

have they no other purpose than to be this Marie, this Jean, and this Petit-Paul? It's not possible! There must be something more."

Certainly there is something more.

The cinema is its herald.

¹ Francis Poietevin (1854–1904) was a minor Symbolist poet.

² A reference to Jacques Copeau's famous Théâtre de Vieux-Colombier, which he founded in 1913 with the help of the writers associated with the *Nouvelle Revue française*.

³ Jean Choux (1887–1946) was a Swiss journalist and film critic who directed a half-dozen films in Switzerland and France between 1925 and 1929, and then hit the jackpot with *Jean de la Lune* (1931).

JEAN GOUDAL, "Surrealism and Cinema"

Translated by Paul Hammond in *The Shadow and Its Shadow: Surrealist Writings on the Cinema*, ed. Paul Hammond (London: British Film Institute, 1978), 49–56. Reprinted by permission. The original French text first appeared as "Surréalisme et cinéma" in *La Revue hebdomadaire* (February 1925), 343–57.

A NEW TECHNIQUE is born: immediately the philosophers come running, armed with false problems. Is it an art?—Is it not an art?—Is it even worthy of interest?

"In short," some of them say, "the cinema is only a perfected form of photography." And they refuse to credit the new invention.

The indispensable extremists assume the other position. They tell us, "Not only is the cinema an art, it will, moreover, gradually absorb all the other arts" (Monsieur Marcel L'Herbier, in a lecture at the Collège de France, repeated in Geneva during October 1924 at the showing in that town of *L'Inhumaine* [1924], previously published in *La Revue hebdomadaire* in 1923). The proof: the cinema takes the place of architecture (30 meters devoted to the palaces in *The Thief of Bagdad* [1924]), music (a Negro jazz band goes through the motions for 20 meters), dance (25 meters on a tango by Valentino). Were they to draw the obvious conclusions from their ludicrous logic they would have us believe that in future our meals will be replaced by the image of Charlie Chaplin and the Kid tucking into a plate of pancakes.

"Given its basic technical strictures, how do we see the future of the cinema?" Now that's a more realistic question. To establish the correctness of it, to begin to answer it, we need briefly to consider the evolution of the other arts.

We see each of them in their turn follow the same general pattern.

First, they escape *literary* contamination (the renunciation of figurative painting, of thematic music); next they renounce the constraint of *logic*, considered an intellectual element restricting sensory freedom, in favor of

inquiring after their guiding principles in terms of their *technique* (Cubism, musical impressionism).

(You can already foresee the third stage: thirsting for total liberty, artists will thrust aside the last support of technique and claim the right to bring into play, without any modification, the very *material* forming the basis of their art.)

We do not want to conceal the excessive simplification of these views or the dangers inherent in them; but nobody can contest this conclusion: in the evolution of every art there comes a moment, which may or may not be deplored, when the artist ignores every command of intellectual or logical origin in order to question the *technical* possibilities of his art. To us this moment appears to have arrived for the cinema.

Let us open a short parenthesis here on a literary movement whose origins are not recent, but which manifests itself at present in a very noisy way.

We know the essential character of the Surrealist theses (we find an authentic expression of them in André Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* [1924]): that the unconscious activity of the mind, on which general attention has been focused through the work of thinkers like Freud and Babinski¹ or the novels of authors like Marcel Proust, has become the keystone of mental life. The artist's principal target is henceforth to search for a reality in the dream superior to that which the logical, therefore arbitrary, exercise of thought suggests to us. On the one hand Surrealism presents itself as a critique of existing forms of literature, on the other as a complete renewal of the field and of artistic method and even, perhaps, as the renovation of the most general rules of human activity: in short, the absolute overthrow of all values.

You might think that objections to Surrealism (about which, however, you cannot deny the relative fruitfulness) are not lacking. Monsieur André Breton, even, shows himself to be ecstatic about the obstacles which already present themselves: "To its conquest [surreality] I go, certain of not getting there, but too heedless of my death not to calculate a little the joys of such possession."

The potential difficulties seem to us capable of being subsumed under two principal headings.

First, an objection as to method. It is not easy to determine if the Surrealists situate a superior reality in the dream itself, or in a sort of union or adjustment, difficult to imagine, of the two states, dream and reality. In both cases the same objection arises. If you admit that dream constitutes a superior reality, there will be insurmountable practical problems in attaining and fixing this dream. As soon as consciousness succeeds in rummaging through the unconscious you can no longer speak of the unconscious. On

the other hand if you accord a superior reality to a mystical fusion of the real and the dream, one cannot see by what means one can make two areas, by definition incommunicable, communicate with each other. (Our intention of progressing quickly here may lend too schematic an allure to our arguments. Furthermore, our real objective is not a critique of Surrealism.)

