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RADICAL AMERICA



SPECIAL ISSUE

SURREALISM

in the service of the

Revolution

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Introduction to 1970

Forty-five years after the appearance of the first Surrealist Manifesto, the revolutionary aims and principles of surrealism remain almost completely misunderstood in the English-speaking world. It would require easily a thousand pages to merely catalogue, as succinctly as possible, the distortions, mis-statements, obfuscations, derisions and lies directed against the surrealist movement since 1924. Again and again we are told, for example, that surrealism is only an artistic and literary movement; or that it is exclusively French; or that it somehow "disappeared" as a movement during the second World War. Critics of the most varied and seemingly incompatible persuasions have formed a veritable holy alliance to exorcise the surrealist spectre, openly avowing their common unrelenting opposition to this essentially new and disquieting menace.

But surrealism knows well the reasons why it must be attacked. The bourgeois protagonists of "art-for-art's-sake" (including its recent incarnations under the names Pop, Op, Minimal Art, etc.) despise the surrealist movement because of its solidarity with the cause of proletarian revolution, its adherence to the principles of marxism-leninism. Thus too the priest Montague Summers, who tries to convince us that "God is the only Reality," is insulted by the "intimacy...between surrealism and communism," and judges surrealism guilty of "crass materialism," of being "unmystical" and "unromantic," and of denying the supernatural. Sartre and Camus, while climbing the ladder of literary and philosophical success, also found it auspicious to fulminate against the surrealist insurrection: their invertebrate polemics against André Breton are classics of incomprehension and calumny. Stalinists, for their part, pretend to see in surrealism only decadence, "idealism" and even mysticism, doubtless because the surrealists have never succumbed to the bureaucratic superficiality of so-called "socialist" realism. The liberal humanist Herbert Muller absurdly reduces surrealism to a "glorification of the irrational, the unconscious," and accordingly manages to read into its similarities with—of all things—fascism. Renegades from surrealism such as S. Dali (better known as Avida Dollars), P. Waldberg, Marcel Jean and J.-J. Lebel also add their mediocre resources to this rampant idiocy. Finally, even Theodor W. Adorno, whose indisputable intellectual qualifications would have led us to expect greater accuracy in this regard, permitted himself to write that "it is doubtful if any of the surrealists ever read Hegel"—a statement which, considering the obvious and immense influence the author of the Phenomenology and the Logic began to exert on the surrealists as early as the late 1920s, must be counted as plainly and demonstrably false. (The example of Adorno suffices to indicate how the consensus of confusion is reinforced and perpetuated by the casual errors and misinformed ignorance of genuinely intelligent thinkers.)

Surrealism itself arises here and now to challenge and destroy the lying insinuations leveled against it, as well as to combat the overwhelming lack of reliable information which has hitherto confined the subject to a few academic specialists and columnists for the Sunday supplements. This surrealist intervention, raising its voice in the English language, intends to correct the stultifying procession of misconceptions not only by elementary critical techniques of clarification and polemic, but above all

by exemplary manifestations of the ineluctable spirit of surrealist adventure, discovery and revelation.

Let us make clear at the very beginning that it is the fundamental aim of the surrealist movement to diminish and ultimately to dispose of completely the appalling contradictions between dream and waking life, desire and reality, the unconscious and the conscious; to "transform the world" (in the words of Marx), to "change life" (in the words of Rimbaud), to create a society of freedom and exaltation, of "poetry made by all," according to Lautréamont's unparalleled watchword. Let us also make clear, to dispel in advance certain misunderstandings, that surrealism fully recognizes that the liberation of the mind requires thoroughgoing social liberation (that is, the emancipation of the working class) and consequently situates itself unhesitatingly "in the service of the Revolution."

Doubtless, however, many serious revolutionaries will approach this surrealist compilation with considerable misgivings, expecting to find here nothing more than a new fashion following in the dismal wake of existentialism, happenings, psychedelics, "post-scarcity" anarchism, McLuhanism, rock 'n' roll mysticism, pop astrology and other essentially theological distractions of a hysterical middle class entering a new period of capitalist crisis. A radical activist might well ask what it is, precisely, that surrealism brings to the revolutionary movement; in what way, with what weapons, does it strengthen the cause of proletarian emancipation? Such questions are, in themselves, entirely legitimate. But they are too often asked of us with an attitude of egocentric arrogance which only too clearly reveals an underlying bad faith. Let me emphasize, meanwhile, that we do not claim for ourselves any "artistic" privileges: we contribute to the best of our abilities to current political struggles and are prepared at any and all times to act decisively on the side of the proletariat, even to take up arms, to serve in the Red Army in order to destroy once and for all the loathesome reign of the bourgeoisie. But as surrealists our essential contribution to the revolutionary cause lies elsewhere, and it would constitute for us an act of intellectual and moral evasion to pretend otherwise.

The reader will find in the following pages, and in our other and forthcoming publications, sufficient evidence of this surrealist contribution. But this traces, above all, only the initial steps of the surrealist project. In the long run, especially here in the United States, surrealism has the power to decisively dethrone and guillotine the ignoble traditions of positivism-pragmatism-rationalism-humanism which for a century and a half, at least, have stifled the development of revolutionary thought in this country. Rest assured that we will perform this ideological regicide with a smile upon our lips, in homage to Saint-Just, to Nat Turner, to Lenin, to Durruti, to Che Guevara, to their admirable, inestimable severity which is also the severity of the true practice of poetry.

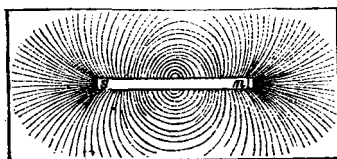
The texts collected herein are not presented with the customary anthropological justifications. Least of all should one expect to find here a complete exposition of the surrealist point of view, or any sort of "finished" compilation: surrealist dynamism automatically precludes such

pretensions. There is occasion to insist, in fact, on the essentially prefatory (as opposed to conclusive) character of the following material. Surrealism is a movement defiantly not shut up in tight definition. These pages bring together a wide selection of theoretical, critical, poetic and pictorial manifestations of surrealism, mostly dating from the post-war period (and many of the texts appearing here translated for the first time), to serve not only as an antidote to the academic and journalistic propaganda against surrealism, but primarily as an introduction, an initiation, to certain fundamental surrealist principles and preoccupations, as well as to its methods of intervention in various domains of inquiry.

The prefatory character of this compilation will soon reveal itself in another and more immediate sense, for the present preliminary act of clarification is intended above all to clear the ground for a specifically surrealist journal in the English language. In closest collaboration and solidarity with the international surrealist movement (with comrades in France, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Cuba, Belgium, Portugal, Brazil, Argentina, England, etc.) this journal, to be called ARSENAL: SURREALIST SUBVERSION—the first issue of which is now in preparation—will demonstrate with ruthless incandescence that surrealists today, more than ever, assume the position of “specialists in revolt.”

For the cause of freedom remains the brightest star in the eye of man, source of our most ardent hope and focus of the realization of our most splendid and inexhaustible dreams. Armed with its impassioned dialectic, with Maldoror's six-bladed American knife, surrealism spares no effort in its perpetual unfettering of the human imagination, releasing the most far-reaching and daring forces of inspiration into the theory and practice of total revolution.

Franklin ROSEMONT



ARSENAL

surrealist subversion

for further information write:
ARSENAL c/o Rosemont
1858 north Howe Street
Chicago, Illinois 60614

SURREALISM IN THE SERVICE OF THE REVOLUTION IN 1970

LETTER

to the Chancellors of European Universities

Gentlemen:

In the narrow tank which you call "Thought" the rays of the mind rot like old straw.

Enough plays on words, syntactic dodges, formula-juggling; now there is the great Law of the Heart to find, the Law which is not a Law (a prison) but a guide for the mind lost in its own labyrinth. Further away than science will ever reach, there where the arrows of reason break against the clouds, this labyrinth exists, a central point where all the forces of being and the ultimate nerves of spirit converge. In this maze of moving and always changing walls, outside all known forms of thought, our mind stirs, watching for its most secret and spontaneous movements—those with the character of a revelation, an air of having come from elsewhere, of having fallen from the sky.

But the race of prophets is extinct. Europe crystallizes, slowly mummifies herself beneath the wrappings of her frontiers, her factories, her courts of justice, her universities. The frozen spirit cracks between the mineral staves which close upon it. The fault lies with your mouldy systems, your logic of two plus two equals four; the fault lies with you, Chancellors, caught in the net of syllogisms. You manufacture engineers, magistrates, doctors who do not know the true mystery of the body or the cosmic laws of existence; false scholars blind in the other world, philosophers who pretend to reconstruct the mind. The least act of spontaneous creation is a more complex and revelatory world than any metaphysics.

So leave us alone, Gentlemen, you are only usurpers. By what right do you claim to canalize human intelligence and award spiritual certificates of merit?

You know nothing of the spirit, you ignore its most secret and essential ramifications, those fossil imprints so close to our own origins, those tracts which occasionally we are able to discover deep in the most unexplored lodes of our minds.

In the name of your own logic we say to you: Life stinks, Gentlemen. Look at your faces for a moment, consider your products. Through the sieve of your diplomas is passing a whole generation of gaunt and bewildered youth. You are the plague of a world, Gentlemen, and so much the better for that world, but let it consider itself a little less at the head of humanity.

Antonin ARTAUD

(originally published in *La Revolution Surréaliste*, No. 3, April 1925)

Fig. 57.



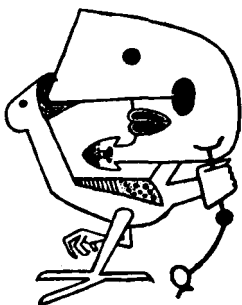
PREFACE

TO THE

International Surrealist Exhibition

London, 1936

drawing by Victor Brauner



WE KNOW the fundamental criticism brought by Marx and Engels against 18th century materialism: first, the conception of the early materialists was 'mechanistic'; second, it was metaphysical (on account of the anti-dialectical nature of their philosophy); third, it did not entirely exclude idealism, the latter subsisting in a 'higher' form in the domain of social science (owing to lack of acquaintance with historical materialism). On all other points, of course, Marx and Engels were in unequivocal agreement with the early materialists.

Similarly, surrealism finds no difficulty in its own domain in distinguishing the boundaries that limited not only the means of expression of realist writers and artists but also their thought; in justifying the historic necessity of eliminating these boundaries; or in making it clear that this undertaking can give rise to no divergencies between it and the old realism with regard to the recognition of the real, the affirmation of the all-powerfulness of the real. Contrary to the insinuation of certain of its detractors, it is easy, as will be seen, to demonstrate that, of all the specifically intellectual movements up till now, it is the only one to be forearmed against the whims of idealist fantasy, the only one to have taken premeditated action, in art, against 'fideism'.(1)

It will be seen that all attempts to make the above two lines of thought contradict one another must fail miserably.

In the modern period, painting, for instance, was until recently pre-occupied almost exclusively with expressing the manifest relationships which exist between exterior perception and the ego. The expression of this relationship became more and more deceptive and insufficient in proportion as it became less possible for it to attempt to enlarge and deepen man's 'perception-consciousness' system, whose most interesting artistic possibilities it had long exhausted, leaving only that extravagant attention to exterior details of which the work of any of the great 'realist' painters bears the mark. By mechanising the plastic method of representation of the extreme, photography dealt a final blow to all this. Painting was forced to beat a retreat and to retrench itself behind the necessity of expressing internal perception visually. I cannot insist too much on the fact that this place of exile was the only one left to it.

The only domain that the artist could exploit became that of purely mental representation, in so far as it extends beyond that of real perception, without therefore becoming one with the domain of hallucination. But here it should be recognised that the two domains are by no means clearly separated, and that all attempts at delimitation are open to dispute. What is important is that mental representation (in the object's physical absence) provides, as Freud has said, 'sensations related to processes taking place on different levels of the mental personality, even the most profound.' The necessarily more and more systematic exploration of these sensations in art is working towards the abolition of the ego in the id, and is thereupon forced to make the pleasure principle predominate over the reality principle. It tends to give ever greater freedom to instinctive impulses, and to break down the barrier raised before civilised man, a barrier which the primitive and the child ignore. The social importance of such an attitude, if one takes account of the general disturbance of the sensibility that it entails (shifting of considerable psychic burdens on to the constituent elements of the perception-consciousness system), on the one hand, and of the impossibility of going back to the former position on the other, is incalculable.

Is that to say that the reality of the exterior world has become subject to caution for the artist constrained to draw the elements of his work from internal perception? To maintain that this was so would be witness either to a great poverty of thought or to extremely bad faith. In the mental domain just as in the physical domain, it is quite clear that there could be no question of 'spontaneous generation'. Surrealist painters could not bring even the most apparently free of their creations to light were it not for the 'visual remains' of external perception. It is only by regrouping these disorganised elements that they are able to reclaim both their individual and their collective rights at once. The genius of these painters will eventually appear to rest not so much on the always relative novelty of their subject-matter, as on the more or less great initiative they display when it is a question of making use of this subject-matter.

So it is that the whole technical effort of surrealism, from its origins until to-day, has consisted in multiplying the ways of reaching the most profound levels of the mental personality.

Pre-determination of the end to be attained, if this end is of the order of knowledge, and the rational adaptation of means towards this end, are enough to defend surrealism against all accusations of mysticism. We say that the art of imitation (of places, scenes, exterior objects) has had its day,



A Clear Day

(drawing by Conroy MADDOX)

and that the artistic problem consists to-day in bringing a more and more objective precision to bear upon mental representation, by means of the voluntary exercise of the imagination and memory (it being understood that the involuntary acquisition of the material on which mental representation has to draw is solely due to exterior perception). The greatest benefit that surrealism has derived from this kind of operation up till now has been that of having succeeded in reconciling dialectically these two terms which are so violently contradictory for adult man: perception, representation; and in bridging the gap that separates them. Surrealist painting and construction of objects from now on permit the organisation of perceptions of an objective tendency. This tendency causes these perceptions to present a profoundly disturbing and revolutionary character in that they imperiously call forth, from exterior reality, something to correspond to them. One can predict that to a very large extent this something will exist.

André BRETON

(translated by David Gascoyne)

(1) 'Fideism: doctrine substituting faith for science or, by extension, attributing a certain importance to faith.' -- Lenin

INTERVIEW

with

André Breton

IN VIEW OF THE EVENTS WHICH ARE TAKING PLACE TODAY, WHAT CHANGES DO YOU THINK WILL OCCUR IN ART?

A new spirit will be born from the present war. We must not forget that the tree of 1870 bore The Hunting of the Snark, Les Chants de Maldoror, Une Saison en Enfer, Ecce Homo. The tree of 1914 brought to their culminating points the work of Chirico, Picasso, Duchamp, Apollinaire, Raymond Roussel, as well as the work of Freud which will influence the entire modern movement on an international scale. Doubtless it is still too early to judge that which is living and rich in promise on the 1940 tree, as well as that which is dead in back of it. It is certain that whatever persists, under the present circumstances, in growing as if nothing were happening, stands self-condemned. I particularly suspect everything that decks itself more and more heavily with jewels; I strongly fear that this is but artificially upheld, and fascinates only in the manner of embalmed corpses. The time has come for a general reconnaissance on the vastest plane; I believe that in art such a reconnaissance ought not be embarrassed by any a priori systematic view, nor by any technical prejudices. The 'new intellectual tremors' (Lautréamont) are all that count. As always in such periods when, socially, human life is almost worthless, I think we must learn

to read with, and look through, the eyes of Eros -- Eros who, in time to come, will have the task of re-establishing that equilibrium briefly broken for the benefit of death. Nothing seems to me to face this trial better than two pictures, chosen as far apart as possible, and outside of surrealism: 'New York Movie' by Edward Hopper, and Hirschfield's Nude ('At the Window'). The very beautiful young woman, lost in a dream beyond the confounding things happening to others, the heavy mythical column, the three lights of 'New York Movie' seem charged with a symbolic significance which seeks a way out of the curtained stairway. It is remarkable that it should also be between curtains, the one lifted, the other raised by itself, that Hirschfield's nude appears in that unique light of a magician's act which has been so well captured by this artist (the first great mediumistic painter). The opening of the curtains, where the figure is placed, is in the form of a perfect Greek vase, whose 'paranoiac' power is much more disquieting than that of the current vogue borrowed from children's puzzles: Find the Hunter (or Voltaire). I imagine that a half-drawn curtain meant a great deal in the attraction which, of Chirico's pictures, the most 1914 had for me, 'La Cerveau de l'Enfant' ('The Child's Brain'). (When I caught sight of it in a window of the Rue de la Boetie, an irresistible impulse forced me to get off the bus and return to gaze at it.) It seems to me that in times of grave exterior crisis, this curtain, visible or not, expressing the necessity of passing from one epoch to another, ought to make itself felt in some way in every work capable of facing the perspective of tomorrow.

WHAT IS THE PRESENT ORIENTATION OF SURREALISM?

The answer to this would be to know how the struggle under way in Europe is capable of influencing my activity and that of my friends. Once more this struggle involves such emotional charges and is called upon to have such decisive consequences on several planes that there is no intellectual step which will not find itself modified - contradicted, weakened, verified, reinforced - more or less radically. Surrealism, as you know, has always endeavored to answer to two sorts of preoccupations: the first of these proceeding from the eternal (the mind grappling with the human condition), the other proceeding from the actual (the mind witness of its own movement: for this movement to have any value we hold that in reality as in dream the mind should go beyond the 'manifest content' of events to arrive at the consciousness of their 'latent content'). These tendencies naturally carry me, as I believe all holders of previously defined attitudes should be carried, to state precisely, in view of the general crisis at which we assist, what is ending in surrealism, what is continuing, and what is beginning.

WHAT IS ENDING: is the illusion of independence, I will even say of the transcendence, of the work of art. In spite of precautions taken at the beginning of surrealism, and the reiterated warnings that followed, this deviation has not been completely avoided: it shows itself in egocentrism (the poet, the artist begins to overestimate his own gifts, scorning the precept of Lautréamont: 'Poetry must be made by all. Not by one,' which remains one of the fundamental tenets of surrealism; it brings with it indifferentism (he sets himself above the melee, believes himself entitled to an Olympian attitude) and is generally ratified by stagnation (he swiftly exhausts his individual resources, is capable only of sapless variations on

a threadbare theme). We see today where this has led Eluard: collaboration in La Nouvelle Revue Française of Paris (a new series sponsored by the Germans) with a poem that is very careful to appeal to all tastes, little else than a vain language of fruits and flowers which would not be out of place in an old number of Keepsake; and Avida Dollars in New York, hunting sensational publicity to illustrate the pitiful rapport of a badly made woman's foot and a worn-out shoe, the beginning of his 'classical period'. It is clear that neither the one nor the other, even though they persist in advertising it, has anything more in common with surrealism.

WHAT IS CONTINUING: is surrealist activity in the three paths in which it was most deeply engaged before this war, and which is the recent period the critical works of my friends Nicolas Calas in New York and Georges Henein in Cairo have set forth quite clearly: the estrangement of sensation, in full accord with the precept of Rimbaud, to make oneself a 'seer' by the careful derangement of all the senses; the deep exploration of objective chance, center of conciliation for natural necessity and human necessity -- point of revelation, pivot of freedom; the prospecting of black humor, extreme means for the 'ego' to surmount the traumas of the exterior world and above all to show that for the great illnesses of the 'ego', great remedies, in the Freudian sense, can come only from the 'id'. My personal contribution to surrealist work, thus defined, will consist in the imminent publication of an Anthologie de l'Humeur Noir from Swift to the present day, refused in France by the censor. I also propose to publish a poem, Fata Morgana, written last winter in Marseilles and refused by the same censor. This poem fixes my position, more unyielding than ever, of resistance to the masochistic undertakings which tend in France to restrain poetic liberty or immolate it on the same altar as the others. This kind of undertaking is, precisely, a recent manifesto of Aragon on the pretended necessity of returning poetry to fixed forms and 'rich' (!) rhymes. What continues and what must be maintained is the great modern tradition inherited from Baudelaire:

"To plunge to the bottom of the abyss,
Hell or Heaven, no matter;
To the bottom of the Unknown
To find the New!"

In the French language this conception is upheld and illustrated by Benjamin Péret, Pierre Mabille, Nicolas Calas, Julien Gracq, E. L. T. Mesens, René Char, Alice Paalen, Valentine Penrose, Aimé Césaire, René Menil, J.-B. Brunius, Maurice Blanchard. It is this conception in painting which, in the latest period, renders more and more necessary and dazzling with truth and life the productions of Max Ernst, André Masson, Yves Tanguy, René Magritte, Wolfgang Paalen, Kurt Seligmann, Victor Brauner, Leonora Carrington, Kay Sage, S.W. Hayter; and which leads us to expect the best from the researches of Oscar Dominguez, Wifredo Lam, Matta Echaurren, Gordon Onslow-Ford, Esteban Frances, Joseph Cornell, David Hare. Collective activity, such as has always been practiced in surrealism, will appear soon again in a card game, for which a model was devised in Marseilles at the beginning of 1941, with another in preparation in New York. This game, of which the significations and figures were debated among us at some length, interests me not only because, in such a troubled time, it proposes to throw an ideological bridge between two worlds, but also because, aside from the very different contingencies which witnessed

its elaboration, it shows plainly the unity of aspiration that exists between surrealism here and over there.

