

WHAT IS CINEMA?

ANDRÉ BAZIN

TRANSLATED BY TIMOTHY BARNARD

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### *Editing Prohibited*

I would even say that Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* could just as easily have been edited in classical fashion, whatever artistic importance one may legitimately attach to his approach. On the other hand, it would be unthinkable for the famous seal-hunting scene in *Nanook of the North* not to show us, in the same composition, the hunter, the hole in the ice and the seal. It matters not in the slightest that the rest of the scene was edited as the director saw fit. It is necessary only that the event's spatial unity be respected at the moment when its rupture would transform reality into its mere imaginary depiction. Robert Flaherty understood this, except in those few places where the film loses its coherence. While the image of Nanook lying in wait for his prey at the edge of the hole in the ice is one of the most beautiful that film has given us, the crocodile hunt in *Louisiana Story*, which was visibly created in the editing booth, is a failure. At the same time, the film's long take of the crocodile stalking the heron, shot in a single pan, is quite simply admirable. The inverse, however, is also true: when a well-chosen shot brings together elements previously dispersed by editing, then the story recovers its realism.