The second order of objection touches more profoundly on the anti-logical ambitions of Surrealism. Men have had the habit for so long now of using a language to communicate with each other that one asks if they can ever renounce this kind of usage. In short, what we call *reason* is the part of our mind common to all men: if it is to disappear will we not lapse into an individual, incommunicable mode of expression? "I believe more and more," writes Monsieur A. Breton (*Manifesto of Surrealism*), "in the infallibility of my thought in relation to myself." Monsieur A. Breton is right; but why then have this "spiritual and mental mechanism" of Monsieur A. Breton's, once fixed in its absolute ingenuity valid only for Monsieur A. Breton himself, printed and published? Is it not so that we can make a comparison between his mind and our mind, and is this comparison even possible without some essential reference that only reason and logic can supply?

One fact seems remarkable to us. The objections we have just sketched out lose their value as soon as one applies the Surrealist theories to the domain of cinema. (That the theorists of Surrealism have wanted to apply their ideas to literature, that is to say just where they are most contestable, should not be too surprising since the same pen suits the theorist and the poet.) Applied to the technique of cinema the correctness and fecundity of the Surrealist thesis is all the more striking.

The objection to *method* (the difficulty of uniting the conscious and the unconscious on the same plane) does not hold for cinema, in which the thing seen corresponds exactly to a *conscious hallucination*.

Let's go into a cinema where the perforated celluloid is purring in the darkness. On entering, our gaze is guided by the luminous ray to the screen where for two hours it will remain fixed. Life in the street outside no longer exists. Our problems evaporate, our neighbors disappear. Our body itself submits to a sort of temporary depersonalization which takes away the feeling of its own existence. We are nothing but two eyes riveted to ten square meters of white sheet.

But we must beware of vague analogies. It is better here to go into details.

Monsieur A. Breton, wanting to establish the superiority of the dream, writes: "The mind of the man who dreams is fully satisfied by whatever happens to it. The agonizing question of possibility arises no more." And, he asks, "what reason, what reason better than another confers this natural

allure on the dream, makes me welcome unreservedly a host of episodes the strangeness of which strikes me as I write”?

The answer to this question lies in what Taine² used to call the “reductive mechanism of images.” When we are awake the images surging into our imagination have an anemic, pale color which by contrast makes the vigor and relief of real images stand out, the ones, that is to say, we get through our senses: and this difference of value is enough to make us distinguish the real from the imagined. When we sleep our senses are idle, or rather their solicitations do not cross the threshold of consciousness and, the reducing contrast no longer existing, the imaginary succession of images monopolizes the foreground; as nothing contradicts them we believe in their actual existence.

Awake, we imagine the real and the possible all at once, while in the dream we only imagine the possible. The Surrealists see an advantage in what, they say, one is used to seeing as inferior. Without going into the legitimacy of this paradox, let us return to the cinema. There we see a whole host of material conditions conspire to destroy this “reductive mechanism of images.” The darkness of the auditorium destroys the rivalry of real images that would contradict the ones on the screen. It is equally important to ward off the impressions that can come to us through our other senses: who has never noticed the special nature of music in the cinema? Above all else it serves to abolish a silence that would let us perceive or imagine auditory phenomena of a realistic order, which would damage the necessary uniqueness of vision. And what spectator has not been embarrassed at times during the showing of a film at the attention he was giving, despite himself, to the music? In reality the only music that would suit the cinema would be a sort of continuous, harmonious, monotonous noise (like the humming of an electric fan), the effect of which would be to obdurate the sense of hearing in some way for the duration of the show.

Someone might object that these are conditions common to all forms of spectacle and that even in the theater the darkness is there to facilitate the audience's concentration on the stage. But let us observe that the individuals performing on a theater stage have a physical presence that strengthens the *trompe l'oeil* of their setting; they have three-dimensionality, they live amidst the noises of normal life; we accept them as our brothers, as our peers, while the camera aspires to give the illusion of reality by means of a simulacrum of a uniquely visual kind. An actual hallucination is needed here which the other conditions of cinema tend to reinforce, just as, in the dream, moving images *lacking three-dimensionality* follow each other on a single plane artificially delimited by a rectangle which is like a geometrical opening giving on to the psychic kingdom. The absence of color, too, the *black and white*, represents an arbitrary simplification analogous to those

one meets in dreams. Once again let us note that the actual succession of images in the cinema has something *artificial* about it that distances us from reality. The persistence of images on the retina, which is the physiological basis of cinema, claims to present movement to us with the actual continuity of the real; but in fact we know very well that it's an illusion, a sensory device which does not completely fool us. Ultimately, the rhythm of the individuals we see moving on the silent screen possesses something jerky about it that makes them the relatives of the people who haunt our dreams.