WHAT IS BEGINNING: everything which, with surrealism, is able to satisfy the ambition to bring the most audacious solutions to problems posed by current events. These events and the commentaries to which they give rise, as well as the notable poverty of perspective which one gets from them all, prescribe the overthrow of ways of thought which have been honored for centuries. I affirm that not a single one of them is capable of giving a satisfactory account of the things happening today on a world scale. The generally awaited verdict is that of a superiority of arms, pure and simple; it is enough to say that it is unthinkable because unpredictable -- as if communications between the exterior world and the interior world had been cut. In thumbing through the works of those who pretend to profit from France's defeat, I am struck by the brevity, not to say sterility, of their views. Conquerors and conquered appear to me headed for the same abyss if they do not instruct themselves before it is too late in the process which set them one against the other; in the course of such a process, the exhaustion of the economic causes of the conflict will but emphasize, in effect, the common misery of our contemporaries, which in the last analysis is doubtless of an ideological order: it is rationalism, a closed rationalism which is killing the world; physical violence is unconsciously accepted, justified as the issue of mental passivity: in this game the least permeable thoughts - Cartesian for instance - are those which turn out to be the quickest overthrown. This is so true, the 'giving up' so general, despair so great, that many ask - I am assured that in this sense a strong current exists in America - if the salvation of man does not demand his 'disintellectualization' for the sake of a revaluation of his prime instincts. It is certain that as far as faith, honor and ideals are concerned, one sees everywhere today the survival of the sign of the signified thing. Faith, ideals, honor ask to be established on new bases; in the meantime all the rags which don't even cling to the body any more ought to be shaken off. In this respect surrealism will never find a more favorable period for its program, in the diving-bell of automatism, the conquest of the irrational, the patient comings and goings in the labyrinth of the calculus of probabilities, are still far from having been brought to an end. The present circumstances remove all utopian aspects and give them a vital interest, of the same importance as laboratory researches. These activities are not in any way restricted and the practical object of surrealism is, on the contrary, to multiply them. Today I see two fields laid out which it will be impossible to avoid without compromising the security of its advance: it seems to me urgent that surrealism confront the results on the one hand with the Gestalt theory, according to which, in particular, all distinction between sensible functions must be rejected; and on the other hand with those of the Theory of Chance of Revel, according to which everything conceivable is possible, everything possible tends to be manifested (everything possible tends to be repeated an equal number of times), in such a way that everything representable tends to be manifested. I am sure that this collocation promises many discoveries and many new certainties.

DO YOU THINK THAT A THIRD MANIFESTO OF SURREALISM IS IN ORDER?

Absolutely.

(excerpts from an interview published in VIEW magazine, December 1940)

HOMAGE
to
Saint-Pol-Roux



collage by F. R.

Art Poetique

The Egyptian spirit enumerates its uncommitted sins before Osiris in order to prove that it deserves eternal blessedness; but the poet has no need to exculpate himself before any judge.

I

I have dazzled even prigs and unbelievers without abusing the marvels inherent in my art.

II

I have scorned meter, rhyme; I have polished words. 'Music be gone!' A plague on discourse!

III

I have discarded clarity as worthless. Working in darkness, I have discovered lightning. I have disconcerted. I have sounded the mute; have confronted monsters and miracles; have burned everything that exasperates the impoverished and the good soul.

IV

Man's dreams, his deliriums, have reached their culmination in my poems. It has not been for me to make them state their name; protiform, they have several directions. I have respected their disorder. I have given free course to their flight. My words testify to their perpetual metamorphosis.

V

I have exalted the feelings that one tests blindly and would destroy in the desire to identify. Thanks to me everyone now opens his eyes to them. He experiences them in a new intimacy. His soul is more at ease when that which he had held too tightly escapes him.

VI

I have not imitated those who acquiesce to the desires of the masses or the powerful. I have established for myself, my rules, my principles, and my tastes, and I have overstated their difference, comparing myself in this with great poets, and through them, with all men. I have thought that there was neither a better nor more expedient way to point out my sincerity and my final dependence.

VII

I have proposed to be inimitable. I have demonstrated my mastery; I have not hidden my boldness. I have rejected the commonly accepted disciplines. I have invented others for my own use. If anyone can imitate me (in being inimitable) it is simply my reward.

VIII

I have never had the burden of proof. Poetry is not a business; impatience and pride guard its cradle. I have avoided platitudes and obviousness. One forces locks, not images. I have never needed to proclaim myself magus and prophet.

IX

I have never feigned the indifference, the good sense and the wisdom of nations. I have noted with satisfaction that my transports have separated me from the flock of Panurge.

X

Work? Pain? Unknown. I have recalled that for water it was an easy, unquestionable course from rain to the spring. I have presented myself as a spring, producing pure water naturally. Verses rushed forth from the very first.

XI

With every word, my verses remind that they are a negation of prose. ('It is oracle that I speak.') Each vain effort to reduce their enigma, to avoid their trap, demands a new reading. One cannot penetrate their secret. In wanting it so desperately, one renders their beauty all the more unfathomable.

XII

Poetry escapes the banality, the servility and the futility of prose, that which is inappreciable. I have held all the dramas of love in a soap bubble. My verses immediately astound. Everything about them distinguishes them from ordinary language, and the spirit marvels that the ambiguous word, the long and uneasy syllable, leads it, trembling, into the woods.

XIII

To someone else belongs the care of feeding the soul with staple foods, which, though indispensable to his stagnant mediocrity, are not rare. I have wanted to force upon him strange and luxurious dishes from the antipodes or the abyss.

XIV

I have seen neither majesty in a king nor ministry in a priest. I have attracted attention to the mockery of sceptre, the slime of the sandal. I have attacked things broadside.

XV

I have not observed the same disrespect in the workshop of the artisan. But I have praised neither his labor nor his work. I have picked up a wood shaving to praise the curve, the color and the quality. Dialectic calls for such priorities.

XVI

Imagination is neither right nor wrong. One does not invent in a void. I have resorted to chance and to magic potions. I have disdained reason and experience. I have changed, if only to have solicited from them their commanding way, the meanings of words. Words leave me, nevertheless, richer than they found me. They have enhanced my powers by confrontations which are retained in the mind.

XVII

I have been rash enough to boast of my audacity and to recommend it as a principle. My imprudences have always been happy; I admit this with pride. I have relied, above all, on the gifts of fate, always challenging them to accentuate the power of my imagination and the generosity of my heart. I have accepted them with pride; rejoicing once more that they should be mine.

XVIII

I have expressed that which was considered, before me, to be inexpressible.

XIX

I have divulged that which was reputed to be unknowable. I have revered the least fashionable science, knowing the impossible, every complex thing that a person considers from birth to death. But, meeting it in my verses, one is struck by evidence that unchains in him the laughter of hashish.

XX

I have a pure heart. I have scandalized all the imbeciles, except those who sleep the sleep of the just.

XXI

Those who like my verses should say them when they are alone and their door opens in the night. Those who like my verses and who love, no longer have any need of saying them.

XXII

I have given to each truth its well.

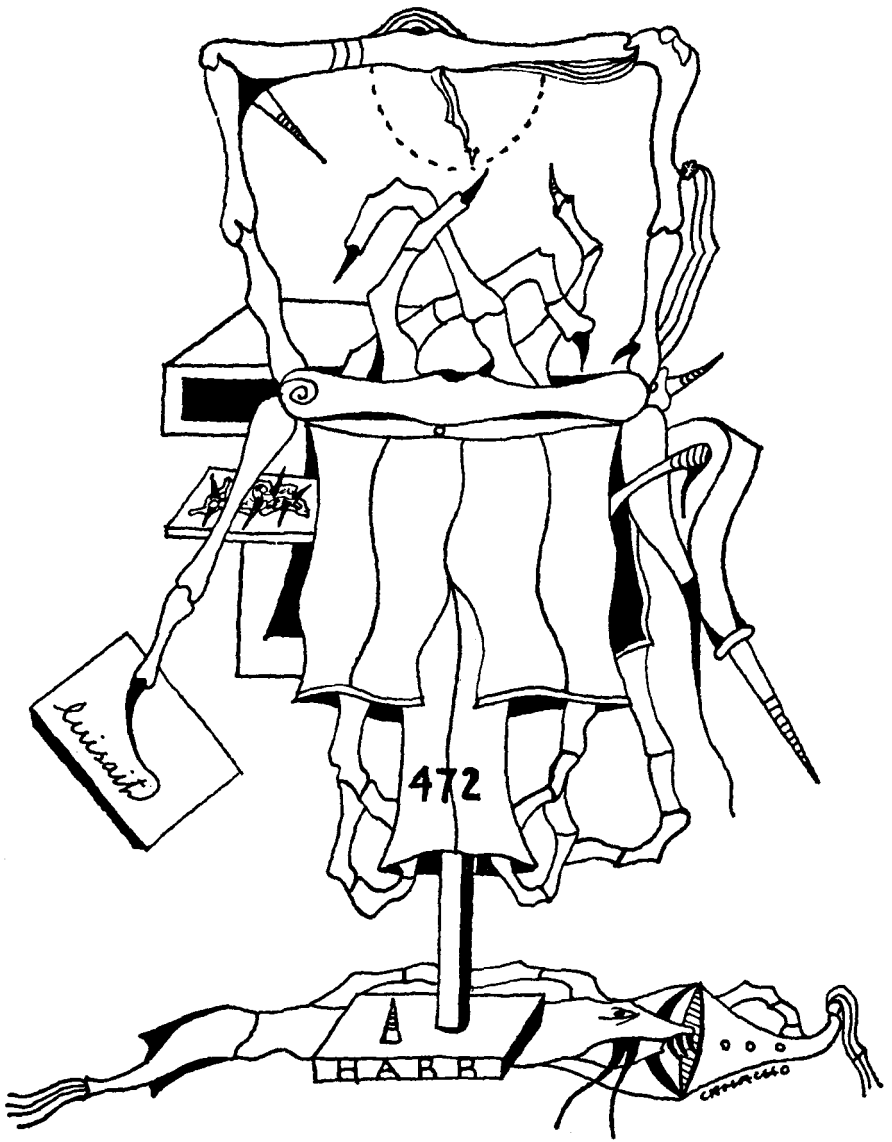
XXIII

This path has freely chosen me. The idea of success or failure is at the end of my foot.

André BRETON and Jean SCHUSTER

1959

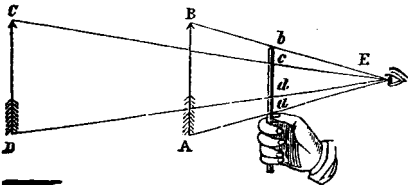
(translated by Louise Hudson)



drawing by Jorge CAMACHO

The Period of SLEEPING FITS

(The following text, reprinted from the Surrealist Number of THIS QUARTER of 1932, remains one of the clearest appraisals of the origins and earliest phase of surrealist activity, viewed in the light of its subsequent development. The concluding discussion attacks those who, like Desnos and others, wished to confine surrealism to the terrain cleared by its first experiments, and who avoided the question of revolution and thus threatened to reduce the surrealist revolt to mere literature.)



‘Know that poetry is found wherever the stupidly jeering smile of duck-faced man is not.’

LAUTRÉAMONT

SO MANY voices that were calculated even when the speakers smiled had disgusted my ears with hearing. Over the too quotidian cobbles, my feet were dragging weighted miles lined with a shadow which yet had no thickness. All the trees were in gallow's wood, and they were innumerable in the forest of repression, with its leaden foliage so thick that from dawn to dusk and from dusk to dawn one did not dare to imagine that some day, beyond the horizon and beyond habit, there would burst a sun all sulfur and love. The leaves were repeating the druidical ineptitudes of oaks, the Mediterranean hypocrisy of olive trees, the fatal bitterness of box, the icy Puritanism of willows, and the dirty innuendos whispered by the poplars of the Third Republic. All the tree-trunks were divided into an infinity of branches sinuous and insinuating, which proffered their muffling ability to strangle quickly, if not the too reckless creatures, certainly the words in their throats. Shipwrecks right inland. Old men were nodding their heads, assured that none would dare to retort to their cloying smiles by refusing to clutch at the wrecks of dogmas, the buoys of classical education, or the floating roots of prejudices.

Now, the period of sleeping-fits remains for me above all as the refusal of an obstinate heart, obstinate in beating, even in the void of a breast which all the ants of dissatisfaction had begun to attack and to eat away to the point of its caving in.

Yes, I had passed my fifteenth birthday, my twentieth birthday. That was natural, and it was natural too that my forehead on fire should have yearned for its wreath of cool hands.

Before, as during, as after, the War, the atmosphere of France had unremittingly been that with which skeptical heads and empty heads are made.

In the days of my childhood, immediately after the first secret readings of books, unmistakable realism had sought to constrain me to see the world as all puffiness and sclerosis. In practice, a sordid materialism expressed official idealism. When I was taking philosophy at the lycee, Kant

appeared to me, in the icy halo of his intangible noumena, as an avenger and all the more and all the better did he so appear, that the war-like opportunism of the time was unceasingly seeking reasons for having no reasons. A few years later it was Chirico's pictures which, through the case-ments made by their frames, opened up a whole series of avenues to my dreams. In the heart of the metaphysical city, in the shadows of statues, artichoke pillows invited to sleep, while, as I read Lautréamont, Paris ceased to be the capital of France and rose again to life out of its stones. The Seine... the rue Vivienne... The light in the Ile de France, which commonplace people find so agreeable, was to me no longer even a scrap of paper. The lead of the skies, the lead of skulls, was lit, crowned, torn, illuminated by a revealing thunderbolt. And even now, after years and years, to enable me to touch that ever fiery time, there must be the May storm so quickening the pulse as to make one fancy that, born of the wrists, subterranean rows of little birds are blooming in heavy flowers of gray matter under the sounds of one's palm.

I wish I could write these recollections in letters of phosphorus. If I am writing them at all, it is because just now, in the Avenue de l'Opera, the sunset had suffused the faces with enough sulfur to turn them yellow, an unbearable yellow, while at the same instant there became blue, an intolerable blue, the bowler hat, originally black, of a quaint little stroller.

Thus I am able to recall that Desnos has eyes sticking out of his face. I am able to recall his two oysters in their shell-lids as they used to reflect in all their glaucous and raucous passivity the motion of the sea. At the edge, the start, of this sea, there had been a beach, of sand by day and of skin by night. On the land side of the beach, in an orchard with too many flowers, a girl had thrown herself down and asked me to give a whole afternoon to crushing geraniums between her breasts.

In the evening, she had invited me to her mother's, her mother being chock-full of theosophy and occult sciences. In the dining-room of the little house, there was also an old woman who, because she could scratch her nose with her chin, had called herself Madame Dante. In between a couple of vaticinations, this self-styled descendant of the famous Alighieri would in winter collect ivy in the Parc Monceau with which to deck her head-bands. In summer she made herself a scourge on the Normandy coast.

The girl with the geranium breasts, her mother, Madame Dante and I sat down all four of us to join hands round a heavy table. Madame Dante had announced that there would be incarnations. My head was content to drop forward onto the wood. I was asleep. The mother of the girl with geranium breasts hastened to waken me. Highly proud of her curative powers, she suggested that, for quite unsatisfactory spiritualist ends, she should initiate me, but this was in any case impossible, since my military service, which I was then undergoing, required my return to Paris the very next day, and there I spoke to Breton of the adventure. He, Desnos, Eluard, Péret and a few others made it happen again at several gatherings, which have been described in Les Pas Perdu (Breton).

In the course of the study entitled 'Enter the Mediums' which he has specifically devoted to this phase of surrealist activity, Breton seeks to make the phase clearer by recalling how 'in 1919, I had come to give my attention to the more or less incomplete sentences which on the approach

of sleep, when one is quite alone, the mind is able to perceive, although it is impossible to say they have been predetermined.'

Earlier Breton had noted that 'this word' (surrealism) 'which we have not invented and which we could so easily have left in the vaguest of critical vocabularies, is employed by us with a precise meaning. We have agreed to refer by it to a certain psychic automatism which corresponds fairly well to the dream-state, a state of which it is by this time very difficult to fix the limits.'

It is indeed as futile to fix the limits of one's states for the period of sleeping-fits as for any other time. 'From Sleep to Simulation' --- such even were the words which I had intended to entitle these recollections and simultaneously to embrace the series of experiments which went on until Dali's recent considerations of paranoia (The Visible Woman) and the essays on simulation of mental disease (The Immaculate Conception by Breton and Eluard),

* * *

In Nadja, Breton asked that 'one of those who attended these countless seances should take the trouble to recall them impartially, describe them precisely, and set them in their proper context.'

Accordingly, although my recollections must not in any way be interpreted as post-confessions; although I have not the slightest concealed intention or wish to discredit this or that genuineness, and do not even raise the matter of sincerity, for the good and simple reason that it cannot in this case be raised, owing precisely to the difficulties of fixing limits to our states and also to the difficulty of establishing who was responsible and who took this or that share in what was essentially a collective undertaking, I am trying to remember.... And I remember how before one of these seances a sentence came readymade to the ears of my waking consciousness: 'Mme. de Lamballe's dresses are being put up for auction.'

I cannot bring myself to suspect that in the way this sentence persisted there merely lurked boyhood recollections of the waxworks in the Musée Grévin, of the disturbed marveling in which I had once been plunged by the representation of scenes such as, precisely, on turning the corner of a corridor, that of Madame de Lamballe's freshly severed head being presented to Marie Antoinette.

One evening hands are being held round a table at Eluard's. I want to fall asleep before Desnos. I am afraid I shan't succeed. So then, in order to do something, I utter the sentence of which I have failed to rid myself the whole day long. The words are weighted, they bear me away. My head bangs on the wood. I no longer exist. On waking, I am told what I have said. As my talk has not been so bad, I am delighted to learn what it has been from the lips of those who have listened to me, but only because I thus score over Desnos, my mediumistic competitor. Otherwise I should not care. I derive from each of these seances an exhausting satisfaction. At night my sleep is hollow. My wakings are not up to much. I have no sexual life all the while I am present at and joining in these seances. I don't want one. I don't even think of having one.

Despite the way in which Desnos and I very quickly came to suspect each other, our suspicion changing into an enmity which I thought might lead Desnos to scratch out my eyes, for instance, just as, for that matter, I myself had given him a push which made him knock his head against a mantelpiece -- when I meet Desnos on occasions other than those of the seances, these of course are the only thing we can talk about.

When I cannot stand any more, when I realize that I am going to lose my life or at least my head if I go on, I decide as a diversion to have an operation for appendicitis, though not without first having done my best so that Desnos (certainly delighted to have the field to himself) may get more strongly addicted and so go mad.

I have never stopped sighing for that time. As a sign of what I must have said, of what I did not hear myself say, I have more and more hated the sound of my voice. But when last week I was led to write these pages, the reading of an old number of Litterature containing the only one of my talks of that time which has been preserved, gave me a discomfort strangely spanning the whole intervening decade.

I recalled by way of confirmation this proverb which I had made up for my sole use: 'An apple tree does not eat its apples... An apple tree does not eat its apples...' And yet what shall the solitary meditation tree, like other trees, bread, butter or cheese trees, do with its fruit? No meadow spreads out at its feet the carpet of its obligingness and the earth which refuses to take part in today's fits of hunger will not, tomorrow either, receive the ripe fruit then perhaps ready to drop.

Concerning Desnos, concerning the dilemma which his case still is, to clear it up one needs only to quote these two passages from Breton:

'I can still see Robert Desnos as he was in the days which those among us who have known them call the period of sleeping-fits. Then he would sleep, but he would also write, he would also speak. It is an evening in my studio above the sky. "Come in, come in to the Chat Noir" is being shouted outside. And Desnos goes on seeing what I see only as, little by little, he shows it to me. He adopts the personality of the most singular man alive as well as the most elusive, the most deceptive: Marcel Duchamp. Desnos has never seen him in real life. What in Duchamp seemed most inimitable through some mysterious "plays on words" (Rose Selavy) recurs in Desnos in all its purity and suddenly assumes an extraordinary resonance.' (Nadja)

'Since then, Desnos, ill served in this respect by those same powers which for a while had supported him, and about which he seems still unaware that they were forces of darkness, unfortunately took it into his head to act on the plane of reality where he was no more or less than a man poorer and more alone than the next.' (Second Manifesto of Surrealism)

And this was due, as Breton observes, to a lack of education, a lack of the philosophic spirit.

Through having for so long fixed the limits of states, the old analytical idolatry made it impossible to pass from one to another. A certain dualism

which they failed to overcome -- that is what threw out of surrealism not only Desnos but so many others, for, being dialectical in essence, surrealism intends to sacrifice neither dreaming to action nor action to dreaming, but instead to foster their synthesis.

Thought, even when least congealed, tends to be limited by the words expressing it, by the writing of which the down and the up strokes are the beats of consciousness itself.

An egg-shell hardens as soon as it is exposed to the air. This sclerosis it is attempted to pass off as something solid and definite must be perpetually condemned.

To draw frontiers between the different psychic states is no more justifiable than to draw them between geographical states. It is for surrealism to attack both, to condemn every kind of patriotism, even the patriotism of the unconscious.

René CREVEL



This Evening

The point of your eyes
On the tip of your breasts
Your eyes in my breast
And your breasts in my mind
At the hour when nothing in the mirror lies in wait
I'll leave on the long road where nothing more can delay me

The houses are wrinkled like ancient whores
And the trees are hungry
It's for that, they search

Your jackal is eating my bedouin
And the Bohemian girl is falling asleep
Dreaming of an unheard music

You speak softly
Yes you are speaking softly
NO
As for me, I am singing at the top of my lungs
In order to derail the trains

There will be no more of tomorrow.

