

to not know the laws of this newborn world which is free of any slavery to gravity. I feel a pleasure at the sight of these images which is, too infrequently, what I seek to awaken in myself—a sensation of musical liberty.

Gallop, canter. How the ascending horizons are inverted and the abyss finally opens its petals to welcome you into its soothing heart. Become statue, house, little dog, sack of gold, rolling river of oaks. I no longer know how to separate you from the midst of your kingdom, O huntress [Diana].

Sentences cannot long carry illogic in their arms without working themselves to death. But this series of images which is not bound up with the old tricks of thought and to which no absolute meaning is attached, why should it be burdened with a logic?

Blond, you lift your head and your curving hair reveals your face. This look, this gesture toward the imagined door—I can give them a meaning of my own. If words had given you life, it would be impossible to preserve you from their constrictive power; you would be their slave. Images, be my mistress.

You are mine, dear illusions of the lens. Mine, this refreshing universe in which I take a bearing on flattering features, according to my taste.

<sup>1</sup> A reference probably to Professor Edward Adolf Sonnenshein (1851–1929), a classical scholar, whose *What is Rhythm?* (1925) had just been published by Blackwell's in England.

<sup>2</sup> Here Clair reverses the meaning of the terms, interior and exterior movement, that Moussinac and Delluc had established several years before.

## RENÉ CLAIR, "Pure Cinema and Commercial Cinema"

Translated by Stanley Appelbaum in René Clair, *Cinema Yesterday and Today*, ed. R. C. Dale (New York: Dover, 1972), 99–100. Reprinted by permission. The original French version first appeared as "Cinéma pur et cinéma commercial," in *Cahiers du mois* 16/17 (1925), 89–90.

**T**HE CINEMA is primarily an industry. The existence of "pure cinema" comparable to "pure" music seems today too much subject to chance to merit serious examination.

The question of pure cinema is directly connected with that of "cinema: art or industry?" To answer this last question, it would first be necessary to have a precise definition of the concept of *art*. Now, our era is not favorable to such precise formulations. Next, it would be necessary for the cinema's conditions of material existence to be drastically altered. A film does not exist on paper. The most detailed screenplay will never be able to foresee every detail of the execution of the work (exact camera angle, lighting, exposure, acting, etc.). A film exists only on the screen. Now, between the

brain that conceives it and the screen that reflects it, there is the entire industrial organization and its need for money.

Therefore, it seems pointless to predict the existence of a “pure cinema” so long as the cinema’s conditions of material existence remain unchanged or the mind of the public has not developed.

Nevertheless, there are already signs of the pure cinema. It can be found in fragmentary fashion in a number of films; it seems in fact that a film fragment becomes pure cinema as soon as a sensation is aroused in the viewer by purely visual means. A broad definition, of course, but adequate for our era. That is why the primary duty of the present-day filmmaker is to introduce the greatest number of purely visual themes by a sort of ruse, into a screenplay made to satisfy everybody. Therefore, the literary value of a screenplay is completely unimportant. . . .

### HENRI CHOMETTE, “Second Stage”

Translated by Stanley Appelbaum in René Clair, *Cinema Yesterday and Today*, ed. R. C. Dale (New York: Dover, 1972), 97–98. Reprinted by permission. The original French version first appeared as “Seconde étape,” *Cahiers du mois* 16/17 (1925), 86–88.

**N**O SOONER had the cinema freed the image from its original immobility than it began to express itself in disappointing formulas. False humor, Italian melodrama, the serial, and “natural” color came along to doom our new hopes. Later, the spectator—anxious for information about the theater but depending on chance for the choice of films to see—discovered *The Cheat*, Chaplin, Mack Sennett, and *Nanook*. And his understandable discouragement gave way to a temporary reconciliation.

At present—except in the eyes of the French legislator, who still classes it along with “traveling shows”—the cinema has been able to win its least favorable judges back to its side. Yet, although it is a newborn force with numerous possibilities, it is still showing signs of only one of its potentials: the representation of known things.

In short, the only role it plays in regard to the eye is partially comparable to that of the phonograph in regard to the ear: recording and reproducing.

Of course, stop-action filming reveals to us events which our eyes did not perceive or did not perceive clearly (the opening of a rose)—but at least we had an idea about the sum of these events. Of course, trick shots give us unprecedented illusions (elimination of gravity, or of the opacity of a body through double exposure)—but only by sticking to objects familiar to our reason, concrete and well-known objects. Do you wish to escape from the real and conjure up something imagined—a soul, for example? You will have to make use of a body, which has become transparent—but is still a

recognizable human body. A conventional representation, but representation.

Thus, all the present uses of cinema can be reduced to films of a single world, the representative, which can be divided into two groups: documentary—mere reproduction in motion—and dramatic (comedies, dramas, fairy-pantomimes, etc.), the origin and essence of which can be found in older types of performing arts (drama, pantomime, vaudeville, etc.).

But the cinema is not limited to the representative world. It can create. It has already created a sort of rhythm (which I did not mention when speaking about current films because its value in them is extremely diluted by the meaning of the image).

Thanks to this rhythm, the cinema can draw from itself a new potentiality, which, leaving behind the logic of events and the reality of objects, engenders a series of visions that are unknown—inconceivable outside the union of the lens and the moving reel of film. Intrinsic cinema—or, if you will, pure cinema—since it is separate from all other elements, whether dramatic or documentary—that is what certain works by our most personal directors permit us to foresee. That is what offers the purely cinematic imagination its true field and will give rise to what has been called—by Mme Germaine Dulac, I believe—the “visual symphony.”

Virtuosity, perhaps, but just like a harmonious concert of instruments, it will move our sensibilities as well as our intelligence. For why should the screen be denied that faculty for enchantment which is granted to the orchestra?

Universal kaleidoscope, generator of all moving visions from the least strange to the most immaterial, why should the cinema not create the kingdom of light, rhythms, and forms alongside that of sound?

HENRI CHOMETTE (1896–1941) was the older brother of René Clair. He worked as an assistant to Robert Boudrioz, Jacques Feyder, and Jacques de Baroncelli; made two short abstract films, *Jeux des reflets et de la vitesse* (1925) and *Cinq Minutes de cinéma pur* (1925); and then directed Dolly Davis and Albert Préjean in *Le Chauffeur de Mademoiselle* (1928).

## FERNAND LÉGER, “Painting and Cinema”

From “Peinture et cinéma,” *Cahiers du mois*, 16–17 (1925), 107–108.

**T**HE PLASTIC ARTS all exist in a state of relativity. If you wish to consider the cinema as such, it then comes under the same law.

In my own case, I know that I have used the magnification of the frame or the individualization of a detail in certain compositions. Thanks to the screen, the prejudice against “things larger than nature” no longer exists.

The future of cinema as painting lies in the attention it will draw to ob-