We must add one last analogy. In the cinema, as in the dream, the *fact* is complete master. Abstraction has no rights. No explanation is needed to justify the heroes' actions. One event follows another, seeking justification in itself alone. They follow each other with such rapidity that we barely have time to call to mind the logical commentary that would explain them, or at least connect them.

(Summary considerations, no doubt, but ones that allow us to make short work of certain illusions about the advisability of adding "improvements" like color, relief or some kind of sound synchronization. The cinema has found its true technique in black and white film—forget three-dimensionality and sound. To try to "perfect" it, in the sense of bringing it closer to reality, would only run counter to and slow down its genuine development.)

The cinema, then, constitutes a conscious hallucination, and utilizes this fusion of dream and consciousness which Surrealism would like to see realised in the literary domain. These moving images delude us, by leaving us with a confused awareness of our own personality and by allowing us to evoke, if necessary, the resources of our memory. (In general, however, the cinema only demands from us memory enough to link the images.)

The cinema avoids the second order of difficulty raised by Surrealism just as happily.

Though the complete repudiation of logic is forbidden language, which is born of this logic, the cinema can indulge itself in such repudiation without contravening any ineluctable internal necessity.

"The strongest image is the one that has the greatest degree of arbitrariness," declares Monsieur A. Breton, who cites, among other examples, this image from Philippe Soupault: "A church stood dazzling as a bell."

The word *church*, encompassed, by virtue of language, within a system of logical relations, just as the word *bell* is, makes the very fact of pronouncing these two words, of comparing them, evoke these two systems, makes us make them coincide. And, as they are not juxtaposable, the reader bridges at accepting the comparison.

On the other hand when the cinema shows us a dazzling church then,

without transition, a dazzling bell, our eye can accept this sequence; it is witnessing two facts here, two facts which justify themselves. And if the two images succeed each other with the necessary rapidity, the logical mechanism which tries to link the two objects in some way or other will not have time to be set in motion. All one will experience is the almost simultaneous sight of two objects, exactly the cerebral process, that is to say, that suggested this comparison to the author.

In language the foremost factor is always the logical thread. The image is born according to this thread, and contributes to its embellishment, its illumination. In cinema the foremost factor is the image which, on occasion, though not necessarily so, drags the tatters of reason behind it. The two processes, you see, are exactly inverted.

The above tends to demonstrate that not only does the application of Surrealist ideas to the cinema avoid the objection with which you can charge literary Surrealism, but that surreality represents a domain actually indicated to cinema by its very technique.

Just leaf through the dreamed poems Monsieur A. Breton has collected together at the end of his *Manifesto*, under the title of *Soluble Fish*, and you will see, perhaps, that the surest way of making the public accept them would be to treat them like film scenarios.

The adventures of the crate penetrated by human arms, sliding down hillsides, bashing against "trees that cast bright blue sunlight on it," then running aground on the first floor of a run-down hotel, and which is found to contain only starch, and the mysterious voyage of the barque which is the poet's tomb following the closing of the cemetery, and the tribulations of the lamppost, and the chase after the woman who has left her veil with her lover, a source of miracles and inexplicable bliss, so many marvelous tales with enough anacoluthon inevitably to shock the reader, but which, brought to the screen, would perhaps be accepted with delight by the spectator. The latter would see in its teeming lapses of logic no more than thousands of details, comic and strange, all ingenious.

It is time *cinéastes* saw clearly what profits they may gain in opening up their art to the unexplored regions of the dream. Up till now this has only been done intermittently, as if by default. They should lose no time in imbuing their productions with the three essential characteristics of the dream, the *visual*, the *illogical*, the *pervasive*.

THE VISUAL

The cinema is already so by force of circumstance.

It will remain so exclusively.

(There is nothing for it to fear, we repeat, from the paltry attempts at phonographic synchronization.)

THE ILLOGICAL

Everything that is foolish about cinema is the fault of an old-fashioned respect for logic.