E. L. T. MESENS

(translated by Cheryl Seaman)

HOSANNAH

In six hundred thousand years

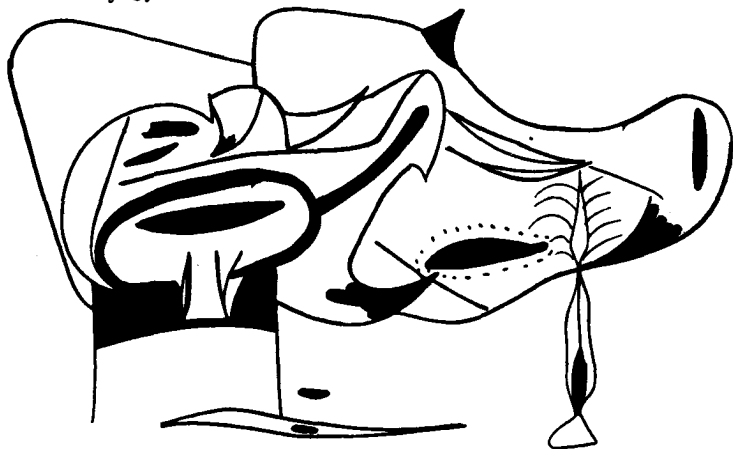
The hunting-spear like a wild beast the caduceus bewildered
By the whirlwind of two satiny serpents issuing from the cavern of foam
 on a fluttering petticoat
Will not recognize the maternal tomb
Nor find the god who does not exist

In six hundred thousand years when this flesh
That is mine and that marries yours at this moment
Will be no more than a bit of sand on an empty beach
And when the beach will be only a light dazzled
In the Ocean, confused with an unlit planet
And when the planet will disperse at the breath of a comet never calculated
Perhaps to be reborn
In atoms of a sky that will have no name

Hosannah for this disaster that I cannot imagine
Hosannah for this star blue as a skull
For the ice floes and basalt rocks that will be overwhelmed
And for the beach where this bit of sand will have rolled
Hosannah in advance for this sand
That exchanges our two bodies against their weight in gold
In the only hourglass of the sun to despair
Hosannah
For this blinding second that is already devoured
Hosannah for the page, crumbling where our two names make only
 an intertwining
My love for your flesh and our own
Hosannah in six hundred thousand years
There will remain Nothing of this glory and nothing of another

Gérard LEGRAND

translated by C. Seaman



ARSHILE GORKY.

Excerpts from a Review of André Breton's
Communicating Vessels

THE CRITICS of Les Vases communicants (The Communicating Vessels) have focused on its details, seizing on certain of Breton's formulations that appeared to them redolent of idealism, and consequently they have not known how to rid themselves of certain preconceptions which at times have led them to make really ridiculous errors, and which precluded any deeper understanding of Les Vases communicants. How then would they be able to comprehend that this marvelous poetic book of surrealism is also at the same time a scientific act that reveals to us the proper presentation of the problem, and whose central importance for the progressive edification of the system of marxist-leninist science should be evident to true marxists.

...it is necessary for us to conceive of existence in its concrete totality; and it is within this same concrete totality that we must study consciousness. André Breton is a thousand times right when he says: 'How can one believe he is even able to see, to hear, to touch, if he refuses to consider these innumerable possibilities, which, for most men, cease to be offered at the first rolling of the milkman's truck!'

In other words, dreams are also part of the human consciousness, the nocturnal dream 'of normal men' as well as the awakened dream of poets. Breton emphasizes that all the elements of the dream stem uniquely from reality, that in the dream there is no trace of perfumes 'from another world'; although this statement may be absolutely obvious, all the same, it is very reassuring for us to see the author's focus on it; he thus contradicts in advance those who reproach him with 'idealism'.

Also, it's just on this point that Breton contributes so much. He is convinced, and justly so, that 'nothing, in this respect, would be more necessary than to carry on a profound examination of the process of the formation of images in dreams, contributing to it knowledge gained elsewhere, from poetic elaboration.'

Certainly, the marxist critics who condemn surrealism and refuse its ripest fruit (that is, Breton's Vases comunicants) would do so with good reason, despite all that is incomprehensible in their attitude, and despite their errors which we have already mentioned, if in his study André Breton were showing us the human individual in his 'eternal' subjectivity, thus separating him from the individual subordinated to the conditions of the historical and social orders in the perpetual process of social change. But Breton never committed this error. Les Vases communicants manifests the contrary; and to be convinced of this it suffices merely to disengage the fundamental thesis that grants the book its scientific validity. Why doesn't anyone want to see that it's there that one must seek the meaning of his victory over 'the depressing idea of the irreparable divorce of action and dream'?

Zavis KALANDRA

translation: Cheryl Seaman

(1935)

The Enigma of Frances Parrish of Paris, France

Under the cold bed I saw
heavy masses of shadows and many people of all races

ready to fall on the sleeping knife and the snoring plate
Happy as I shall be to see this uncanny sight

The ocean-like landscape that no one dares to tread on
only the giant from Macy's dares to leave imprints in its surface

Under the hot frosted bed I saw
a mangled trumpet that Dizz never blew and never wished to

the sound of a crushed baby filled the ears of all horses and toothpicks
happy as I shall be to see this and to even listen to this uncanny happening

'Understanding the rights of an artist is for God and not for man'
said the fleur-de-lis to the floating image

Under the fleshy filled bed I saw
all the important dreamscapes and many multi-colored people

they were all awaiting my signal to place the crown
upon the head of the queen of all dreams his
dreams their dreams my dreams they were awaiting
and happy to assist in such a ceremony

the stones were no longer hard they were soft as camembert cheese and
even the image that defied all explanation became almost explicable

Under the empty glass bed I saw
the queen rise into the air with her magic Celtic scandals

her knees were close together and they were no
longer knees but were a pair of amphibious nuns
saying a prayer for mercy on the apache that
blew the trademarks of France away and were now awaiting their sentence

Queen Frances de Parrish with hands gracefully folded smiled and said
'Blessed is the tin can that doeth no harm to the
bare foot that troddeth upon it'

Under the bloody lung filled bed I had seen
Under the bloody toothpick I had tasted
Under the bloody bass drum I had listened
Under the sugar-coated maggot I had crawled for a
better view of the dreamscape which the corona-
tion played to the important role in your soul his
soul their soul and even the shoe soul

cosmic rays have penetrated

Ted JOANS

HEARTHES of ARSON

(excerpt)

BETWEEN beauty and the beauty of nature man has erected an impenetrable barrier. The beauty of nature, as Rousseau and Amiel conceived it, is a 'state of mind' which is no more than a decor in which is unraveled the play of mental interests -- 'the ambition of art is to reveal nature to us,' says Bergson. The beauty of nature leads finally, for others, to a vague feeling of the picturesque. The critic on the other hand, who will not abandon the study of a picture until he has examined all its elements, will hold his tongue; he will stay perhaps in ecstasy before the 'mystery of nature' and will understand it only in repeating Wilde's drift that nature imitates art.

But there isn't only nature; a whole world of forms, products of a curious chance, surrounds us constantly. How does it happen to pass for the most part unperceived? Why -- is it quite valueless?

The interest of men has not always been concentrated so exclusively on human works. In a prescientific epoch when the world of forms was endowed with mysterious powers, the interest of phenomena which passed then for supernatural - and the world was full of the supernatural - reacted on the affectivity with a force which in the adult state we no longer feel. The loss of the supernatural has separated us from the world of forms of non-human causality. Between the supernatural and man there used to exist a bond, an identity, which stimulated the affectivity. One took the movement, thunderbolt or eclipse for the sign of a desire speaking to another desire, our own; one lived intimately with the divine. There was not, then, an inhuman world, but only a superhuman one, and between the two a pure difference of degree. Science has come to overthrow these conceptions; the superhuman has unconsciously been transformed into the inhuman. The known, because the knowable has been limited, has enlarged the unknown. Against the inhuman and to protect himself from the unknown, man invented humanism, the measure of human limitation. Thus to Socratic philosophy was added an affective attitude which completed it.

The unknown and inhuman world was forgotten, all contact with it lost. In the presence of the unknown man adopted an agnostic attitude. Positivism, which embodies this tendency, is not only scientific, but aesthetic as well. Man has not only ceased to recognize the unknown, he no longer feels it; he has repulsed it. Without contact, the unknown cannot become recognizable; without affectivity, no contact is possible. But the bankruptcy of scientific agnosticism cannot but involve the bankruptcy of an agnostic aesthetic. The sole social justification of positivism is the timid, petty-bourgeois attitude. Positivism is a petty-bourgeois science fabricated by little fellows of the Spencer-Durkheim-Guyau-Alain type. The petty-bourgeois is afraid of the unknown; he writes limitations in his intellectual and financial ledger. The petty-bourgeois never overspends his little income; he does not think beyond his own little life; he does not often leave his own neighborhood; he

marries the daughter of his parents' friends -- what he calls 'someone suitable'; he chooses to send his child to the school where he went; he associates with childhood friends. Everything is arranged to avoid the unknown; the congressman for whom he votes is a safe one; he reads the Tribune or the Sun; his favorite authors speak of his world; the critic is his intellectual preservative: in telling him what he ought to read, what he ought to see, the critic above all prevents him from seeing or reading something else -- the unknown!

The known forms, the familiar neighborhoods, the plants of domesticated exoticism, palms or another variety of palms, landscapes, still-lives and nudes, and the fortnight in the mountains or at a familiar beach. The known forms, the forms created by a known being, 'our dear friend Man'. Every man is not a man, the worker is not always a man, the madman is not a man, and everyone is mad who goes too much or too little to mass or to the whorehouse. The work of the madman, the products of delirium, are unworthy of our interest, they are not the work of men. There is not only the Catholic Church raising an index finger; the academies, the universities are created not to stimulate but to police the intellect. There are professors, more boring than the Glossatores of Bologna, who have invented the frightful theory of artistic intuition. Everyone isn't an artist who wants to be! Only he who has intuition, the divine gift, can take his seat at Parnassus! And happily there are people who have discovered the gift -- it is the intuition of artistic intuition! These will tell us who is an artist, who should be awarded the Prix de Rome, the Pulitzer Prize, investitures which the clerical crew of the universities award to those whom it feels, with or without intuition, sufficiently worthy and sufficiently safe to share their order, which is only the order of That's All, written in black letters on police stations. How can a madman have artistic intuition? The madman is mad, the madman is for the Immortals what the Jew is for Hitler, the Trotskyist for Stalin, the Negro for Ford.

Nicolas CALAS

Annunciation

to André Breton

From new bloods of mokatine ringing to the meat
caught on the branches of the vegetal sun; they wait their turn

A movement of palms sketches the future body of portresses
with harvest yellow breasts budding from all revealed hearts

The contest of the torch descending to the farthest point makes
of the city's weakness a friendly rose-window moored
by young liana vines to the true sun of true fire of earth true:
annunciation,

For the annunciation of the portresses of mokatine palms moored
to the sun of the torches' contest -- green eye ringed with
yellow oxyde laden with moons eye of moon laden with torches --
eye of torches twist the cautious manure of the knots undone

Aimé CÉSAIRE

translation: C. Seaman



Photograph by Penelope ROSEMONT

SURREALISM

& the

SAVAGE HEART

THE STORMS of romanticism had proved inadequate and so had its effusions: even while it was slamming the doors of the 'salons' where it had reigned supreme only by embracing their less perverse but more richly endowed charms, art was bent on patiently satisfying the vanities of aesthetes, on catering to the needs of disenchantments born of a leisure fit for dogs. Art was a language. A painting's or a sculpture's sole mission was to evoke. Thus did high society's hedonism find thorns of satin for its faded roses; came nightfall, and the gravity of stock exchange speculations yielded to the concerted futility of images. A rudimentary television authorized the enjoyment of the self, and, although the spectator failed to objectify this enjoyment, it gave him, by virtue of its objective origin, a high opinion of his sensitive faculties as well as of his quickwittedness.

When Guillaume Apollinaire undertook to make each of his poems a 'poem-occurrence' (poeme-evenement) in relation to which all the means of poetry had to be thoroughly revised, the occurrence -- there were, of course, certain antecedents, but these suddenly appeared under a new light -- corrected the angle of sight much too opportunely not to feed very soon the mill of surrealist speculations. Thus, the concepts of work and skill were deprived of the value theretofore attached to them, value that should be set on the spiritual process only, of which the work of art is at the same time the product and the cause. At the very inception of the dispute which was to drag on for a quarter of a century between figurative and abstract arts, surrealism was able to dismiss both parties unsuited; on the one hand, the effusive painters of conventionalized forms, on the other, the craftsmen of a language by means of which they hoped to solve the antimony between the individual and the universal. In sharp contrast with the artists who entrusted their 'message' to a sad quantity of adequate words, other artists -- who did not consider themselves as such -- were bent on using words and shapes in an attempt to modify, if only for a moment, their relations to the universe. We know that painters and poets were among the first ones to jump over the fence on which the specialist had always kept close guard, intent as he was on preserving from sight the objects that belonged to the paraphernalia of ethnology, and that would henceforth pertain to the 'primitive arts'. Despite a certain lack of discrimination inevitably caused by the scarcity of these objects and by the fact that they had no birth certificates, the cubists were to electively discern in the African art an echo of their stylistic concern; surrealism alone, however, was destined to project deep into the night that it was exploring the fiery lights of a most cruel sun, reflected by the sculptures of the Americas and the Pacific Islands.

We must admit, indeed, from the very moment they were considered as objects of art, these products of primitive cultures lost many of their



MIMBRES,
NEW MEXICO.
POTTERY DESIGNS

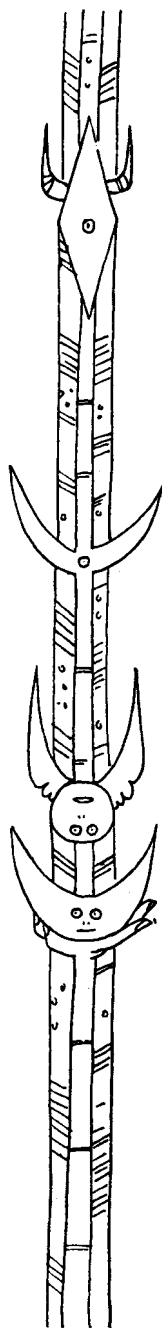
magic powers. African sculptures especially suffered this misfortune, some of them with a certain amount of complacency; the play of light on ivory, the patient stylisation of the mass - even where the object was a ritual sculpture - proved the existence of a certain concern for form that the cubists were quick in detecting. No wonder, therefore, that Breton and Eluard who, very early, were fascinated by the savage arts, preferred to gather objects which had been spared this coarse seduction. From the Pacific islands came objects that the mirages of art for art's sake could decidedly not set off to advantage. Better still, they were made of deadly smiles and cries of birds. The world into which they were born could easily pass for a nightmare thronged with nightblue feathers. It was there that the entire fauna of the Australian Great Barrier Reef had left its shimmering lights, its creaking sounds, its whirlwinds. Towards the extreme North, a glittering laugh reigned supreme, borrowed from the ten months of the red night, while, in the Indian cosmology, the 'black gods' of the pre-columbian mythology lived on, as powerful as always.

However, it was not enough that aesthetic criteria be routed. As soon as they became more familiar, the sculptures grouped themselves according to the isles from which they originated, and became linked with traditional types that illustrated a very specific conception of human life and of the world. We know that, through the refinements of polished wood, the African statuettes illustrated an animist conception which tries to preserve a certain order of the world in all the activities it undertakes. The static nature of such a conception directly belonged to a civilization of peasants, primarily concerned with the fecundity of nature which hostile forces could always jeopardize if one was not careful. Although there were many exceptions in Africa to this widely spread conception of the world (fetishes with iron nails, tellems, dance masks of the Ba-Djok) - and among these, the surrealists were particularly attracted by the sculptures of the Baga - what was at stake in Oceania and the Americas was an altogether different dimension of the mind which had madly ventured into the jungles of dreams ruled by scarlet birds.

From one shore of the Pacific to the other, from the Indian Archipelago to Araucania, including Melanesia, Australia, British Columbia and the Pueblo Indians - with the exception of a few Polynesian islands where probably a late autocratism of some sort had deeply modified the indigenous society - the same form of apprehension of the world manifests

itself; a universe as impassioned as can be, usually composed of two complementary halves, a universe conceived as an androgyne, not a primordial androgyne as in the speculations of ancient Mediterranean civilization, but a still present and active androgyne, whose every essential gesture is a love drama. The state of interpenetration of the world in which man lives and of his personal idea of the world is such that this very pattern is apparent in the organization of society; sometimes it is more geometric, as is the case among the Navajo Indians whose sand designs are the compassdial of a sacred space, and sometimes more openly sexualized, as in Australia or Melanesia. Nothing less than that was needed in order to color with the hues of the marvelous the works which so manifestly expressed this high state of consciousness. Perhaps surrealism would not have become what it is had it not developed in the shade of the malangas through whose branches the night breeze stole among networks of lianas and snakes. Some oceans, deep within the dark night of man, had been explored by the pirogues with a human head or by the wooden sharks within which the people of the Solomon Islands would place the skulls of their dead. Here, we are made conscious of the deficiencies of our senses; it seems that, on the whole, Freud was the only one to tell us how pregnant with meaning appearances could be. For a long time, poets had intuitively guessed it; we were warned: the 'pagan blood' is 'coming back!' (Rimbaud). Never were the totemist peoples afflicted with this near-sightedness which makes us see in appearances the only reality compatible with technical use. For them, as is the case in critical-paranoiac activities, there is no reality that is not ready to slip towards another and more revealing one. Perhaps it is given to sculpture to bring us some confirmation of this. But, whether the aim is ritual or not, what matters most is to witness this very objectification of a certain daily behavior which has never ceased being that of surrealism. For, as it has been said, 'words make love' (Breton) and, consequently, the very forms of the world are making love.

If appearances are not as simple as they seem, this could be due to a unique kind of distraction which for us, here, gives access to everyday magic; whereas, on the Pacific shores, it is subjected to the assault of the dead who come back inside the body of a pink lizard. Let there be no misunderstanding; wonder is attained only at the very end, after staggering encounters at every turn of the path, inhabited by tree trunks. In the armpits of each branch, portholes look and see. The elders, who have left the village, roam by turns in the forest; they wear all their orna-



drawing by

Wifredo LAM

ments, the ornament for the day sea-slugs are extolled, the ornament for the dance of the shark and the ornament for war, which cuts off the hearts of women. Actually, it is not essential to make clear whether the injunctions of the dream, fiercely discussed with the spirits, concern the way in which the Clan should perform their major actions or only the erection of a ritual sculpture, when this sculpture assumes the dimensions of a public event. In this respect, had surrealism claimed that it could transpose, 'by means of a deceptive three-dimensional representation of dream images,' the Oceanian sculptors' intentions, then we have to admit that it would have painfully felt the limitations which transformed Dali's own intentions into an individual venture, the necessity of which his friends alone could perceive at the time when it took place. Although it is less discreet, however, the figurative representation resorted to by the sculptors living on the Pacific shores is nonetheless confronted with a public judgment through which its essential characteristics are compared with those of a legendary teaching. It is through this judgment that the fidelity to a style is preserved in an art which remains traditional. The extreme freedom that exists (visibly) within these stylistic domains tends, more than anything else, to make them appear as the rules of a grammar of forms, this grammar alone being fit to account for the idioms of each people. When Dali defined this conception for himself (and although he was probably little aware of the existence of the sculptures found in British Columbia and Melanesia) he was less than anyone else free from the bonds of such an idiom, since it is known that he borrowed from the European painters of the 17th century one of the recipes through which our eye has been accustomed to be deceived. What may, at that time, have been felt as a revelation, was lighted from within by an aurora borealis that borrowed from dreams its gestures of violence and its mother-of-pearl humor.

On the 'trajectory of dreams', the spectres of the wolf and the frog give each other a leg up the great totems of the Western Coast, in the same way as they climb up the 'exquisite corpses' (cadavres exquis)* of surrealism. Surrealism has replaced mythology with psychic automatism. By bringing together remote species - provided they were legitimate - it hoped to give life to a spirit more igneous than its isolated components. We know that in Australia, New Britain and in all other areas where the great totems prevailed, this practice of surrealist alchemy constituted, under more obscure names, the very pattern of life, adorned with bleeding flowers and bird-of-paradise feathers. In order to prove, by way of example, the fecundity of this method - and this long before Roheim's and Winthuis' works were known - the First Surrealist Manifesto proclaimed: 'Surrealism will usher you into Death which is a secret society', words that might have been uttered by a high-ranking initiate of the New Hebrides several times deceased through the intercession of the bolt of lightning which flashes between lovers. This death, multiplied through the successive initiations of native 'secret societies' - the secret concerns only the ritual and its psychic results - was proved in Australia (more forcefully than anywhere else) to have destroyed the natural conditions of a young man and to have reconstituted him in the shape of a living lingam, after a death which was all the more gory for being symbolic. A vertiginous boldness is needed to carry the revolt against empirical existence to such a degree of fury; the transformation cannot be distinguished from a ritual in which the great officiating priests are spirits clad in painted wooden garments. In the network of their embroideries one can decipher the major nuptials of which the young initiate becomes the image. The use thus

made of the object is the latter's only justification. Whereas it regains in dramatic powers much more than what it lost in seduction to shopwindows' wares, the condition of life here make it so that the object's efficiency is limited either to its author or to a narrow group of people. And the audience which recently attended the 'Execution of the Marquis de Sade's Will' by Jean Benoit gives the most optimistic idea of such a group.

The only reality is that of the operation, of the process. The 'magical art of surrealism' may have periodically felt the need to rut its strength to a test, to brace up its revolt by plunging into the spirit of the peoples who were immune from the usual compromises with hell. What, in Freudian terminology, is called the sublimation of instinct is still named initiation among the Tarahumaras, from whom Artaud received it; among the Brazilian Indians, with whom Benjamin Péret visited; among the Eskimo Shamans whose trances Victor Brauner seems to reproduce. Automatism undergoes its own death before donning the mask which ensures its victory over the 'Saturnian Princes'. For a second, the Jackdaw will carry you on its wing with an aventurine stone.

Vincent BOUNOURE

(translated by Claude Tarnaud)

* 'Exquisite corpse', a game of paper-folding invented by surrealists, which involves the composition of phrases or drawings by several people, without any of the participants having any idea of the preceding contribution or contributions. The name is derived from the first sentence obtained in this manner: 'The exquisite -- corpse -- shall drink -- the young -- wine.'

The Ten Dimensions of Eros

DIMENSION I

Warning: Do not PRAY for her
because she is MATTER!

