegrafie*, no. 16 (2003): 299.

90. Dwight MacDonald, "The Preminger Problem," in his *On Movies* (New York: Da Capo, 1981), 154. In fairness, Huston isn't seen in the sort of "extreme close-up" that disturbs MacDonald, and the shot of Schneider—"a billboard view . . . of the area between Miss Schneider's chin and eyebrows"—is the tightest framing in the film and comes at the story's climax.

91. Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 117–89.

92. Quoted in Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel, *The Future of the Movies: Interviews With Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, and George Lucas* (Kansas City, Mo.: Andrews and McNeel, 1991), 73.

93. Paula Parisi, "Larger Than Life, Widescreen Rules Film," *The Hollywood Reporter*, April 18, 1995, 1, 8.

94. I'm referring here to virtually all the Movie Brats, including Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese—but not Steven Spielberg, one of the few of his cohort to practice more or less classical mise-en-scène.