Sentimentality is the respect for logic within the framework of feeling. (All elegance, all unselfconsciousness results from the severing of one or more links in the traditional chain of feelings.)

The *feuilleton* is the respect for logic within the framework of episodes. (I term *feuilleton* any sequence of events whose unfolding, using basic characters and situations, can be understood by the average concierge.)

Slowness is the respect for logic within the framework of situations and gestures.

Etc.

THE PERVASIVE

But if you are to bring to the screen only various illogical series of images, assembled according to the most capricious associations of ideas, don't you risk alienating the public?

First, we reply that we are suggesting only one possible direction for the cinema here. *Other ways remain open besides this one.* Bit by bit the education of the public will occur.

Next, we feel we must not lose our footing through complete incoherence. Man is only interested in what is close to him. I am interested in my dreams, despite their coherence, because they come from within me, because I find a particular quality in them belonging no doubt to what I can recognize in them of elements of *my* past life, though arbitrarily assembled. These memories are my own; but I have difficulty in identifying them. For want of a better word this is what I mean by the expression: the dream is *pervasive*.

This property of the dream is strictly personal, one can see that. How can a film, which must address itself to thousands of spectators, manage to be *pervasive*?

This is the place to reintroduce the human dimension.

One of Surrealism's points of departure is the observation that everything that emerges from the mind, even without logical form, inevitably reveals the singularity of that mind. Man retains his personality (all the more so perhaps) in his most spontaneous productions.

A film, then, will have a sufficiently pervasive and human character because it will have come from the brain of one of my peers.

We now come up against a serious problem. In the actual process of cinema, a film does not have one creator, it has two, three, ten, fifty. One man supplies the scenario, which usually consists of an extremely brief outline. This scenario is taken up by the director, who develops it, fills it out with

detail, in short brings it to the level of practical realization. It remains to note the contribution of each artist, the suggestions of the costume and prop departments, the requirements of the lighting technicians. During the course of such a many-sided collaboration doesn't the work risk losing the singular quality it owed to the individuality of the author, the singularity of its first conception?

This difficulty is, we believe, only temporary and soon tends to disappear. It is due to the exceptional conditions created by the too-rapid growth of the cinema. The cinema has met with such success since its beginnings (it is barely thirty years old, remember) that it has had to cope with demands disproportionate to its means. The public expects new films every week. To create them is the work of many. You employ whomever you can. Let us give the division of labor and the necessary specialization the time to find their way. Then, beginning with the original cell, the source idea born in his mind, the *cinéaste* will be able to supervise it, thanks to a technique he must be master of, until it is seen on the screen without the idea being bungled by a commercial organization concerned only to exploit it. On that day the cinema will have its artists, and the question whether or not "the cinema is an art" will thereby get an affirmative response difficult to contest.

The *cinéastes* are beginning to see the light.

It isn't too hard to see indications in their most recent productions that would confirm our previsions, yet with what awkwardness is this *Marvelous* in which the cinema finds its real voice still spoken of. Will results come from the comedy film side? We have memories of certain American films, almost without subtitles [intertitles], in which girls, irresponsible individuals, and animals let their whims, of the most diverting fantasy, take control of them. Do not the recent Chaplins betray the desire to construct a simplified setting which no over-precise detail can localize (Charlie Chaplin being universal, the locations he performs in could be anywhere)—and also the preoccupation with creating a dream atmosphere which is believable and makes possible the extraordinary gestures of this unfortunate with the little mustache and big feet. Remember the strange chapel with its strange congregation in *The Pilgrim* [1923], where Charlie, the bogus pastor, delivers that strange sermon; and in *Payday* [1922], Charlie, the mason in his cups, returning to a far-off lodging house that proves impossible to get to, and that nightmarish rain, and those futile, unreal attempts by the drunk to get on a tram which has no destination and will always escape, full of eternal commuters, back into the anonymous night.

Besides this burlesque *Marvelous*, Charlie's unique atmosphere, there is a place for that faery [*féerie*] *Marvelous* certain films have already brought

us, the essential elements of which would be the *geometry of line* and the *illogicality of detail*.

The Marvelous in the cinema, unable to utilize the infinite resources of color, must count above all on the resources of lighting and line. Just as in the world we inhabit no line is absolutely geometrical, so a resolutely geometrical stylization creates a surprising atmosphere.

In *The Thief of Bagdad*, for instance, two details strike the spectator forcibly: the gate of the town that opens and closes through the connecting and disconnecting of identically formed panels, and Douglas Fairbanks soaring above the unreal clouds on his scleroid horse. These two images have the admirable manifest artifice of the dream.