Therefore: Pick up her bloody hour clock
under the eyelashes of her toes,
Make the falcon drip from her icy
tongue,
See and enjoy her vertical spring

1

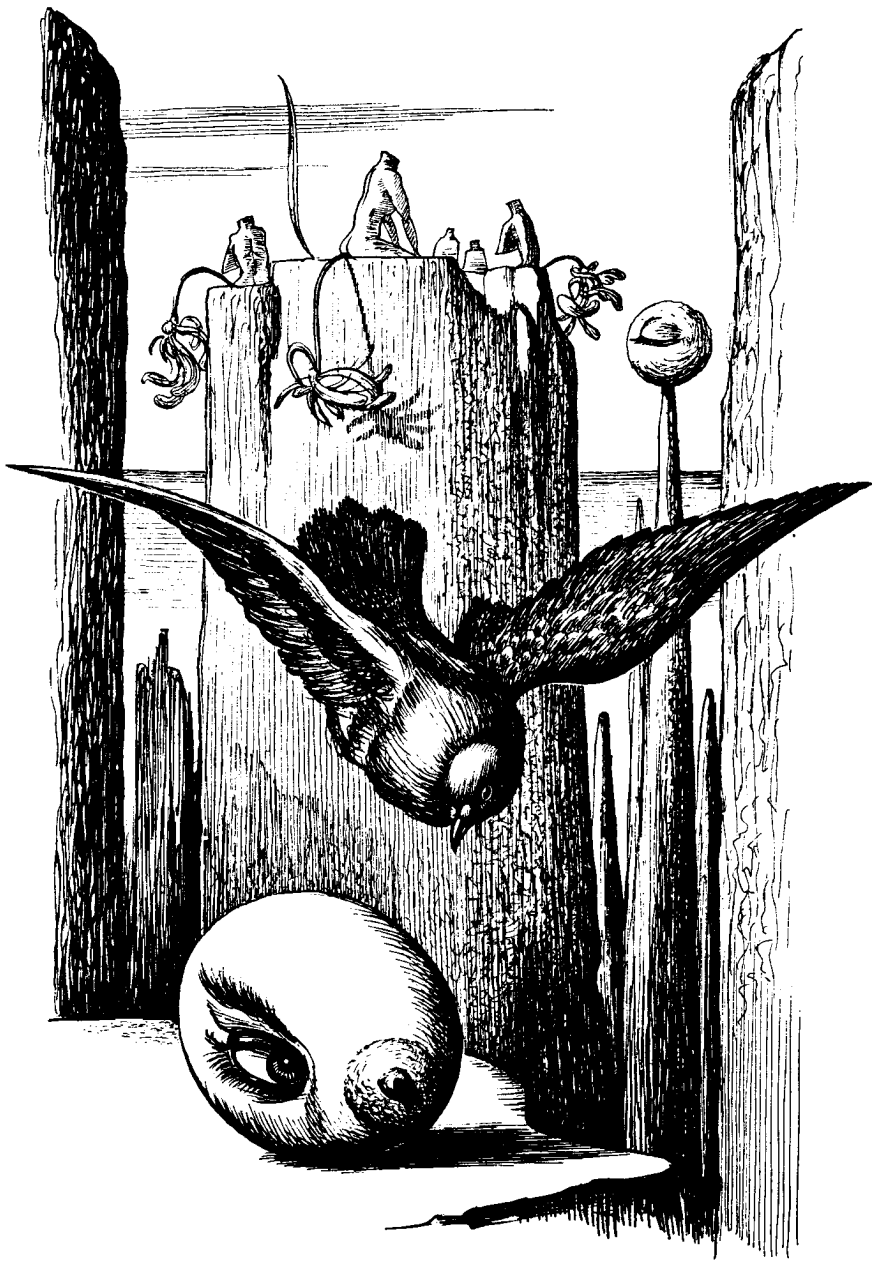
DIMENSION II

Warning: Do not feel GUILTY when
she arouses you, because she is
instant LOVE!

Therefore: Suck her hairy thumb, which your
eye cannot see,
Allow the snake to talk to her
Belly,
See and enjoy her waves become a
mother elephant

2

(excerpts)



drawing by J.-H. MOESMAN

Gardeners' Despair,

or,

Surrealism and Painting Since 1950

Preface to the INTERNATIONAL SURREALIST EXHIBITION, 1961)

FOR THE DESPAIR of gardeners and the perplexity of botanists, nature has foreseen this singular plant which, trampled under foot, bruised, crushed, denied, springs up again as early as the following day and continues to grow as though nothing had happened. So with surrealism, that quitch grass, of which good souls had really thought, mistaking their desires for reality, to extirpate the malignant weed from the fields of poetry, of art and of revolutionary thought, and which nevertheless persists, to their great rage and discomfiture, not only in surviving, but in prospering.

Let it suffice to recall the opening in Paris, in December 1959, of an International Surrealist Exhibition, relayed in November 1960 by that of New York, and that, at the time of my writing, a new surrealist magazine: La Brèche ('The Breach'), will soon be seeing the light of day; it will be agreed that the signs of a continuity are indisputable...

To be sure, one then comes up against other arguments, which can be brought down to three: 'Yes, surrealism was of importance in 1925; it is no longer so today;' 'Surrealism is always the same thing,' or again; 'Today's surrealism isn't that of 1925; it is no longer true surrealism.' Condemned in the name of its historical significance, of the permanence of its 'force-ideas', or even of its evolution, there is nothing left to surrealism, as in the past, but to confound its detractors in the dust raised by its forward march. Such is the foremost reason for this exhibition in Milan, the exceptional character of which I will emphasize later on.

I should like to say beforehand that I have not lost sight of the fact that this manifestation is being proposed to the public of one of the nations least well informed as to what surrealism is. In the years preceding the last world war, during which surrealism knew a very wide international diffusion, Italy, like Germany, and for the same reasons, opposed to it on the ideological level, an impenetrable rampart, breached by only a few lone painters: MARTINI in Italy, ENDE and OELZE in Germany. The war over and artistic exchanges having resumed their normal course, works that were tremendously indebted to surrealism and to automatism, which André Breton promoted as early as 1924 as being the mainspring of poetic and artistic creation, appeared everywhere. But, save for a few very rare exceptions (Pollock and Tobey in particular), this debt was passed over in silence. For the past fifteen years, almost all the galleries and modern art museums throughout the world have been overrun with 'ersatz' and 'by-products' of surrealism. 'Ersatz' as are plastic panther skins compared to the skins of real panthers (thus with Leonor Fini, Carzou, Coutaud,

Labisse, Lepri, Tchelitchew...); 'by-products' as straw is to wheat (thus with a good number of lyric abstractionists who built their entire reputation on one of the manifold receipts used by Miro, Ernst, Matta, Arp, Masson, etc.).

That painters' self-esteem should often prevent them from confessing to such a filiation, which has a somewhat sulphurous mustiness, can be readily conceived. The more so as surrealism cannot be defined by the means used, but by a revolutionary conception of existence extending to moral comportment as well as to creative comportment. On this level, the gilded irresponsibility cultivated by certain young men can no more be mistaken for surrealism than the academic quackery of Mr. Jean Cocteau. We cannot be too careful in warning the Italian public against the confusional and publicity-seeking agitation of such vulgar success hunters who, unable (with good reason) to make a name for themselves by their own painting, are bent on remedying this situation by mobilizing, like budding movie stars whose charms they lack, the swarm of wasps of reporters of all sorts about their would-be 'surrealist activity'. The phenomenon is not new, and the precedents (Dali, Hantai) have taught us that these fits of notoriety usually end up in the maganimous bosom of the Holy Roman and Apostolic Catholic Church: that the latter is preparing to shortly kill the fatted calf...

As to the continuity of which we spoke, we are brought to question ourselves on its nature: has there or has there not been an 'academisation' of surrealist painting? In the midst of the latter does imitation or repetition of the past outweigh invention? Can this painting, in fine, claim to play a part as it has done in the past?

To these redoubtable questions, the present exhibition gives a most frank answer. For the first time, in fact, it does not hamper itself with any retrospective ambition, uses no great artists of worldwide renown as a lightning rod, and refuses also to claim the sponsorship of painters whose sympathy for surrealism is well known. This surrealist exhibition - and it is in this that is originality lies - groups only works painted by surrealists in the proper sense of the term: those who have given their actual intellectual and moral adhesion to surrealism, or those who, recognized by surrealism as being answerable to its own concerns, have approved this recognition.

On the other hand - and but for a single exception, to which I shall return - this exhibition is intentionally limited to works painted in the past decade; therefore it is indeed the present state of surrealist painting that is in question. I hasten to add that this is not to be interpreted as a gesture of distrust towards such or such fascinating 'star': I am thinking in particular of Joan Miro, who remains to my mind the greatest surrealist painter, and even the greatest painter alive at the present time. It is rather out of a requirement for sincerity and a certain taste for the hazardous that we have desired these painters, for the most part young or unknown, not to appear to be overshadowed by their glorious elders. I am pleased to think besides that a manifestation of this kind definitely strikes with decay, at least with regard to the last part, a heavy work devoted to surrealist painting, the person responsible for which modestly felt that surrealism had been unable to survive his own departure, some ten years ago....*

A few surrealist painters already known before the war happen nevertheless to be represented. Such is the case, first of all, for Paalen and Toyen, whose researches, during the recent period, have been carried out in very close contact with the innermost preoccupations of the surrealist group, and by a formal renewal which holds to our mind the value of an example. As to E. F. Granell, we are not misguided enough to forget that he was long in Central America, as he is today in New York, the most qualified representative of surrealism. During the same period, Meret Oppenheim went happily from the 'objects' which made her celebrity, to painting and sculpture; the poet E. L. T. Mesens discovered a second nature to himself in 'collage'. By their side, those who have come to surrealism in the course of the past few years; Jean Benoit, Adrien Dax, Yves Elleouet, Robert Lagarde, Mimi Parent. Others, still younger, appear in their turn, such as Guy Bodson....

Lastly, there are those who, discovered and enthusiastically welcomed by the surrealists, have accepted seeing themselves considered as one of them: Yves Laloy, Le Marechal, Molinier, Rozsda, Max-Walter Svanberg, Friedrich Schroder-Sonnenstern.

A special mention must be made of the case of J. H. Moesman, whose works presented here are prior to the period under consideration. Discovered quite recently, thanks to our friends of the 'Bureau de recherches surréalistes' in Amsterdam, this solitary artist - whose profound adhesion to surrealism is indisputable - has never exhibited his work; there is nothing surprising in the space made for him here.

This enumeration completed, the fact remains that, no more than previous surrealist exhibitions, does this one aim at a superficial formal homogeneousness. Surrealism, if it has ascribed itself exacting and imperious objectives, is too aware of the worth of individual 'sight' to ever have subjected this latter to a command vision. For the past forty years, each true surrealist painter has been a new 'sight' -- and I lack space for giving way to an exhaustive enumeration. Whether or not a subterranean identity innerves this most varied forest, I leave it up to the 'cispalpine' public and art criticism to find out....

May I be allowed to part one moment, of the fan thus shaped, the two butterfly wings, just as brilliant but dissimilar, whose junction cannot fail to captivate and disconcert. On the enameling of the first, one finds brought together all that stems from a kind of 'magic figuration', where ceaselessly the triviality of the everyday is contested for the benefit of an enjoining to 'see better and dream better' that does not suffer mediocrity. Moesman appears to be governed by the mirage in which privileged obsessions are reflected; Mimi Parent considers a universe wholly filtered by frost crystals, in which the crystallization becomes enchantment; Molinier enmeshes desire, the more naked for being rouged, in his nets; Toyen lives in the intimacy of spectres, and, in their company, passes through the wall of appearances; Le Marechal, prophet and town-planner of the Babylon to be, enjoys our misery of mechanized insects; Svanberg metamorphoses Woman into a puzzle of scents, bird calls and caresses; Sonnenstern illuminates, by his aggressive parables, of a lofty humor, the dull 'commedia dell'arte' of human concerns. Here each artist controls a territory that is his own, and brings his stone to this palace of the marvelous that no Facteur Cheval will ever complete...

The other wing assembles those for whom it is less the sensible remembrances of mankind and of his scenery - be they questioned anew - that count, as the giddiness imparted by the materials and the very instruments of this new 'mancy': automatism. One would speak of 'action-painting' if, in the cases where this appellation is used today, the action involved, precisely, were - as is the case for our friends - 'the sister of dream'. The authority of Paalen in the moving fascination of the works of his last years, rejoins Kandinsky's decisive explosion in 1911; but Paalen's 'secret' is still more secret than that of the great Russian painter. Elleouet has suddenly burst into flame in the midst of the Breton heath: the 'korrigans', those elves of the celtic soil, doubtless got the best of it in order that he might build them a house of wind. Adrien Dax, a tireless experimenter, achieves the hard to believe synthesis of 'ArtNouveau', of Tanguy, of Matta, about a bestiary where dragonflies are coupled with comets. Lastly, shall I acknowledge that since Gorky, perhaps, no one has seemed to me to attain such a height of melodic sensitivity of stroke as Robert Lagarde? I know of nothing at the present time so unadorned and satisfying to such a degree to the eye and to the mind.

In the spreading of the two wings, one can distinguish, like the fulcrum of a balance, these antennae of a power difficult to evaluate: the paintings of Laloy, thanks to whom geometrical figures become a procedure for secondsight, a shocking thing for those gentlemen 'constructors' Mag-nelli, Mortensen, Dewasne, etc.

From this entomological description, a few ascertainties seem to me to spring up naturally. That in the first place, save for a few relationships -- but there again the differences are more striking than the resemblances -- the painters here represented are not 'disciples' of their elders: no off-shoot of Miro, Tanguy, Brauner, Matta or Max Ernst....

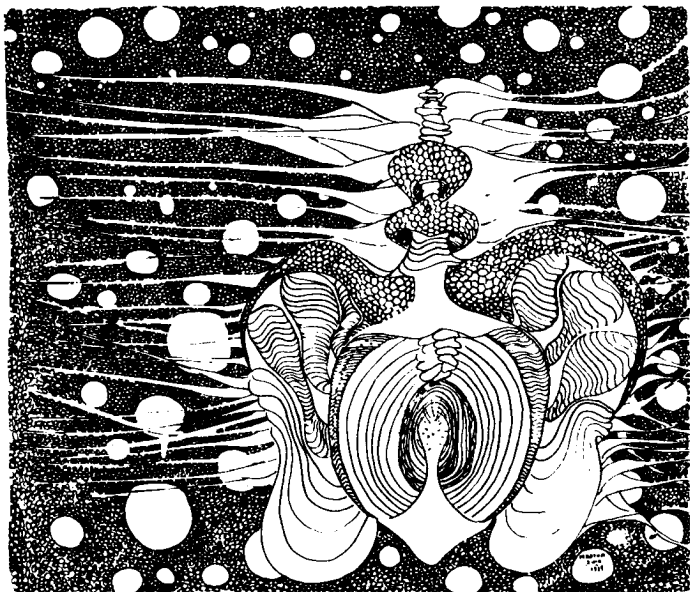
It would seem that pictorial surrealism succeeds - a token of its survival and renewal - in freeing itself from its own influence, I mean that of the great painters it has already carried in its womb. Paalen, for example, meets Kandinsky, Yves Elleouet acknowledges being sensible to Poliakof and Lopicque above all, Toyen was indisputably marked by the brief flare-up of 'tachisme', etc.... In sum, whereas the excitements once undergone by surrealist painters had a specifically surrealist origin (admiration for Chirico, certain aspects of Picasso's work, then Tanguy and finally Matta), today it is the entire field of modern art that is proving itself capable of reincarnation, of reinvestment in surrealism -- as if therein it had finally found its justification for existence.

Another ascertainment, a corollary of the preceding one, asserts itself: the fan of surrealist painting covers today the whole of modern pictorial forms of expression, from fabulous imagery, in 'trompe l'oeil' or not, to geometrical composition, through 'lyric' abstraction and calligraphism. One last remark will serve me as a conclusion: this exhibition definitely frees itself from any homage to the ashes of Dada, of which surrealism has always been a vehement negation and to which it owes, quite to the contrary, not the slightest 'acknowledgement'.

Milan, Italy

José PIERRE

* The reference is to Marcel Jean--ed.



INTRODUCTION to the READING of

Benjamin Péret

AT THIS juncture, the posterity which we constitute is in great debt to Péret; this poet is far from having the place he deserves, one of the foremost. I have always appreciated the fact that they have never re-done, nor replaced on their pedestals, the statues which the Germans carried off during the occupation of Paris. These empty pedestals provide the hope that everything has **not** been definitively lost and that the liberty to choose for itself other guides of the spirit exists for humanity at every moment. Péret will incontestably be one of these examples. You aren't convinced? Then do you want to wager with me? I'm not worth anything there: I'm sure to win!

Benjamin Péret. Drop this name in a conversation. You will have two reactions on faces: in both cases a pout, being accompanied in some - the most numerous - by a questioning raising of the eyebrows, those who hear this name for the first time; for the others, by a frown, those to whom 'that certainly suggests something, but what exactly?... in any case, one hasn't read anything by the author in question.' These last are not slow in remembering that they have seen this signature at the bottom of various surrealist brochures, next to those of Breton and of so many others, 'whose names change very frequently besides' (here, a suspicion of gentle irony...).

Indeed, for many Péret means only a name, a sort of supernumerary disembodied from surrealism. You will search in vain for a line of his or even about him in literature textbooks, when he is even mentioned, of course... (it's true that insanity is inherent in these kinds of books and their authors).

And yet what a beautiful subject, even for the most idiotic weekly critic, even for the most limited academic, always occupied in clogging up the ill-timed streamings of poetry. For Benjamin Péret is a golden instance! Born in 1899, died in 1959, 60 straightforward years, easy to remember! Litterature was founded in 1919; Péret arrives in Paris in 1920; from that time, during almost 40 years, Péret will show proof of 'ABSOLUTE SURREALISM!'^{*} The only one who, since the first appearance of the surrealist movement, remained faithful to the ways of André Breton without lapses, with a valiance which ceded only to death. The only one, with Breton, whose work stems only and entirely from surrealism (the poems previous to 1920 were destroyed by Péret). This unique title to fame would already be sufficient for Péret to be considered with some attention, even by those who, occupying without contention the upper places in the pile of idiots, talk copiously about the 'pope of surrealism', since, as they say (and it's true, but the misfortune for them is that they don't know a thing about the profound motives which dictated them) surrealism is a long succession of shattering exclusions.

It is impossible to speak properly about surrealism while ignoring Péret who was its purest 'defender and illustrator'. Subjective judgment? Then we'd share it with numerous young surrealists of the post-war period who see in Péret the equal of Breton. We'd also share it with men who are more qualified than you and I to judge poetry, and who are called Breton, Aragon and Eluard. His friends, you will say. Undoubtedly: but besides the fact that they had very sure taste, they did not bestow - far from it! - similar praises to all those who, at one moment or another, participated in the activity of the surrealist group. Moreover, one can affirm that these poets envied (in the best sense of the term, naturally) Péret's exceptional gifts, which implies that he brought something which belonged only to him.

* * * * *

It is to Péret's credit that he restores to daylight that which slumbers in everyone's heart, and that he returns this forgotten treasure to modern man whom History has maimed. It is Péret's originality to adopt for this the genre which ordinarily captivates childhood - this hypothetical paradise which a perpetual nostalgia confirms and invites to recoup - the form of the tale, but modifying it totally: henceforth it is no longer a question of a story for children, written, like all the others, by an adult, but a story for adults, sprung forth from the dream of an authentic poet who, like one of the personages of La brebis galante (The Gallant Sheep), can exclaim: ¶ bring the original color with me.'

Claude COURTOT

translated: Almuth Palinkas

* expression used by Breton in the first Surrealist Manifesto (1924)

The Gallant Sheep

(excerpt)

THONEY without moon, what have you done with my foot and the remains that were agitating convulsively under the thrust of their passions?

It was a beautiful day when the sea withdrew to let pass a white automobile in which slept a skin covered with lice. The automobile ran at a speed one could calculate while cutting an apple in quarters. It was equal to the trail of salt that the automobile left behind. White automobile, you grow in the distance. You occupy the whole visual field that my eyes can run during an entire year and your chauffeur, whose desire to not establish contact between the sea and your wheels I have not seen till now, salutes me. He is tall. He has an eye between his legs. His head oscillates on his shoulders like the balance of a pendulum. The needle marks 5 o'clock on the surface of the sea. Suddenly, the auto stops and the man at the head of the pendulum rushes up to meet me. He has steps of light and gestures of precaution. Everything in him is physical and blue, as far as his respiration, which diffuses around him a sky of spring mornings, making the swallows hesitate to leave the country. He is now four yards in front of me. His legs are spread apart and he sucks up the sun avidly.

'It's science,' he murmurs. And the shadow of the Shepherd issues from the depths of his pants. For a long time, it follows a fly that has taken off at the mention of science.

The man rises. The sun's needle projects its shadow on his face in the form of a shoe sole covered with nails. I recognize Nestor who hourly dances waltzes under the sun. The sun imitates him and the shadows follow the movement. Go, then, after what entrusts you to the sun-dial. Nestor looks at me and recognizes that I am his friend. He tells me his hopes and his grief that are like the algae of mirrors:

'I am alone, it is true, but to well-born souls the cross does not count upon the number of diamonds. One day I was in a barn with straw and cows. The cows ate the straw and vice versa; although that must seem strange to you. And yet what happened to me next is perhaps even stranger yet. I was looking with the delight suitable to this sort of spectacle, the cows eating the straw, when the roof split, the whole length of the barn. A white sheet passed through the opening and flapped at a breath of wind that I did not feel at all. Then, slowly, it descended to the ground. The ground, in turn, opened. And I saw, following a rigorously perpendicular line, a little red fish descend from the roof by gliding along the sheet, and bury itself in the earth. It was followed by a second, then a third. Finally the number grew as rapidly as their dimension and the rarefaction of the air in the upper strata of the atmosphere permitted. The wind swelled and the barn slipped away from the earth. When I say slipped away... it took off, or rather they fled, for the barn was divided in two. One half left with the straw and the other with the cows and each in a different direction, coming to an end in the same place: the mountain of rabbit skins.'

Benjamin PÉRET

the hermetic windows of JOSEPH CORNELL

JOSEPH CORNELL, who was born in 1904 and lives in Flushing, New York, is one of the few native Americans who have been associated with the surrealist movement. He was attracted to surrealism at the age of twenty-six when he discovered Max Ernst's album of collages, La Femme 100 Têtes. Examples of Cornell's work were included in a Surrealist Exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in 1932. He has never ventured from the U.S. except in his imagination, nor has he become particularly well known here. He participated in several surrealist exhibitions and, in the '40s, collaborated on the publication of the surrealist-oriented VIEW magazine in which several of his collages, pictures of his boxes, and several of his texts may be found. (1)

One of my favorite of his works - a little collage of ship, rose and spider-web(2) - draws together and expresses very subtly both cultural and dream symbols that are very compelling. It seems almost possible to grasp it immediately and yet it lingers mysteriously in one's thoughts -- like a dream which one is sure is filled with hidden meanings. Ships have always been considered feminine. This vessel displays her sails proudly like a beautiful and independent woman; nested at her stern is a huge rose in all the beauty and maturity of its bloom, lending its symbol of female sexuality to that of the ship; inside the rose is stretched a spider's web, the pattern of which perfectly reflects the pattern of the ship's rigging, implying that the petals of the rose can be controlled by the spider's web as precisely as the sails of the ship can be controlled by the rigging. But the web is not empty; in its center dwells a spider who controls the web and sets it out for its own purpose, for the satisfaction of its desires, even as the flower sets out its petals, and the ship sets out its sails.

The small boat behind the ship could very well be a child who follows his mother whom he both respects and desires. The ship itself, a woman essentially desirable and beautiful, is also purposeful and intelligent -- a ship with the gracefulness and stillness of a dream.

Cornell is best known for his object-boxes of which he has made hundreds. The 'Soap Bubble Set'(3), one of his earliest boxes (1936) is dominated by a large chart of the moon labeled in French. Before the moon, on a low shelf, is placed a white clay bubble pipe; below this are three circular mirrors. To the right on a high pedestal is a child's head of white china; to the left is a goblet in which an egg is suspended. Near the top of the box four rounded containers are suspended; on the left one is a collage of an astrological horse and rider, Saturn replacing the horse's head. On the right Saturn rises above the ruins of an ancient city.

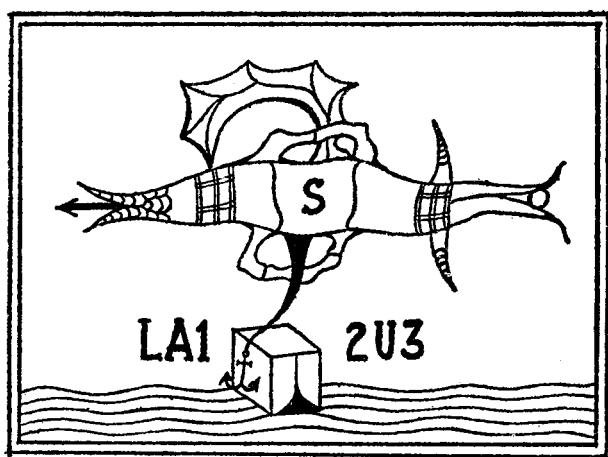
In this particular box Cornell's work is remarkably analogous with the imagery of alchemy. Alchemy itself, to preserve its secrecy, used a cloak of analogy involving traditional symbols. Thus the Magnum Opus is often

represented as the head of a child or, to follow its reflection on the other side of Cornell's box, the 'egg of the philosophers', meaning either crucible or retort but also symbolizing 'the perfection of their work, the roundness of the universe, eternity. The egg has also been called the "stone which causes the moon to turn".' (4) In the 'Garden of Earthly Delights' by Hieronymus Bosch the egg is carried aloft in the parade about the Fountain of Life (its position is the exact center of the central panel). In Brueghel a broken or cracked egg represented corruptness, and the cracked and broken head the corruptness of the state. ('All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again.') The child's face is itself an egg: one finds there the beginning of an adult and hope for the transformation of the world.

The four containers suspended above the shelf can be seen to represent the four elements of the alchemists (fire, water, earth, air); the three mirrors on the floor of the box, the three alchemical realms (animal, vegetable, mineral) or perhaps the three planes of being (corporeal, subtle, spiritual). Alchemically, lead is represented by Saturn, a winged horse (the volatile principle) and the ancient city perhaps becomes the ancient art.

The glass goblet is a recurring element in Cornell's boxes: one thinks of china cabinets and the mothers who cherished, polished and protected them. (But why should cups have stems? Are they imitating flowers?) The moon in this box seems to be the Magnus Opus of the child, his great alchemical triumph which has been created from the goblet and egg by means of the bubble pipe. The moon and bubbles participate in the same luminousness and evoke the same fancy. Is it possible that soap bubbles which escape and drift very high become moons?

Cornell's boxes hearken to that magical time in childhood when thought was the same as deed, when one suffered the pangs of conscience for dangerous thoughts against one's parents, when one carefully avoided the cracks of sidewalks, occasionally running all the way home just to be sure that one's mother was safe. It was this period of life, or perhaps earlier, that



drawing by Jorge CAMACHO

I remember being fascinated by the jars on my mother's dressing table. One of Cornell's boxes, 'L'Egypte de Mlle. Cléo de Mérode: Cours Elementaire de l'Histoire Naturelle'(5) evokes the same feelings. It is filled with lovely jars containing fascinating specimens. Once, playing by myself, I carefully inspected all the jars and bottles on my mother's table, picking them up one after another, reading their labels and examining their contents. At this time I recall that I came upon one which made my heart beat faster with wonder and fear, for the label read quite clearly - there was no mistaking it - VANISHING CREAM. There was not a doubt in my mind that one vanished when one applied this cream, nor that my mother applied it and vanished on occasion. The instructions for application were quite clear, and I longed to be initiated into this secret rite, to apply the cream and vanish. How glorious to have the omnipotence of one's parents! But there were absolutely no instructions regarding how to reappear. I was afraid that in my vanished state, although I would be able to learn all secrets, I might not be able to communicate with anyone, and thus be destined to remain vanished and lost forever. Worried that I might be discovered, I replaced the lid, being careful not to get any cream on myself lest I vanish in part, and thus reveal to all what I had discovered, leading to some punishment.

Cornell's boxes appeal to that time when we first learned to wonder, when the sun still followed us wherever we went, when dream and reality were not understood as being separate; a time of alchemists when the mind triumphed over matter and base metals could certainly be transmuted into gold through the correct process of thought and combined action; when one had the power to bring on the night by making a shadow with one's hand. The alchemists sought to transform matter; Cornell transforms matter into dreams by the creation of perfect worlds in miniature, entirely self-contained. A rational order with a seemingly incomprehensible end, Cornell's worlds appear remote - as remote as distant galaxies - but they are in fact the reflection of the forgotten and forbidden secrets of one's own mind.

Penelope ROSEMONT

NOTES:

1. Among Cornell's contributions to VIEW are an article 'Enchanted Wanderer: Excerpt from a Journey Album for Hedy Lamarr' (Vol. I, No. 9-10); a series of collages, 'Story Without a Name--For Max Ernst' (2nd series, no. 1); and his contributions to the 'Americana Fantastica' issue (2nd series, no. 4). Cornell's first one-man show was at the Julien Levy Gallery in December 1939. He was represented in the International Surrealist Exhibition in New York, 1960.

2. This untitled collage is reproduced in ART NEWS, summer 1967, p. 56.

3. A photograph of this box is reproduced in Julien Levy, Surrealism (New York, Black Sun Press, 1936), p. 183. This book, for which Cornell designed the cover, also includes one of his collages and his film scenario, 'Monsieur Phot'.

4. Stillman, The History of Alchemy and Early Chemistry, p. 171.

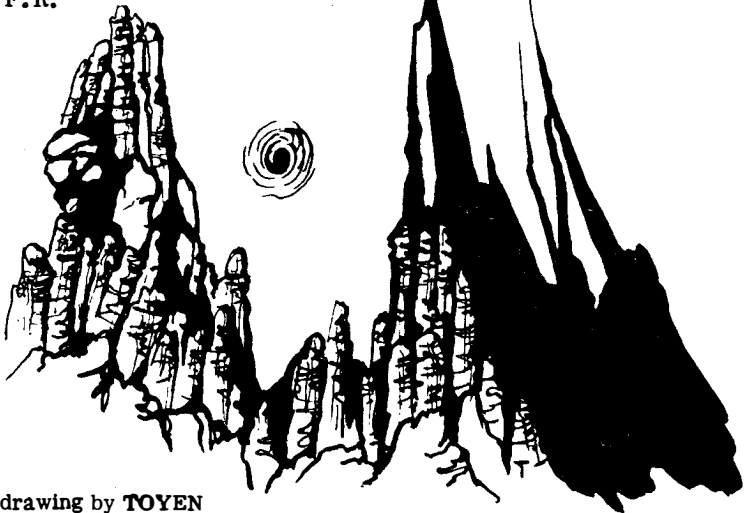
5. A photograph of this box is reproduced in color in LIFE, Dec. 15, 1967, p. 58.

Bird of Paradise

Once in the blond garden
of the extricated smoke
Twice in the vaguenesses
of eyes blinking
in slow motion
Three times in the sun
which folds
like a newspaper
Four times in the funnel
of snow the glass of alcohol
and gloves
Five times in the five senses
arranged like a puzzle
against the arthritic sky
Six times in the almanac
heavy with a pendulum
and with the index of allusions
Eight times in the frosty grass
where pebbles sleep like fish
Nine times in the purple floors
of dolphin's eyes
Ten times in the hypnotic window
simple as a grape
in its lace and laundry

The sphere of the dark
loosened from its distant hinges
in the light of frogs
so suddenly asleep

F. R.

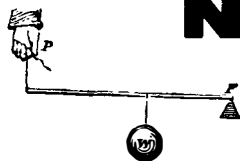


drawing by TOYEN

WHERE

NOTHING

HAPPENS



I WILL define Pop by Happenings.

It is virtually the only manifest form that Pop has adopted since its launching, which was accomplished in total confusion of theory and title. I recall that the Pop artists called themselves in turn Neo-Dadaists, New Realists, Factualists, Commonists, polymaterialists, painters of placards and comics, Urban Folklore Artists, all without a single collective statement to justify one or the other epithet. The invention of Pop Art has been, as Hilton Kramer remarked, 'a declaration of independence from the art critic' but the artists themselves, in the uproar that surrounded them, have kept for a very long time a prudent silence, that they are only now beginning to break. Their most frequent and laconic utterance has been 'no comment'. Their most exuberant was this reflection of Lichtenstein: 'I am anti-experimental, anti-contemplative, anti-nuance, anti-getting-away-from-the-tyranny-of-the-rectangle, anti-movement and anti-light, anti-mystery, anti-paint-quality, anti-zen and anti-all those brilliant ideas of preceding movements which everyone understands so thoroughly.' One could say no more in refusing to explain oneself.

We know, meanwhile, that Pop artists participate in Happenings, which they organise regularly (the word is disquieting and not mine) and that these manifestations have had in Allen Kaprow a fluent and cultured defender. In May 1961, in ART NEWS, Kaprow explained eloquently the disgust that is inspired in him, as much as in his friends, by the precious and hygienic modern art galleries where works which seem so natural in their native studios become delicate after-thoughts on the white walls of well-lit and wall-papered rooms where the conversation echoes that of cocktail parties.

Happenings were born, he explains, of a wish to make the work of art theatrical by forcing the visitor into active participation, in a series of acts improvised like jazz, where chance would play a primordial role. The Happening would utilise, in an environment of total alienation (backyard, kitchen, garage, hangar, supermarket, warehouse), perishable materials: newspapers, scrapiron, rags, jam-jars, sundry gadgets or cardboard boxes.

In the Happening called 'Alter of Apples' (and which Kaprow signed), the public fought its way through a labyrinth of wire and brown paper, under bands of colored paper which constituted a 'tranquil space'. In the 'Spring Happening' (also by Kaprow) water is poured over the audience, protected by plastic curtains, and a lawn-mower cuts, suddenly, all the partitions. In the 'Automobile Collision' by Jim Dine, two cars, male and female, acted by two men, make love and change sex. Dine drew a car in chalk on a blackboard with frightful groans and stutterings. In 'American Moon' by Robert Whitman, an enormous plastic bubble swells up, pushing

away the spectators, and the artist climbs over it, acrobatically, over their heads. Kaprow gives a more general description of happening atmosphere: Color transparencies are projected on the wall, representing all kinds of hamburgers, big, red, thin or flat. Clouds of 'New Automobile' perfume are dispersed, with odors of hospitals and lemons. The spectators, in their claustrophobia, are prisoners of the work, and if they dirty themselves a little, so much the better, says Kaprow, for 'dirt is at once fertile and organic'.

None of this is very new. He admits it, and notes: 'It all goes back to surrealism, Dada, mime, the circus, the carnival, and the mysteries of the medieval procession.' But Happenings give to the artist a new melodramatic role: 'After the Cowboy, the Indian, Stella Dallas, Charlie Chaplin, the Organisation Man and Mike Todd, the American Artist has become a figure of melodrama... He ends the creator aspect of his career... His activity incarnates the myth of non-success while Happenings can be sold and sent away home... The new myth is going to develop by itself, without reference to what it would have been, the artist will achieve a perfect isolation, will be celebrated for purely imaginary gifts, and will be free to explore something that nobody will notice.'

There is in this sufficiently superb conclusion something singularly disenchanting. Plastic art become theatrical and each artist a buffoon, the act at first sight seems called to supplant the work, or to replace it. The Artist at this stage will be simply whoever defines himself in this and that as an artist. Will the Happening turn out to be a scuttling of the plastic arts? One may well ask. Certain propositions uttered by Kaprow remain unanswered. If the art-gallery devalues the work, why shouldn't it be seen in its natural habitat, the artist's studio? Why aren't Happenings arranged at the painter's own place, and if they have to use perishable goods in them, why aren't the works that these painters exhibit in other ways submitted to the same liberating destruction?

One suspects that the revolt against art dealers is not very serious, that pop artists' studios are too comfortable to be subjected to the momentary anarchy of the warehouse and backyard; one suspects above all that pop works, whatever is said of them, have no other function than to be exhibited, like the rest, in these beautiful over-polished galleries, where alone these shock-absorbers, bits of sacking, and aggregates of detritus can appear expensive.

But let us return to Allan Kaprow, who in July 1963 came to Paris to give us a Happening, under the lofty patronage of Mr. Bohlen, U.S. Ambassador. It is a matter, the catalogue told us, of transposing onto the stage the art of Assemblage, which becomes at the same time an envelopment, so that the spectators become an integral part of the composition, then of provoking a 'collage of unforeseen events, at once very sophisticated and very primitive.' In the Théâtre Récamier Mr. Kaprow explained to his guests that no theatre auditorium could be suitable for a Happening, unless one could demolish it from floor to ceiling. The Happening was going to remove, with its audience, into the great Bon Marché shop, after closing-time. Mr. Kaprow explained to us that he was fascinated by the ritual of buying and selling in the framework of the Big Store.

Each ticket would give us the right to a packet. At a given signal, each would open his packet, and the password would be 'Have you got any bread?', a touching American play on words. (One of the packets, it is understood, would give an unforgettable surprise by containing a morsel of bread.) In the Big Store, somewhat dreary, we assisted in some little scenes, innocent enough; a lady in her bath, a washing-machine and a television attended by their demonstrator would try to communicate a thrill of novelty to an audience glum and bored, in which Mr. Kaprow hastened to combat the least humor. It had good cause to be in a sullen mood; as regards the happening, it had assisted at a shopping session, where the roles, allocated in advance, left nothing to chance, and in which invention had been conspicuously poverty-stricken. The fascination Mr. Kaprow seemed to find in the motions of shopping chimed very discordantly with his postulated wordly disinterest. Was not the 'rite' of purchasing, in order to be propelled outside the domain of the art-market, simply exalting another kind of transaction, eminently well-paid, and for the minimum of intellectual expenditure?

* * *

'The Pop Artist judges nothing,' writes Clair Wolfe, 'he is neither the translator of his own images, nor a mentor, an interpreter nor a revolutionary. The conclusions drawn from his art do not engage his responsibility. His works are not declarations of principle, but questions.' And the critic Stanley Kunitz, examining the term New Dada, recalls opportunely 'Dada was essentially a revolutionary movement, impelled by an immense social passion. It was an attack on the bourgeois society to which the Dadaists imputed the First World War.' But the Neo-Dadaists embrace, on the contrary, the bourgeois symbolism, and are closed to passion. 'It was a matter,' wrote Leo Steinberg, 'of out-bourgeoisising the bourgeoisie, of going beyond it, of taking its place and playing its role, with excess.'

* * *

Does everything one sees in the U.S., ugly or beautiful, transform itself into a work of art, a cult object or currency? One might as well say at once: America has become a work of art. The step towards the great declaration of American chauvinism begun by the handsome flags of Jasper Johns has been taken with perfect satisfaction; 'Pop is the American dream, optimistic, generous, and naive,' says Robert Indiana. 'It is industrial painting,' says Lichtenstein. 'America was hit by industrialism and capitalism, the meaning of my work is that it's industrial; it's what all the world will soon become.' Already Jim Dine is reproaching Motherwell with having written, in a famous canvas, the words 'Je t'aime' (I love you)! And when one remarks to Lichtenstein that he too often liked to isolate warlike and aggressive elements in the comics - machine gunners, torpedoes, or marines in action, to spell out insistently 'Takka Takka', 'Tzing!' or the 'Ack-Ack' of fascist rifle-fire - he replies evasively: 'The heroes depicted in comic-books are fascist types. But I don't take them seriously, I use them for purely formal reasons.'

One might ask, then, why he never copies the exultant and poetic images of Flash Gordon, Mandrake, or Krazy Kat, or the satirical and liberal comics like 'Pogo' or 'Lil' Abner'.

The moral implications of all this are inevitable. What can one say of this news from Warhol; 'My next series will be pornographic pictures. They will look blank; but when you turn on the black lights, then you will see them, big breasts and... If a cop came in, you could just flick out the lights, or turn on the regular lights. How could you say that was pornographic? Segal did a sculpture of two people in the act of making love, but he cut it all up. I guess because he thought it was too pornographic to be art. Actually, it was very beautiful.'

We could at this stage grow indignant, or poke fun at them, if it weren't that this collection of facts and remarks seemed to conceal a kind of drama. (This generalisation should not include Bob Rauschenberg, whose titles, writings, and collages, supported by assemblages like 'Canyon' [1959 - the stuffed eagle] have always worked in a neatly anti-patriotic and subversive sense. I am sorry that this artist, who, though an involuntary precursor of Pop, is always dissociated from them by the more purist critics like Thomas Hess, should mix, doubtless from emulation, in manifestations like 'The Building of Boston'. Likewise, the self-brutalising procedure I attribute to Warhol, Lichtenstein or Oldenburg, is foreign to James Rosenquist, whose painting, instead of working by repetition or simple copying, proceeds from choice, focuses, makes montage -- an individual activity of a superior order.) I can't help thinking that in the Happenings, the Pop artists find their moment of truth in the devaluation of their own work, in the reduction to nothing, the physical destruction of these morsels of strict obedience and slavery that are their daily affectory to the ugly, the digestible, the venal.

To the cry of Dore Ashton 'Where is the aesthetic distance? Where does the problem of metaphor come in?' none of these artists could reply, because their problem lies elsewhere. Don't look at what we reproduce, they seem to say, look at our gesture, our torment. We aren't rebellious artists: all that we do succeeds, and that's the drama! But we could do something else. Don't look at our works, look at us! We are the true heroes of our time, the perfect symbols of refrigeration, of electronics, of taylorisation, of reproduction techniques. We are the perfect chameleons in an aesthetic desert where we have eaten all the cactuses, which we replace -- see with what realism! I see, on this stage, Protean man, transforming himself into a hot sausage, a shooting gallery, a juke-box, a waffle-iron, the news-items of the Daily News, the noise of a grenade, a cream bun. The curtain falls.

Where were we?