In the same film, on the other hand, the heavy-handed Americans, wanting to show us a monster, have laboriously sought verisimilitude and concocted a sort of enormous lizard, instead of painting in, in broad strokes, a clearly fantastic creature of geometrical cardboard. The Germans made the same blunder when they sought to represent Cerberus guarding Brunhild's castle (in *The Nibelungen* [1924]). They constructed a complicated, naively realistic mechanism needing sixteen men to make the huge thing move. What effort and money expended, not necessarily in vain, but they missed the whole point!

At least we have a success in the laboratory set F. Léger designed for Monsieur L'Herbier's *L'Inhumaine*. The effect of the machines used to bring the loved woman back to life is striking, the Cubist decor coming alive and moving in a clever frenzy.

Let us quote Monsieur A. Breton again: "No matter how charming they may be, a grown man would think he were reverting to childhood by nourishing himself on fairy tales, and I am the first to admit that all such tales are not suitable for him. The fabric of adorable improbabilities must be made a trifle more subtle the older we grow, and we are still at the stage of waiting for this kind of spider." It is the fineness of this fabric we think of when calling for the *illogicality of the detail*. It is not without unparalleled sorrow that man, crushed by a thousand years of logic, will renounce the principle of identity. The American faery that we find in this same *Thief of Bagdad* (flying carpets, flames, monsters) is not much more courageous than Perrault's, whose fairies didn't go quite so far as to change a pumpkin into a horse or a rat into a coach, but prudently changed an animal into an animal, an object into an object. "There are," adds Monsieur A. Breton, "fairy tales to be written for adults, fairy tales still almost blue." Who will write these tales if not the cinema?

The preceding pages, we repeat, aim only at suggesting one possible direction for the cinema.

As for the concessions needed to suit public taste, we do not think it

useful to insist on them. There will always be enough industrialists to keep up the old traditions, to go on adapting novels to be acted out by boxing champions and France's most beautiful *midinettes*.

What the cinema has produced over a quarter of a century justifies all our hopes. One does not fight the forces of the spirit.

JEAN GOUDAL (1895–?), as far as is known, composed just this one essay on the cinema.

¹ Joseph François Félix Babinski (1857–1932) was best known for his studies on hysteria—for example, *Démembrement de l'hystérie traditionnelle, pithiatisme* (Paris: Semaine médicale, 1909).

² Hippolyte Taine (1828–1893) was an influential literary historian and critic whose positivist theory of literature attempted to explain literary works in the context of race, place, and time period.

PAUL RAMAIN, "The Influence of Dream on the Cinema"

From "L'Influence du rêve sur le cinéma," *Cinéa-Ciné-pour-tous* 40 (1 July 1925), 8.

IF ONE TAKES inspiration from the ideas of Sigmund Freud on dream—which is "untranslatable in words, [and] can only be expressed by means of images"—it is quite obvious that one is correct in believing that the current cinema is based on dream *under all its guises*: both the dream that is an unconscious creation of moving images during sleep and the daydream that is a subconscious creation of the waking state—two forms which have the same cause according to certain psychologists. Moreover, inspiration is associated with dream: like dream, it is a spontaneous manifestation of the unconscious or subconscious which is translated into images.

Now, this—quasi-conscious, if one can say that—use of dream appears constantly in the majority of artistic films or real "cinema," whether it occurs as content, as means, or merely as a sporadic element.

To cite the films which are dreamlike or use dream images would be time-consuming, there are so many: from Sjöstrom's *Charette fantôme* [*The Phantom Carriage*, 1921] to René Clair's *Fantôme du Moulin Rouge* [1925] and *Midsummer Night's Dream* (in preparation),¹ by way of the same author's *Entr'acte* [1924], a film which has to be regarded as a type of dream but an incoherent one, which makes it all the more interesting. *L'Inhumaine* [1924] also is of an oneiric order. As for the German productions, from *Caligari* [1919], which is a distorted vision, the oneiric delirium of a madman, to *Waxworks* [Paul Leni, 1924], *The Hands of Orlac* [Robert Wiene, 1924], and *Warning Shadows* [Arthur Robinson, 1923], dream turns to nightmare and nightmare to hallucination.

If the cinema is dreamlike, the reciprocal is also true: dream is like the cinema. Without entering here into what I could call the physiology of the cinema, I will show briefly how dreams and cinema are merely different,