Robert BENAYOUN

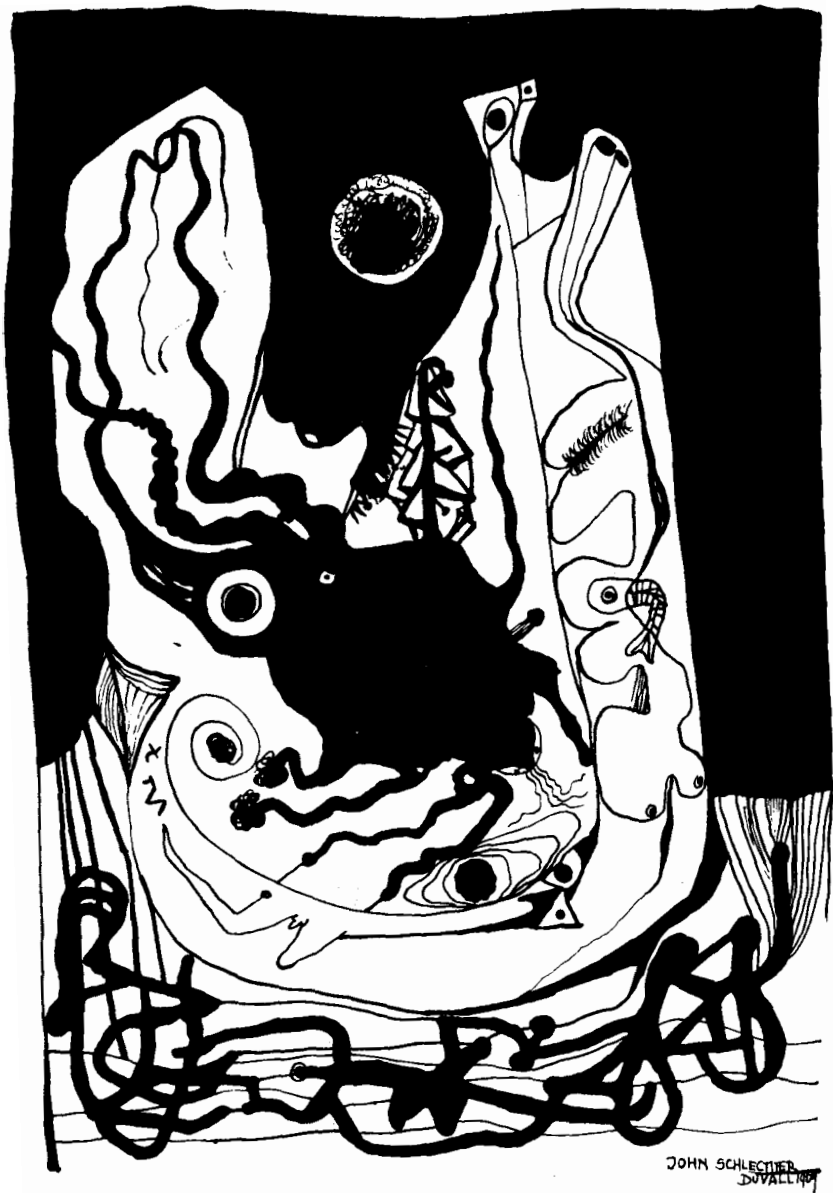
(translated by John Lyle)



**P
o
e
m**

On your wooden horse you advance
Your slender lance of flesh
Strong with the white odor of childhood
Straining before you
Determined to pierce the gross indifference
Of mushrooms dressed in pink satin
Who lie down in your bed
Of beardless cavaliers
Without stain and trouser-fly

Joyce MANSOUR



drawing by Schlechter DUVALL

Athamor

This morning
I brought you the sun
in a sack

I rose from my bed very early
I put on a brown dress
of pheasant feathers
a cloak made of chameleon skins
and on my head I set the nest
of a robin

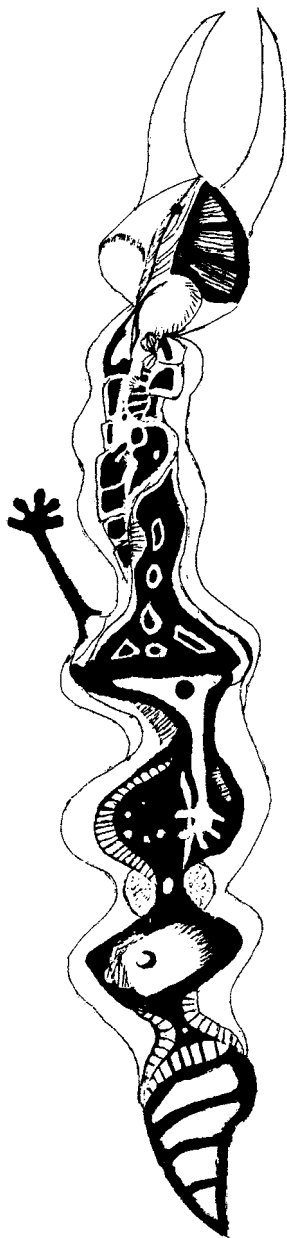
I sped to the edge of the sea
on the back of a snow leopard
who chilled the air as he passed
causing hoarfrost on weeds and trees

At the sea's edge
while the horizon was invisible
I concealed myself (with the help
of my chameleon cloak)
among lavender clouds
and silver rocks

Just as the still drowsy sun
came from behind the sea
I seized it with tongs of liquid mercury
and cast it into a sack
lined with brimstone
and nettles

I will bring it to you
for your breakfast
to spread on your bread like butter
and drink like honeysuckle nectar
and rub on your body
so that you will become luminous
dazzle your enemies
and become master
of all the beasts

Penelope ROSEMONT
23 August 1967



drawing by F.R.

The Seismograph of Subversion



Notes on Some American Precursors

THE APPEARANCE of *Les Champs Magnétiques* by André Breton and Phillippe Soupault, in 1920, marked a new and higher stage in the exploration and liberation of the mind; the unconscious passivity of the romantics was superceded, definitively, by the conscious activity of the surrealists. Doubtless the early fruits of 'pure psychic automatism' (as surrealism originally defined itself) were harvested with a multiplicity of intentions; doubtless a few wished to utilize this discovery only for the reprehensible rejuvenation of the literary marketplace. Thus Soupault, for example, rapidly became a poet only in the past tense, and in the worst sense. But the revolutionary development of surrealism was such that the automatic revelation was not permitted to harden into a comfortable aesthetic formula; the change of the title of the first surrealist review from LA REVOLUTION SURREALISTE to LE SURREALISME AU SERVICE DE LA REVOLUTION demonstrates clearly the direction indicated by the surrealist vaccination against literary and artistic sclerosis. It has been falsely insinuated that surrealism was able to advance only after it renounced (?) automatic writing. Rather, we may go so far as to say that it was precisely its fidelity to the principles of automatism that carried surrealism forward. Far from being 'abandoned', as so many critics pretend, automatism has never ceased constituting a fundamental pivot of the surrealist aspiration, a revolving door opening upon our brightest dreams.

In the first *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924) Breton surveyed the literature of the past, noting certain examples and specifying in what respect they could be considered surrealist; 'Young's *Night Thoughts* is surrealist from cover to cover... Swift is surrealist in malice... Saint-Pol-Roux is surrealist in the symbol... Roussel is surrealist in anecdote...' etc. 'They are not always surrealists,' he goes on to stress, 'in that I discern in each of them a certain number of preconceived ideas to which - very naively! - they hold. They hold to them because they had not heard the surrealist voice, the one that continues to preach on the eve of death and above the storms, because they did not wish to serve simply to orchestrate the marvelous score.' We may say that they unconsciously, and hesitatingly, articulated this surrealist voice, without themselves hearing its full implications. The degree to which these figures of the past speak in this surrealist voice is precisely the degree to which they speak directly to those of us who have rallied to the surrealist cause, which is none other

than the cause of human emancipation conceived in its most expansive sense, in which the seizure of power by the proletariat is an absolutely essential preliminary. In the United States, it goes without saying, hardly anyone has ever attempted to listen for this voice, which is all but drowned out by the chorus of utilitarian cash registers and endless box-cars of imbecile pragmatic gadgets. It is our pleasure and our pride, as surrealists, to have begun this task, to have listened attentively to this voice, and to have observed that its multifarious patterns, sensitively traced upon the graph of imaginative possibilities, constitutes a veritable road-map of implacable inspiration. The present text should be seen above all as the notes of a brief excursion along the road thus revealed.

The reader is forewarned, however, that there will be nothing in the subsequent observations to call to mind the impoverished etiquette of formal literary criticism; that every form of conventional aesthetic criteria has been rejected in advance; that didacticism, too, with its dreary professorial physiognomy and its cosmopolitan triteness, has been forced to retreat like a penitent jesuit into the deepest jungles of Ecuador, hopefully never to return.

The following notes - unsystematic, incomplete, and tending to move forward roughly and unpremeditatedly through a series of mountainous and cavernous digressions rather than comfortably across the smooth terrain of a well-defined subject matter - are intended only to provide at least some opening in a road that has been closed for so long, and is so overgrown with the weeds of verifiable despair, that its very existence has been almost effaced not only from view but from memory. Along this road, which alone among the avenues of American consciousness really interests me, to the point of fascination, and which at present can be traveled only at night, it has fallen to me to witness occasional flashes from the darkness which provided sufficient illumination to venture a few steps further. The theoretical and practical ramifications and implications of such illumination are problems I willingly leave to the future; like a strip of magnesium held in flame it is the brilliance of the flash itself, here, which focusses our attention to the exclusion of all other considerations.



It hardly needs to be said that we shall find few indications of the surrealist spirit in the repressive context of colonial Puritan righteousness and wrath. If the early colonists built the cradle of what became America, no less did they dig the grave of poetry. Surrealism is, of course, absolutely incompatible with all forms of religion, and Christianity has naturally received the greatest share of its anti-religious violence. 'Nothing will ever reconcile me with Christian civilization,' said André Breton, to whom we also owe the watchword: 'God is a swine.' With Puritanism one sees the viciousness, inhumanity, rigidity and swinishness implicit in all religion developed to an extreme frenzy which was doubly dangerous because it also controlled the machinery of state power. Everyone was to succumb to an individual and social authoritarianism in the cloak of theology which effected an almost total censorship of mind and body. Everything that surrealism celebrates - mad love, dreams, freedom, humor, desire, the marvelous, the unfettered imagination - was relegated to the province of Satan. But we know today, to the everlasting credit of Freud, that such human ten-

denies cannot be entirely suppressed; they inevitably return, unexpectedly and unconsciously, for they are integral to the very life of man, in all cultures and in all periods.

Thus in the colonial period, oppressed with Puritanism, glutted with superstition, one perceives signs of the struggle of the imagination to liberate itself. We cannot afford the luxury of dismissing these manifestations because of their religious mantle; it is necessary to see the truly human poetry, fragmented as it is, that lies beneath it struggling for its emancipation. Perhaps no one has described this process better than Moses Colt Tyler who wrote thus, in his History of American Literature: 1607-1765, of the plight of the Puritan and poetry: 'Though denied expression in one way, the poetry that was in him forced itself into utterance in another. If his theology drove poetry out of many forms in which it had been used to reside, poetry itself practiced a noble revenge by taking up its abode in his theology.'

Throughout this period many of the most popular works were those which enumerated, with painstaking detail and with imagery suitably somber and stark, the endless terrors of Hell. Cotton Mather's Wonders of the Invisible World, Jonathan Edwards' sermon Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God and Michael Wigglesworth's poem The Day of Doom - the best-sellers of colonial America - are all black, diabolical visions in which the light of the marvelous erupts through the starry eloquence of the satanic, the sinful, the eternally damned. One is reminded of Blake's note in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: 'The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it.' A serious argument could be made, I am convinced, for the poetic superiority of Michael Wigglesworth over (let us say) T. S. Eliot, whose servile, prostrate sentimentality, and his sensibility of a London banker, seem to me thoroughly anti-poetic, whereas Wigglesworth possesses at least a certain ruthless, raw magnificence. 'His pages,' Tyler notes, 'are strewn with many unwrought ingots of poetry.' One senses a desperateness in these simple narrations of devilish rage and writhing agonies of flesh and flame, a desperate quest for poetry, for true life, beyond the inhuman borders imposed by their monstrous theology whose praises they sang with such sinister, volcanic - almost ironic - elegance.

It is certain that this period, the least known of American literature, still obscured by contemporary academicians, needs careful reinterpretation. Perhaps our sensitivity to its real significance could benefit from a highly experimental attitude. Surely one should be able to go beyond the cretinous limitations of 'historical fiction' to feel the real content of a vanished period. For my part, some time ago, poring over some extracts from Wigglesworth's Day of Doom, I found myself suppressing, with a pen, its religious elements, as well as its starved metrical form, and at the same time making certain automatic additions and 'corrections', thus liberating and extending its remarkable poetic potentiality. These 'Wigglesworth Corrections', part of a series of surrealist experiments, will hopefully be made public in the near future.



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With one splendid exception, there was no poetry in America in the latter half of the eighteenth century other than the act of colonial Revolution; the exception consists of four novels written in great haste in less than a year (between the summer of 1798 and that of 1799) by Charles Brockden Brown, in whom we recognize the first true American precursor of surrealism. Very popular and highly regarded in his own time and throughout the first half of the nineteenth century (his admirers included Shelley, Poe, Hawthorne) the subsequent decline of interest in his work is largely attributable to the rise to power of literary realism and other consolidations of American bourgeois consciousness. Brown wrote in a specifically American variation of the Gothic genre, a category of literature since fallen into complete disrepute; indeed, it is often held up to ridicule as a veritable model of bad literature. But it is worth emphasizing that surrealists, who generally scorn the novel as an inherently confined and mediocre literary form, have always shared a passionate regard for the masterpieces of Gothic romance; Walpole's Castle of Otranto, Ann Radcliffe's Mysteries of Udolpho and others, Lewis' Monk, and Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer. In the first Manifesto, Breton excerpts from his severe condemnation of novels in general, only these Gothic works whose characteristic devices of terror and apparitions situate them unreservedly in the service of desire.

Although Brown wrote mostly about the formally excluded areas of reality - the marvelous - he was nonetheless, like his contemporaries Blake and Sade, an adherent of the fundamental principles of the Age of Reason, and, also like them, disdained religious mystifications. Also comparable to the attitude of Blake and Sade is Brown's early intimation of the Age of Reason's immense boastfulness, and its consequent failures. For despite his avowed acceptance of the tenets of the Enlightenment, his work constitutes one of the earliest recognitions of their essential deficiencies. The rational solutions concluding his works really solve nothing, for the reader is finally confronted with problems of even greater magnitude than supernatural mysteries. 'The voices that drove the fanatic to madness and murder in Wieland,' writes Harry Levin in his lucid study The Power of Blackness, 'are produced by a ventriloquist whose avowed intent has been to test his victim's credulity. This raises questions more terrifying in their purport than the superstitions they undermine, for Wieland's voices are easily discredited; but Carwin, the malevolent rationalist, is prompted by that 'mischievous demon' who will subsequently instigate Dostoyevsky's Possessed.'

Brown, almost systematically, breaks one's confidence in the permanence of immediate reality. His severe attack on religious superstition does not in any way support the pillars of comfortable deist optimism. He, too, perceived obscure voices calling from the darkest corners; his work comprises a remarkable premonition, an admirable, if unsteady, step toward the definitive conquest of the irrational.

Dr. O. P. BROWN'S HERBAL OINTMENT, **ONLY A QUARTER A POT.**

The case of Edgar Allen Poe, put through every conceivable sieve of criticism and analysis, yet holds fast to a certain disdainful obscurity, stubbornly refusing to be laid to rest by too hasty evaluations. Hardly a real influence in the last few years, Poe has suffered the brutal castigation and, alternately, complete neglect, not only of conservative and liberal academics but also of what has passed itself off as an American 'avant-

garde'. Let us note that his reputation even within surrealism has not been constant: cited in the 1924 Manifesto as 'surrealist in adventure', by the Second Manifesto of 1929 he is attacked as the initiator of police fiction ('Let us spit, in passing, on Edgar Poe'); but he is included in Breton's Anthologie de l'Humeur Noir (1939), and, in an interview in NEW DIRECTIONS 1940 on 'The Meaning of Surrealism', Nicolas Calas mentions Poe and Melville as American presurrealists. (It should be mentioned too that Antonin Artaud consistently included Poe among the 'accursed' poets -- along with Villon, Baudelaire, Gerard de Nerval: 'men tortured by language, hemorrhaging as they write.')

What we find of special interest in the works of Poe are some of his least-cited tales: 'The Angel of the Odd', 'The Imp of the Perverse', and 'A Predicament' ('At twenty-five minutes past five in the afternoon, precisely, the huge minute-hand had proceeded sufficiently far on its terrible revolution to sever the small remainder of my neck') -- tales in which the imaginatively liberating element and 'the ego's victorious assertion of its own invulnerability' (Freud) attain veriginous excess.

Poe's reactionary political pretensions, his fanatical racism and his hopelessly pompous stance as 'literary gentleman' are doubtless sufficient to confine him to a relatively minor position. But it is necessary to challenge and overthrow the particular prejudices against him (based on ideological oversimplifications such as 'decadence', 'neurasthenia', and even 'bad taste') enforced by his academic detractors. Poe's greatest influence in this century, it would seem, has been primarily 'underground': it is especially discernible in the work of Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. Perhaps it is given to the sympathetic interpreters of these latter authors to provoke a new recognition of the true significance of this curiously isolated figure, whom Apollinaire touchingly hailed as 'the drunkard of Baltimore'.



With the single exception of Herman Melville - who remains extremely problematical - the only Americans whose work is wholly or largely admirable in our eyes are either academically 'discredited' or completely unknown. As for Melville, it is necessary to insist, before going on, that the work of this author of indisputable genius possesses disturbingly long and complicatedly interwoven threads of ambiguity which no one has been able to unravel with more than slight success, an attribute he shares with Rimbaud, and which explains the origins of the abusive posthumous 'alliances' which both have suffered. For us Melville will always be the one who shouted 'No!' in thunder, and it is a source of regret that there were no surrealists in the US to mobilize their rage on his behalf against the abject critical assimilation campaign of the 1920s and '30s, as the surrealists in France did for Rimbaud with their pamphlet 'Permettez!' and the demonstration against the unveiling of the statue of Rimbaud at Charleville.

One can say without exaggeration that the ink of scholarship poured over Melville's works has done more to conceal them, to bury them, than the fog of neglect that shrouded his works in earlier generations. Melville holds steadfast, however, to a position of unassailable defiance -- a darkly brooding figure, driven, obsessed, flamingly lucid and commanding inspiration. His ruthlessly total grasp of reality situated itself in a mythology which

is haunted and haunting, but strangely, distressingly compressed; his intuitive dialectical materialism flew, like an albatross, on wings of the wildest lyricism. I would say without hesitation that Moby Dick seems to me closer to Hegel's Phenomenology than to any novel. Moreover, no criticism of this work, no explication, annotation, nor interpretation has seemed to me one-twentieth as significant as a news-story I came across some months ago in a magazine from the 1950s, which told of a remarkable incident that occurred, far at sea, during the production of a film-version of Moby Dick; the specially-constructed model of the white whale somehow broke away from its moorings and led the entire ship - directors, cast and crew - on a long and terrible chase. How vitally, passionately dangerous Melville remains, how clear his voice rings in our ears, like the sea in a conch-shell, years after certain morons have celebrated, with cocktails and sermons, his centennial!

OPIUM

HABIT CURED. I ask no pay
till you know you are cured. DR.
M. C. BENHAM, Richmond, Ind.

So much has been written about Emily Dickinson, one would almost consider her 'case' closed. The salaried official historians of Literature and their goon-squad henchmen, the compilers of textbooks, have been largely successful in their efforts to mold her into a prototype of the sort of 'Poet' - lifeless, cold, wooden, saccharine, sentimental, cloistered - rightly despised by schoolchildren. Surrealism intends to rescue her from this stupid lie. It is true that a vague religious strain too often intrudes to mar her sense of wonder, and one could reproach her with surrendering to her isolation and retreating into silence rather than advancing toward a more conscious attitude of revolt. But I think we should have done with such retrospective advice, so easy, so idiotic. What matters is that this woman has left us inexhaustible resources of poetic reverie: 'Dust is the only secret'; 'The Spider holds a Silver Ball'; 'We Shall find the Cube of the Rainbow'.

The 'hatred of the marvelous' decried by Breton in the Surrealist Manifesto has been refined in this 'land of the dollar' (as the US has been known for years to the working class movements of other countries) with technological exactitude. The capitalist road of reification has become a four-lane highway, and the 'traffic death toll' a suitable symbol of the state of American civilization which decades ago Freud recognized as a 'colossal miscarriage'. I think it is impossible, in 1969, to exaggerate the precariousness of the human condition. It is clear today that there is something empty, rotten and wrong about any 'politics' which has nothing to say about the near-extinction of polar bears. It is thus exceedingly important - urgent - for us to give increasing attention to all the truly oppositional voices in our past, to those voices of truthful fervour which raised, under many and divergent circumstances, the most terrible questions. And this is necessary not only for the sake of intellectual survival but to better comprehend what is to be done in the future. In the fragile hands of Emily Dickinson the sidereal grandeur of the dandelion and the shadow of the Carolina parakeet left the signature of their insolent trajectories. We whose specific task it is to put the English language in a state of miraculous effervescence, to liberate language from commodity fetishism and place it in the service of desire and thus to restore it to a high place in the struggle for the revolutionary transformation of the world, do not hesitate in avowing the pleasure we derive from certain magnificent lines by this admirable mistress of the image, who woke "at Midnight...dreaming of the Dawn."

'Revolt! and still revolt! revolt!

...

Revolt! and the bullet for tyrants!'

-- Walt Whitman (1856)

IDEAL HAND BOOK of Instruction how to **Make Your Own Bullets**

Ambrose Bierce, according to the writer of the introduction to his very incomplete Collected Writings, 'is not, of course, a great writer'; following which quaint wisdom the same little literary justice of the peace, who calls himself Clifton Fadiman, goes on to bemoan Bierce's 'painful faults of vulgarity and cheapness of imagination', lines which reveal, with incredible clarity, the most repulsive and police-like aspects of literary criticism, calculated - in this case - to convict and imprison the works of Ambrose Bierce (and many others!) behind the four walls of positivist formalism. Fortunately Bierce's own subversive genius naturally reinforces the surrealist arsenal with highly effective weapons which already permit us to forecast the almost inevitable destruction of the cultural bastille in the wake of an authentic poetic jailbreak. Bierce's sublime pessimism, pushed to the point of paroxysm, placed on American civilization's moral grave monstrous and poisonous wreaths of desecration so boundless that he resists all the conventions of literary classification. Those critics who content themselves with writing him off as a 'minor precursor' of realistic fiction should contemplate this definition from his Devil's Dictionary: 'REALISM, n. The art of depicting nature as it is seen by toads.' In relentless opposition to all intellectual fashions of his day, Ambrose Bierce casually swung the unsparing razor of his humor into the stifling hypocrisy of America's philosophical mid-afternoon of one-dimensional humanism. Today more than ever his is the best introduction to the night in which our footsteps continue to move forward. And in this night, during which the American dream continues to revolve on its axle of anxiety and boredom, we turn again and again to our surest guide, the one who hurled the silver-plated platter of progress into the Amazon River of his laughter: Ambrose Bierce, this bitterest beacon of black light.

MAGIC LANTERNS WANTED AND FOR SALE
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Samuel Greenberg was a Jewish immigrant from Austria who died in New York in 1917 of tuberculosis at the age of 24. To him we owe some of the most astonishingly hermetic poetry in the English language, poetry whose amazing transparence, extraordinary mobility and captivating images give it the magical charm of a kaleidoscope, as well as a wildly glistening quality, like rare glass in starlight. It is unfortunate that no collection of his manuscripts (he published nothing during his lifetime) is currently available, and even more unfortunate that he remains known almost exclusively to literary specialists, and even to them only as an obscure verbo-maniac frequently plagiarized by that celebrated mediocrity Hart Crane, who happened to come across the Greenberg manuscripts. It is clear that at a period in which most people who thought they were poets in the English language - not only Hart Crane but also Eliot, Pound, Joyce, etc. - were merely dabbling in the ignoblest sort of literary deception and the most grotesque vanity, leaving behind nothing but various blind alleys of mysti-

fications, Samuel Greenberg, on the contrary, was involved, desperately, in a quest of an immeasurably higher order. On his primitive raft of exhilaration and anguish he set sail on a passionate exploration of the poetic marvelous according to the principles of what Rimbaud had referred to as the 'alchemy of the word'. It is Greenberg's delirious fidelity to the cause of poetry conceived as a revolutionary and emancipatory activity of the mind that makes his whole work belong as much to the living future as the work of Crane-Eliot-Pound-Joyce & Company belongs entirely to the dead past.

Celebrated Hats.

STYLE AND QUALITY UNEQUALLED.

There are a host of writers, perhaps more plentiful in America than anywhere else, commonly categorized as 'cranks': protagonists of bizarre systems, monomaniacs of unaccepted theories, professors of weird sciences, proselytes of new religions. It should hardly be necessary to dwell upon the facts that such phenomena are especially noticeable among the increasingly pauperized petty-bourgeoisie, always in search of the most impossibly utopian panaceas; or that the underlying motivations would almost invariably reveal more or less serious psychological disorders; or that a great majority of such cases would doubtless be found to possess, at best, a conservative political attitude. The career of the Nazi 'Cosmic Ice Theory' movement (based on pseudoscientific works) should be sufficient to make us wary of greeting such phenomena with enthusiasm, and confusional literature on the subject (such as the particularly stupid book The Morning of the Magicians by Pauwels and Bergier) must be vigorously combatted. On the other hand, the immense quantity (and in some cases high imaginative quality) of this literature, as well as the great influence it has exerted and continues to exert on a portion of the population which is by no means negligible, alone make it a subject worthy of consideration. The very least one may expect from research in this area would be some additional light on some of the darker regions of the mind. And perhaps from this foggy terrain there may yet emerge one or two genuine bearers of illumination. It serves to recall Lewis Carroll, for example, who was clearly 'psychologically disturbed', and politically a conservative Protestant, factors which do not, however, in any way detract from the sublime and subversive splendour of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

There is of course in this brief preliminary reconnaissance no space to do more than cite an example from this vast literature. Of special interest is Alfred Lawson, baseball player, inventor, and pioneer of US aviation, who developed an extraordinary conception of the universe, reducing all worldly and unworldly phenomena to a handful of superbly idiotic laws, elaborating a veritable 'system' to which he gave the name Lawsonomy: 'the knowledge of Life and everything that pertains thereto', also defined as 'the science of that which is, not that which ain't'. Lawson's 1904 novel Born Again, more or less science fiction, is interesting for its utopian and prophetic aspects (it forecasts radio, among other things), as well as for its overriding paranoid schizophrenic plot. Lawsonomy could be seen as a kind of homegrown, roughcast species of 'pataphysics (Alfred Jarry's 'science of imaginary solutions') though Lawson seems to have had none of Jarry's faustrollian sagacity. But such Lawsonomian conceptions as the 'menorgs' and the 'disorgs' (microscopic creatures inhabiting the human body and responsible for organizing and disorganizing its activity), and the 'law of zig-zag-and-swirl' (illustrated by the example of a germ moving

across the surface of a corpuscle which is traveling up the bloodstream of a man who in turn is walking down the aisle of an airliner which is traveling at 100 miles per hour and at an angle of 32 degrees from the Earth, etc.) reveal Lawson's unmistakable (even if unconscious) reservoir of humor. And it is impossible to remain indifferent to an author who could write such lines as these: 'When my Eyes no longer see objects about me; when my ears no longer record sound messages; when my Nostrils do not attract odors; nor my Taste distinguish flavors; when external Pressure can no longer affect my mentality, nor internal Pressure register the appeal of my voice; when the Power of Suction has deserted me and my body is dissolved and the substances of which it is composed have returned to the great ocean of Density from whence they came; my words must still talk and urge you forward in search of the unlimited knowledge to be found in the unexplored regions of PENETRABILITY.'



George Herriman-KRAZY KAT

Situated equidistant from what is called 'serious' literature and from almost all of the aforementioned 'crank' literature is the invaluable body of work left to us by Charles Fort. Interest in this remarkable figure (all of whose books are now in paper editions) has risen greatly in recent years; it would appear as if his work has been permanently retrieved from obscurity. It is too early to perceive what this resurgence of interest will bring in the way of clarification and new ideas; one may expect very little, for instance, from such collegiate pastimes as the rejuvenated 'Fortean Society' in which the scathing humor and intelligence of the master are reduced to platitudes and stagnation. Fort was the systematizer and experimental cosmologist of 'accursed' phenomena: frogs that fell from the sky, visitations from space, astronomical peculiarities, animals that talk, etc. Noting that the disappearance of Ambrose Bierce into revolutionary Mexico coincided in time with the disappearance of an Ambrose Small, a Canadian, Fort asked: 'Is somebody collecting Ambroses?' With untiring intellectual fortitude he compiled and speculated upon his compelling data in books whose fluid style has been compared to collage: quotes from scientific journals, luminous analogies, polemical intrusions, disturbing coincidences, violent juxtapositions give these works a specifically irresistible quality of magical evocation. This philosopher of Absolute Doubt chronicled the everyday interventions of the conventionally unexpected and wove from these scattered stars a defiant galaxy of the imagination, far from the fashionable neighborhood of novelists and other gossip columnists and even farther from their psychological maneuvering and scarcely-concealed commercial ambitions.

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Another writer unique in American literature, whom we regard with great admiration, is the IWW poet and theoretician T-Bone Slim. He is best known for his contributions to the famous Little Red Song Book; songs characterized by a deeply cutting humor and a reckless spirit of revolt. But it is in the columns that he wrote regularly for the IWW papers - especially in the 1920s when his texts seem to have been published with little or no editing - that his poetic mastery reached its truest articulation. Like the style of Charles Fort, the poetic method of T-Bone Slim bears a resemblance to the technique of collage: headlines, news stories, advertising slogans and popular songs provide occasions for the intervention of his laughter with which he mows down the pillars of simplistic rationality, leaping unpredictably from subject to subject. He did not 'organize' his pages; he used no outline, no premeditated plan; utilizing every variety of word-play, certain of his texts seem to possess continuity primarily through the flowing shapes and sounds of the very words themselves, and through the spontaneous images formed as they collide and roll along the page, rather than in their conventional meaning. But it is his profound humor, and his revolutionary sensibility, which distinguishes these experiments with language from the superficial and contrived 'revolution of the word' practiced in the 1920s and '30s by Eugene Jolas and many of the collaborators of the literary magazine transition.

Let us emphasize that T-Bone Slim was unquestionably a proletarian writer, which makes his destiny and his message so much more moving in our eyes. It is clear, moreover, that his work obviously resists assimilation into the stifling categories of so-called 'proletarian' or 'socialist' (actually stalinist) 'realism', which in fact was never anything else than an essentially petty-bourgeois, bureaucratic, guilt-ridden parasitical and repressive ideological device, in flagrant contradiction with the teachings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin; it was 'the kind of art functionaries understand', as Che Guevara wrote. Functionaries in the service of stalinist state capitalism could obviously not tolerate T-Bone Slim: the self-activity of the imagination is as terrifying to them as the self-activity of the working class. 'It is up to us,' wrote Breton in the Second Manifesto, 'to move, as slowly as necessary, without any sudden fits or starts, towards the worker's way of thinking...' Let us meanwhile render homage to T-Bone Slim, a working man conscious of the oniric weaponry of language, who gave to poetic revolt in English a resonance peculiarly his own, and to whose memory we are pleased to offer at least this minimal act of reparation.

HERE ~~WE~~ ARE AGAIN BOYS.

∴ ∴ THIS TIME IT'S AN ADJUSTABLE BULLET

It is not only in the written word that we recognize poetry. The revolutionary defense of the marvelous must be achieved by any means necessary.

Night weaves the brightest of magical flames in the subtlest folds of its darkness, speaking to us sometimes in a voice as criminal as the sea, burning with purity and yet as frozen as the tracks of wolves in the snow before dawn. The **BLUES** comprise an extraordinarily fertile poetic tradition which is only now beginning to emerge in a new light. The inadequacies of the existing critical literature, which even at its best tends to restrict

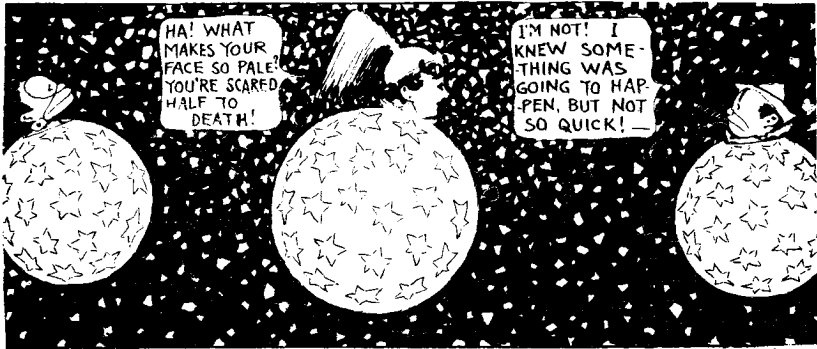
blues to the categories of the social sciences, should become increasingly evident as Paul Garon publishes his researches into the profound and exalted lyricism emanating from the work of such bluesmen as Peetie Wheatstraw or the better known Robert Johnson. Much has been written of blues lyrics as a means of expression; almost nothing regarding them as an activity of the mind. We have everything to expect of further exploration of this elusive, important domain, which promises to unravel many tangled mysteries of human expression as well as to liberate new and dynamic forces of inspiration.

HORNS FOR TALKING MACHINES

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COMICS and cartooning comprise one of this century's clearest windows on all that is most marvelous in the imaginative life of man. Heir of folklore and fairy tale, as well as many aspects of 'artistic' tradition, the best comics articulate delicious dreams of adventure, revenge and the realization of the mind's potentiality, offering momentary flights of incomparable exhilaration from the prison walls of immediate reality, and permitting the human sensibility to arm itself somewhat against the drab military background of everyday life with its cushioned monotony, its ceaseless procession of inhibitions, laws, cops, courts, priests, and the well-known sterility of truly human faculties in the capitalist epoch, a situation which finds its most adequate expression in best-selling novels cranked off an assembly-line of enforced stultification. For me, a single Bugs Bunny comic book of the early 1950s (such as 'The Magic Sneeze' of 1952) will always be worth more - in terms of freedom and human dignity - than all the novels of Proust, Sartre, Faulkner, Hemingway... Such a judgment, which will probably strike some as excessive, possesses at least the virtue of complete seriousness. Regrettably the spatial limitations of the present article do not permit me to deal more concretely, nor even at greater length, with this subject, to which, however, I shall return in the future. Meanwhile it must suffice to signal certain of the comics which, from the surrealist point of view, seem to offer the greatest promise, the brightest revelation: in the first place, the delirious lyricism of 'Crazy Kat' by George Herriman, a mad ballet with eternal variations on a single theme, the simplicity of which only emphasizes the poetic heights and depths it attains at every turn. Also close to us are Winsor McKay's 'Little Nemo', a beautifully-constructed celebration of the Pleasure Principle; the wild-eyed buffoonery of 'Happy Hooligan' by Frederick Burr Opper; the 'Toonerville Folk of Fontaine Fox; and the concrete irrationality of Rube Goldberg's elaborate inventions, as well as the sublime ridiculousness of his 'Foolish Questions'. From a later period surrealism singles out especially the comic characters of violent humor: these are most always animated cartoon 'stars' who are later featured in comic books and sometimes newspaper strips: particularly Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck, but also Tom & Jerry and the early Woody Woodpecker, characters whose origins and development are linked to a revolt against the bourgeois banality of the Walt Disney studios. Among animated cartoonists surrealism affirms the amazing dynamite of black humor in the work of Tex Avery; also the masterpieces of the 'gag' by Chuck Jones, Robert McKimson and others; and the sensitive, penetrating delight of several works of Norman MacLaren. Of the 'super-hero' comics, generally a boring genre, marked with semi-fascist ideology, surrealists point out only certain rare exceptions: 'Cap-

tain Marvel' whose bungling humor is in such complete contrast to the dreary unemotionalism of 'Superman'; the early 'Plastic Man' (like the former, not to be confused with its current dull reincarnation); and Will Eisner's fantastic 'Spirit'.



Winsor McCay-- LITTLE NEMO

We can do no more here than merely mention the names of certain PAINTERS in whom we recognize preoccupations that foretell, enhance or parallel our own: some of the curious allegorical landscapes of Thomas Cole (1801-48); certain works of John Quidor (1801-81) illustrating themes of Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper; the entire work of Albert Ryder (1841-1917), Louis Eilshemius (1864-1941), and Edward Hopper; certain 'naive' painters, above all Morris Hirschfield; and Joseph Stella's early and specifically New York interpretation of futurism. More attention should be given to American Dadaism; particularly to Man Ray, who went on to become the first American surrealist -- aside from toppling the governing conceptions of 'artistic' photography he has contributed a great number of paintings, drawings and objects which are still far from receiving their full measure of appreciation. Later there were those who adhered to the principles of the surrealist movement in this country: the sculptor and photographer David Hare (who edited the first US surrealist journal, VVV), Joseph Cornell, Kay Sage, Dorothea Tanning, the early Alexander Calder (inventor of the mobile), the Armenian immigrant Arshile Gorky, and Marie Wilson. We should also mention some of the more obessed abstract-expressionists, principally Jackson Pollock. Of recent American painting there has been little which meets the fundamental surrealist requirements of revolt and revelation; a few examples by Rauschenberg and Rosenquist are very small oases in a vast desert. Of foreign surrealists living in the United States let us extend our warmest fraternal greetings to the Spaniard E. F. Granell, whose passionate and ceaseless explorations of the internal labyrinth have brought him into close collaboration with the minotaur; and the Indonesian Schlechter Duvall, who has plunged mercilessly into the imagination's deepest sea of flames to rise as the non-euclidean phoenix. We may expect the growing presence of surrealism here to overthrow completely the existing tendencies in 'art', to restore imaginative vitality to painting and to situate it in the service of poetry and human freedom.

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If surrealism tends to reject the greater portion of American CINE MA for its commercialism, its racism and its State Department ideology, if it agrees with Luis Buñuel that 'in none of the traditional arts is there so great a disproportion between potential and achievement as in the cinema',

it nonetheless calls attention to certain remarkable exceptions: the entire early work of Chaplin, the Mack Sennett comedies, Buster Keaton, W. C. Fields, all the works of the Marx Brothers, and a few exemplary films (King Kong, The Phantom of the Opera, Peter Ibbetson) which reveal the explosive possibilities of the miracle of cinema, which André Breton has called 'the first great open bridge' uniting day and night.

Scales

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Excepting only the igloo, the longhouse, the adobe and the wigwam, we are quite prepared to say that the architecture of this continent bores us to tears. The only other exception might be the oddities of American building: the isolated 'castles' of nineteenth century eccentrics, certain magnificent grain elevators, the Leadville Ice Palace of 1896, the Chicago Water Tower... Thus it is with particular pleasure that we affirm the absolute splendour of Simon Rodia's towers in Watts, triumph of automatism and collage, and a delirious promise of the surrealist architecture that will be.

Nothing to Watch but the Road Ahead.

Send for Catalog.

'History is a conception of the future!' wrote Nicolas Calas. In the present period we are surrounded by bourgeois misconceptions -- pompous crucifixes of philosophical hypocrisy; pink satin pillows of capitalist culture for soft heads; iron bars of bureaucratic sociology and the miserable glue of patriotism, respect for property, religion, advertising, education, etc. -- which must be discredited and destroyed. Such a transformation of the past in the service of the future is not, for us, an abstract diversion to be pursued in isolation in this or that ivory tower. It takes shape and develops, rather, in the heat and light of genuine struggle -- struggle against bourgeois ideology and the concomitant struggle to liberate forces of revolutionary inspiration and action. The conceptions of the past which prevail today are rooted in ideological deception. They are, collectively, the autobiography (hidden behind the mask of anonymous 'objectivity') of the ruling class. To attack this deception, to tear away this mask, is to provide surer ground for the revolutionary movement to advance on; it is to clarify our perception of the terrain on which we must fight.

For us, surrealists, this task of revolutionary revaluation necessarily commences with the theory and practice of poetry, for poetry is, as Benjamin Péret has said, 'the source and crown of all thought'. But let no one confuse this point of departure for a point of arrival; let no one think that we accept any of the stale literary evasions which are the puerile staff of life only for those pretenders who wrongly call themselves poets. Our unreserved adherence to the fundamental principles of marxism-leninism, our active participation in concrete political struggles and on militant demonstrations, should be sufficient proof that our conception of poetry does not end with the poem.

At the same time, however, we recognize that specifically 'poetic' problems do exist, and that their solution is crucial to the development of a truly effective revolutionary theory and practice. The solution of these problems - problems of human expression in all its forms, problems of dreams, love, madness - cannot be harnessed to the ideological or tactical

requirements of any political group, even under the best circumstances. Among existing intellectual efforts, it is precisely surrealism, in fact, which seems to be most able to propose and carry through the most daring solutions. Before surrealism, in any case, almost nothing concrete had been done in the area it set out to explore, and it is clear that surrealism has contributed more than anything else to this project. Moreover, surrealism has always situated its consideration of these problems in a framework tending to support the struggle for socialist consciousness and proletarian revolution.

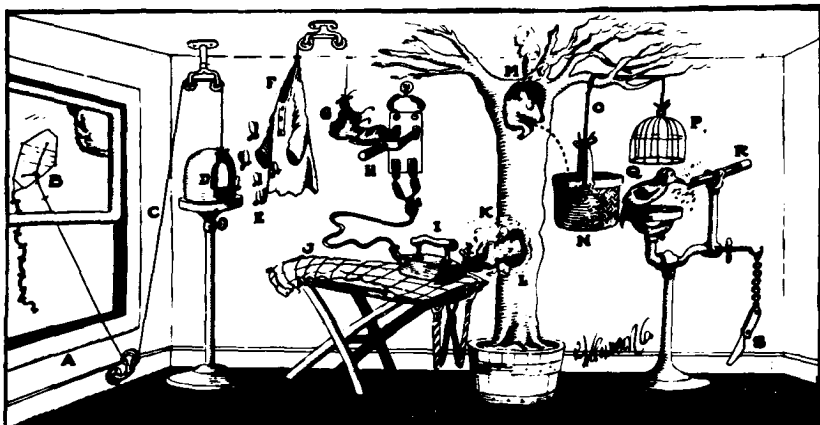
It is unforgivable that there is a growing tendency by reactionary critics to consider surrealist works as mere literature: André Breton's Nadja is even described as a 'novel'. Nothing could be more misleading. Nadja should be read the way one reads What Is To Be Done? It is also worth pointing out, however, against this distortion at the hands of critics, that there are young people today, unquestionably intelligent, sensitive and perceptive - and their number is steadily increasing - whose very sense of life has been brought to the boiling point by poems by Péret, Breton or Césaire, a painting by Tanguy, Gorky or Toyen, an early collage by Max Ernst, a story by Leonora Carrington or an object by Oscar Dominguez.

'I call tobacco that which is ear,' wrote Benjamin Péret shortly before he left for Spain to fight, alongside the workers, as a militiaman in defense of the Spanish Revolution. Poetry, properly understood, concretizes man's desire for freedom; but we are quite prepared to pick up the gun, when necessary, to defend that freedom in the streets.

Communism and surrealism are 'communicating vessels' -- and their unfettered communication leads to the total liberation of man.

On the political plane, the watchword of Marx and Engels retains its impassioned validity: 'Workers of the world, unite!' And on the poetic plane, the revolutionary watchword remains that of Lautréamont: 'Poetry must be made by all. Not by one.'

Franklin ROSEMONT



The Simplified Pencil-Sharpener by Rube GOLDBERG

The Pale Impromptu

I

Silver mourned gray. Slept the greenlight
Pale neath coil of rock and clay
Stirred the tasted belt, such flower sighed tears
Kept lewd powers away --- by
Northern soprano
The Eastern lute
The forgotten pallette
Strains ramble
Pellucid Quest
times chant
Hearts brow
Pale heat
Fusive bleat
Thus of eye, lived low beyond colours earned retreat
But dared not show --- a vain vampires rath
Can you forget this wreat
Hidden winds perspired foul --- as
a palmed rose
The well shade
Urgent fears
Eyes jealousy
painted mirth
royal flesh
candle salve
consumed moon
And here, the ash tray was Blown!

II

Blue turned white, gave the earth
a coating balzomized sooth
Though naked light shealds the trail of love
The fold metal granite doth move
In --- Waves of skin
Shapes of tale
tinted stains
graceing clumps
Slime pigments
Lurid farrows
Nulling marrow
Shallows cloak
Marble sponge
Therein I but tarry, as the yoke of Helium tinge
Unmatched, foreign, alien to the shrine of beauties cringe
Leanness will but crave
Water waves
torque blocks
Skulls of saints
patience absent
Yellow dreams

Sensive stirs
Silent hills
precious death
His woob? hath yet nigh its breath

III

Clover sank to iron heat, stole the
lillies of pale mat gold
The hearse in ghosts, where black
jet black --- driven in Frail --- By
Solitudes wish
Phantoms orient
Grey life
Fouls deviation
Spiritual songs
pearls from tissue
traits rejuvenation
Stale plants
dim accuracy
There sat the minstrel, bent in leagues
of Frozen charm
Though lightly, fettered, as perfect calm
Thawing melancholy
Into
Early psalms
river rhodes
tale of lamps
Satyres burial
Paradise shrine
Noble realms
Mirror's envil
Clover's muse
O soul! enlivened from dire perfume.

Samuel GREENBERG
(1915)

ELECTRICITY

Juice is stranger than friction.

A friendly stranger is half as strange as a strange friend.

The world's champion friend has 198 friends --- two, former friends --- are no more.

China has 440,000,000 opportunities for a man looking for friends.

The thinning out of the Chinese, in favor of western civilinsanity, has started in earnest --- earnfest --- to enslave the rest.

The idea is to get the 440,000,000 Chinese to support the world --- an impossibility without thinning them out, and impossible after.

China industrialized will number about 200,000,000 workers, and will be able to do much of Europe's manufacturing, when not conducting an engage-

ment with rice and chop suey --- and, when Europe's unemployed hold extraordinary sessions with soup and petrified biscuits.

Europe's civilinsanity, too, will feel safer after China is deflated; remember how rosy the school girl complexion of 'our' capitalism got after labor was deflated, 1920---?

But, (note this) they do not deflate labor in America any more --- they use a stomach-pump; they grab a man in the street, full of compulsory temperance, rush him to a hospital, and pump the constitutional sobriety out of him.

Sometimes they save the man. Good! Bravo! But, neverthelittle, prohibition has killed more men than we lost in the last war --- this is not favoring war nor prohibition -- prohibition is the worst stuff I ever drank.

I would not mention it if it wasn't a thinning-out process --- why carry on war when --- when you can give the victims wood alcohol, hair oil, chloral and torso-ointment ---?

If you want to thin 'em faster, re-introduce saloons, legalize moonshine and denatured 'gas'.

Not much prohibitory stimulant is being guzzled --- little is SO effective, and SO cheap. Really, prohibition seems like a concession to the mounting gas bills --- with what would you buy a radio if the people were allowed to spend the money for liquor? Only a saloon-keeper would have Fords and 'Neitherdynes'.

Leaving all jokes aside, I would rather listen to a radio than a drunk, yes I would ---as much as the pufformerxstagger in their igloo --- Sixon --- but I would rather be half shot while doing it, yes I would.

How helpless we Americans are. Law tells us when to work, what to eat, what to drink, what to chew and smoke, where and when to sleep; tells us what to think; tells us where to live; tells us when to die --- where would we be without law? What would we do? It tells us not to celebrate our Independence with Chinese fire-crackers.

I suggest --- patriotically suggest --- that we loan our laws to China, just as soon as we can spare them.

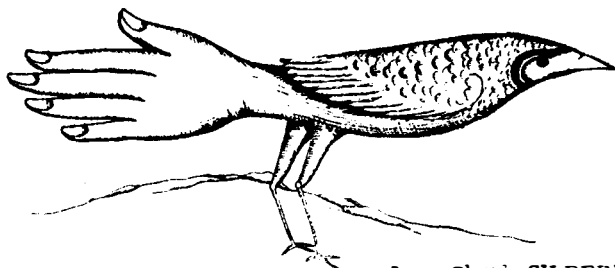
Another thing in our favor is cheap food. It's really astounding!

You can get two spoonfuls of oats and a tube of milk for 10 cents --- everybody, too, seems to have a dime -- ah, may the dimes never grow extinct!

I stood by the cashier's desk and watched the breakfast customers pay their bills. Here is what the register registered: 10, 15, 10, 05, 10, 10, 10, 10, 05, 10, 20, 10, 10 ---Iwonder where all that money is coming from. --- A hundred years from now they'll celebrate this prosperity and Coolidge --- the one-man PROSPERITY.

T-Bone SLIM

(Industrial Pioneer, August 1925)



Jean-Claude SILBERMANN

The Devil's Son-In-Law

WHEN BLUES SINGER William Bunch was killed in a car-train wreck in 1941, he had recorded nearly 200 songs. Although his death was reported in the music trade journals and his name is familiar to record collectors, he still rests in an obscurity incommensurate with his eloquence. Bunch was known as Peetie Wheatstraw, the Devil's Son-in-Law (indeed, nearly all his records were labelled as such) and often referred to himself as the High Sheriff from Hell. Although the name Peetie Wheatstraw was a folk-name like Stavin' Chain, or the more common John Henry, it should be recognized that William Bunch must always be associated with the name as well as with the myth with which he surrounded it.

The character of Peetie Wheatstraw was strikingly manifest in his songs, and a sample of the lyrics is extremely revealing:

'Women all raving about Peetie Wheatstraw in this land (2 times)
He got some of these women going from hand to hand.

I am Peetie Wheatstraw, the High Sheriff from Hell. (2x)
The way I strut my stuff, oooh well well, you never can tell.'
(*'Peetie Wheatstraw Stomp #1'*)

'Everybody hollering 'Here comes that Peetie Wheatstraw'. (2x)
Better known by the Devil's Son-in-Law.

Everybody wondering what that Peetie Wheatstraw do. (2x)
Cause everytime you hear him he's coming out with something new.

He makes some happy, some he makes cry. (2x)
Now he made one old lady go hang herself and die.

This is Peetie Wheatstraw, I'm always on the line. (2x)
Save up your nickels and dimes, you can come up and see me some-
time.'

(*'Peetie Wheatstraw Stomp #2'*)

'Now I am a man that everybody knows. (2x)
And you can see a crowd everywhere he goes.

My name is Peetie I'm on the line, you bet. (2x)
I got something new that I ain't never told you yet.'

(*'Shack Bully Stomp'*)

Although the subjects covered by Wheatstraw in his songs are various, and as diverse as suicide, travel, the depression, welfare, urban renewal, insanity, drinking, women, gambling and murder, each song contributes a bit more to the picture, and what ultimately emerges is a remarkably fantastic character:

I did more for you than you understand
You can tell by the bullet-holes, mama now, here in my hand...'

(*'Ice and Snow Blues'*)

Or:

'This is Peetie Wheatstraw this morning, people want to know why
do I (frown)* (2x)
Sometime I (frown) in the far distant lands, sometime I (frown) over
the rising clouds.'

(*'Pete Wheatstraw'*)

'Kidnapper's Blues' is a magnificent, and elaborately constructed,
Wheatstraw fantasy:

'They kidnapped my baby, she was all I had. (2x)
They asked for 10,000 ransom, it made me feel so bad.

No kidnapper can do me thisaway. (2x)
I'm going to the chief detective to see what will he say.

I love my babe, and I want her to come on home. (2x)
But the lowdown kidnapers have taken my babe and gone.

I'd give them 10,000 dollars just to see her smiling face again. (2x)
She is all I got to live for, also she is my best friend.

The chief detective say, 'I got all my mens on the block. (2x)
And I'm telling everybody this kidnapping must be stopped.'
(*'Kidnapper's Blues'*)

Although women figure significantly in his blues, their role certainly
varies:

(*'Now where would you be mama, you made my life a wreck. (2x)
I'd rather have a rattlesnake wrapped around my neck.'*)
(*'Devil's Son-in-Law'*)

Wheatstraw's significance and influence in the world of blues is often underestimated. He embellished the last line of each of his verses with an 'ooh, well, well' cry that soon became his trademark. Musicians who played with him only briefly later began to use his cry on their own records, and blatant Peetie Wheatstraw imitators were common. The blues singer Herman Ray billed himself as 'Peetie Wheatstraw's Buddy', and although pictures of the real Peetie Wheatstraw appeared in early Decca catalogs, it would seem to be a photo of Ray that has been recently and erroneously circulated as a picture of Peetie Wheatstraw. The blues singers Casey Bill Weldon, Smokey Hogg, John Henry Barbee, Champion Jack Dupree, and even, possibly, Sleepy John Estes all show traces of having been influenced by Wheatstraw.

Toward the end of his career, on his last recording session, Wheatstraw no longer accompanied himself. Most of his early records featured his smooth, rolling piano, or, in a few cases, his strangely jerky but rhythmic guitar playing. His later records had not been quite as good as his earlier ones, but on the last session, his lyrical compositions were stunning. He recorded 'Southern Girl', a song about the ill effects that urban life (and whiskey) have on women. The song ends with the verse:

¶ I know Chicago will get them that way. (2x)
There's people coming to Chicago going hog-wild every day.
(‘Southern Girl Blues’)

Peetie's last session was made less than a month before his death. Although his death was seemingly accidental, of the nine songs he recorded that day, one was called ‘Separation Day Blues’, one began ‘old organ, you've played your last tune’, while another was called ‘Hearseman Blues’ and still another was called ‘Bring Me Flowers While I'm Living’.

‘Bring me flowers whilst I'm living, please don't bring them when I'm dead. (2x)

And bring them back to my bedside, to cool my achin' head,

When a man is sick in bed, please come to my rescue. (2x)
When a man is dead and gone, how in the world he know what you do?

Bring me water to my bed, a drink will keep me cool. (2x)
And just say after I've gone, ¶ I sure tried to help that fool.’

I'll stay here as long as I can, leave when I can't help myself. (2x)
We has all got to die, and I ain't no better than no one else.
Don't bring me flowers after I'm dead, a dead man sure can't
smell. (2x)
And if I don't go to heaven, I don't sure need no flowers in hell.

Paul GARON

*NOTE: In this verse, the word ‘frown’ is unclear and could easily be ‘cry’ or ‘clown’.



Kidnappers Blues

No 3249 PEETIE WHEATSTRAW

3249

KIDNAPPERS BLUES and FROGGIE BLUES
—Vocal, Piano, Guitar Acc. Peetie Wheat-
straw59c

Such Pulp As Dreams Are Made On

(H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith)

(The recently reawakened interest in the work of H. P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith sufficiently justifies reprinting the following article—one of the earliest serious discussions of these writers—which appeared in the American surrealist journal VVV in 1943.)

FORESTS are decimated and the dismembered corpses of trees are tossed into a hell-broth concocted by industrial chemurgy, and so reduced to cellulose. This wood-pulp is converted into paper of various types. Nine-hundred and sixty nine mills are engaged in the primary pulp and paper industry in the United States; more than a million persons are supported by this process. These figures do not include those masses engaged, in one way or another, in the various skills of spreading ink upon the paper.

All this multifarious activity has grown up in response to one basic human craving -- that insatiable appetite to escape from the 'low dark prison' of segmented existence. Some might define this unconscious drive as a passion for participation; others as the revolt against the boredom of life imposed by the dictatorship of the Machine. The 'news' purveyed on paper may intensify and temporarily nourish, in vicarious fashion, the hunger for communal participation, and provide a temporary release from the rigors of everyday monotony.

To some thirty millions of Americans, pulp-paper publications offer avenues of release; yet, in the hierarchy of contemporary literature, the 'pulp' are relegated to the lowly caste of the untouchable. Disdained by the literary experts, they are preserved in few libraries; they have never been diagnosed by sociologists and psychologists, who remain blandly indifferent to the significance of their widespread and enduring appeal. The 'literature' of the subject is sparse and well-nigh inaccessible.

Nevertheless, from the point of view of communication by the printed word, the 'pulp' function efficiently. They engage the loyalty of millions of faithful and habitual readers, who vociferously express their approval with reader-response letters, organize themselves into 'fan' clubs, even hold annual conventions and trade their cherished fantasies with each other -- even to the extent of printing bibliographies of their preferences and masterpieces of 'futurian' literature.

Successful communication may be likened to an electric current. Writer and reader, in such a communal experience, are lifted out of their individual isolation and fused into a single, all-enveloping identity. The I is transfigured by the We. The reader-response published by the editors of the pulps, if authentic, is adequate testimony of this communal participation.

This class of untouchables populates the newsstands with impudent density. The pulps thrive with the hardihood of weeds -- or the ambiguous hemp-plant. They bring to mind the words of Hamlet; '...an unweeded garden that grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature possess it merely.'

The life of the individual pulp is brief, evanescent, ephemeral; but the species spawns and pullulates. Some of them answer the craving for purely physical derring-do; 'action' stories, 'westerns', aviation adventures. Others purvey ersatz opiates designed to assuage thwarted sexual impulses. Still others indulge in masked orgies of murder, torture, violence, sadism, sterilized and rendered morally innocuous by the automatic triumph of the forces of law and order.

Most fascinating, perhaps, are those pulps devoted to super-realistic 'wonder' -- to the weird, the horrendous, the pseudo-scientific, the resurrection of ancient myths and folklore. In these we discover a wild, undisciplined jail-break from the concentration camp of the mundane, a carefree defiance of all the laws of the universe, a flight from the penury of life in three or four dimensions. Here is explosive vocalization of repressed imaginations, wrenching off the manacles of Time and Space!

These 'scienti-fictions' catapult the reader (by 'spaceship') to the remotest reaches of the solar system. With Thomas Traherne the pulpiteer cries out: 'Tis mean ambition to define a single world; to many I aspire, the one upon another hurl'd.' Some of these 'interplanetaries' (the technical name for such tales) transport you in the twinkling of an eye to any one or another of the 1830 (or is it 1381?) planets, asteroids, or planetoids, of our own solar system. You find yourself, perhaps, in some 'hot spot' in Io City, megalopolis of the planet Jupiter. There (in surreptitious defiance of the interplanetary Gestapo) 'space-farers' and 'space-rats' carouse and plot. You, reader, are really the hero -- a right guy, a regular fellow, a prince among your comrade star-rovers. You pick up bits of startling information from 'slender snake-like Venusians', lepidopterous Mercurians, or good-natured Brobdingnagian Jovians. You plot the downfall of the Hitlerian dictator of the solar system; and from the sidereal double-talk of five planets you inadvertently learn of a colossal snatch-racket: a gangster-star from the other side of infinity is plotting to kidnap our Brother the Sun! Or you may speed through space-lanes regulated by interplanetary traffic cops to the rescue of some trans-lunar princess. As they thrust out their revolting serpentine feelers toward the princess in distress, you lasso giant man-eating pitcher-plants. Or else you discover the populace of two alien and irreconcilable dimensions battling for the supremacy of our little world. In all these variegated adventures, the naive reader experiences a dilation of consciousness, the expansion of belief beyond the boundaries of the credible, release from that disagreeable little patch of experience men know as the plausible. *Credo qui absurdum!*

The exhilaration experienced by hardened addicts is suggestive of the ecstatic elevation induced by hashish or marijuana; the soaring into a Paradise of Mahomet, the distorted awareness, then weightless, effortless flight, followed by a sudden, chilling drop to reality. The addict feels himself larger, stronger, far freer, the dominant feeling 'one of immense joy and liberation'. His experience recalls DeQuincey's with laudanum: 'The sense of space, and in the end the sense of time, were both powerfully affected. Buildings, landscapes, etc., were exhibited in proportions so vast as the bodily eye is not fit to receive. Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable and self-repeating infinity. This disturbed me very much less than the vast expansion of time. Sometimes I seemed to have lived for seventy or a hundred years in one night; nay, sometimes had feelings representative of a duration far beyond the limits of any human experience.'

August Derleth and Donald Wandrei have salvaged the work of two extraordinary 'stars' of the pulpwood fiction-factories -- H.P. Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith. Convinced that Lovecraft (this name is slightly incredible, but it is no nom de plume) was of more than passing significance, Derleth and Wandrei collected thirty-six of his tales (Lovecraft had died in 1937) and submitted the huge manuscript to leading publishers. Most of these promptly rejected the project as a 'poor commercial risk'. Undismayed, these two young litterateurs set up their own publishing house, the Arkham Press, in Sauk City, Wisconsin. Lovecraft's work (The Outsider and Others) was printed in a bulky volume of 553 closely printed pages, including an introduction and Lovecraft's own exhaustive essay on 'Supernatural Horror in Literature'.

Whipped on by some inner compulsion to write, Howard Lovecraft passed most of the forty-seven years of his life in an old Georgian house in Providence, Rhode Island, timorously shunning all rough-and-ready contacts with the workaday world. At an early age, through the medium of his own microscopic calligraphy, he began to create his own subjective universe. This imagined cosmos was peopled with ghouls and demons, primordial creatures of Manichean evil surviving from prehistory, or super-cosmic Titans ready to take possession of the human race at some unguarded moment. Lovecraft spun his own endless filature of ink as an armour against the external. He communicated with other sympathetic minds through the medium of letters. With more than two hundred unseen friends he corresponded regularly -- letters of forty, sixth, or seventy sheets of standard typewriter size, covered on both sides with spidery penmanship. Some of these letters grew longer than a full-length novel, bulking from fifty to one hundred thousand words.

Precocious wonder-children create their own imaginary kingdoms, complete with custom, currency and costume. Like them this recluse mapped and charted his own subjective archaeology and fantastic prehistory. The recluse was oppressed by the presence of 'Old Ones' who might return to take possession of the human mind and unleash the powers of darkness. 'All my stories,' Lovecraft confessed, 'are based on the fundamental lore or legend that this world was inhabited at one time by another race who, in practising black magic, lost their foothold and were expelled, yet live on outside ever ready to take possession of this earth again.' With Arthur Machen he agreed that 'it is possible that man may sometimes return on the track of evolution.' He found support for his own neurotic sense of doom in Algernon Blackwood's disturbing warning of 'a survival of a hugely remote period when consciousness was manifested in shapes and forms long since withdrawn before the tide of advancing humanity -- forms of which poetry and legend alone have caught a flying memory and called them gods, monsters, mythical beings of all sorts and kinds....'

Lovecraft's tales eventually found publication in such pulpwood publications as Weird Tales, Astounding Stories and others devoted to the supernatural. His financial rewards were infinitesimal, averaging him less than a cent a word. Lovecraft recalls Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood, Arthur Machen and Poe. He overstrains his efforts to strike terror. Like all verbo-maniacs, he fails to master his obsessions: he is too wordy, too explanatory, too rhetorical. He is at his best when he retreats into the universe of his own creation, or indulges in flights of pseudo-archaeology, and leads his readers in grim expeditions to hunt down traces of the prehistoric malevolence, as embodied in the 'Old Ones'. Most impressive, in my opinion at least, are 'The Call of Cthulhu' and 'At the Mountains of Madness'. Here

he frees himself from the conventions of fiction in its standardized forms, and presents an uncensored testimony of his inner adventures.

'The Call of Cthulhu' is a long narrative of 'the Great Old Ones who lived ages before there were any men, and who came to the young world out of the sky. These Old Ones were gone now, inside the earth and under the sea; but their dead bodies had told their secrets in dreams to the first man, who formed a cult which had never died.' The story ends with the imagined narrator testifying:

'Cthulhu still lives... again in that chasm of stone which has shielded him since the sun was young. His accursed city is sunken once more... but his ministers on earth still bellow and prance and slay around idol-capped monoliths in lonely places... Who knows the end? What has risen may sink, and what has sunk may rise. Loathesomeness waits and dreams in the deep, and decay spreads over the tottering cities of men.'

In 'At the Mountains of Madness' Lovecraft transports us, by plane of course, to the ruins of a lost, primordial, super-cosmic super-city founded by Titans who were both animal and vegetable, a city that formed the primary nucleus and center of some archaic chapter of earth's history.

'Here sprawled a Paleogaeon megalopolis compared with which the fabled Atlantis and Lemuria, Commorion and Uzuldaroum, and Olathae in the land of Lamar are recent things of today -- not even of yesterday; a megalopolis ranking with such whispered prehuman blasphemies as Valusia, R'lyeh, Ib in the land of Mnar, and the Nameless City of Arabia Deserta. As we flew above the tangle of stark Titan towers my imagination sometimes escaped all bounds and roved aimlessly in realms of fantastic associations -- even weaving links betwixt this lost world and some of my own wildest dreams concerning the mad horror at the camp.

'The things once rearing and dwelling in this frightful masonry in the age of dinosaurs were not indeed dinosaurs, but far worse. Mere dinosaurs were new and almost brainless objects -- but the builders of the city were wise and old, and had left certain traces in rocks even then laid down well nigh a thousand million years -- rocks laid down before the true life of earth had advanced beyond plastic groups of cells -- rocks laid down before the true life of earth had existed at all. They were the makers and enslavers of that life, and above all doubt the originals of the fiendish elder myths which things like the Pnakotic Manuscripts and the Necronomicon affrightedly hint about. They were the 'Old Ones' that had filtered down from the stars when earth was young -- the beings whose substances an alien evolution had shaped, and whose powers were such as this planet had never bred.'

The expedition to the 'Mountains of Madness' ends with the allegorical and semi-prophetic admonition: 'It is absolutely necessary, for the peace and safety of mankind, that some of earth's dark, dead corners and unplumbed depths be left alone; lest sleeping abnormalities wake to resurgent life, and blasphemously surviving nightmares squirm and splash out of their black lairs to newer and wider conquests.'

* * *

More arresting, from the point of view of unconscious revelation, is the Californian Clark Ashton Smith, a collection of whose tales (Out of Space and Time) has just been published by Messrs. Derleth and Wandrei. As an explorer of the grotesque, the interplanetary and the trans-dimensional in pseudo-scientific fiction, Smith has for many years enjoyed widespread popularity among pulpwood 'fans'.

Born in Long Valley, California, Clark Ashton Smith began to write at the age of eleven. Almost wholly self-educated, at seventeen he was selling stories to The Black Cat. Before he was twenty, his first collection of verse was published. This boy-poet of the Sierras soon discovered that juvenile and provincial fame is fickle. He could not live on the acclamation of his admirers. In his twenties, Smith became a journalist, a fruit-picker and packer, a wood-chopper, a typist, a cement-mixer, a gardener, a hard-rock miner, mucker and windlasser. He was past thirty-five when he resumed the writing of short stories as a profession. Then, with publication in Weird Tales of 'The End of the Story', he came into his own in prose. The success of this story inspired others -- all weird, macabre, fantastic, all flights from 'the real'.

Smith has tried his hands at all kinds of pseudo-scientific fiction. Throughout his tales, as now collected, the reader is haunted by a sense of gloominess, of isolation. They are, perhaps unconsciously, autobiographical.

In 'The Uncharted Isle', for instance, a shipwrecked sailor is beached upon a strange island of the Pacific and finds himself in a jungle that might have been painted by Rousseau le Douanier. The plant-forms are not the palm-ferns, grasses and shrubs native to South Sea islands; leaves, stems, frondage are of archaic types, such as might have existed in former eons, on the sea-lost littorals of Mu. The sailor is overwhelmed with intimidations of a dark and prehistoric antiquity. 'And the silence around me seemed to become the silence of deadages and of things that have gone down beneath oblivion's tide. From that moment, I felt that there was something wrong about the island.'

The sailor discovers the main town of the strange island, where the inhabitants move about in perplexing and perplexed fashion:

'None of them appeared to notice me; and I went up to a group of three who were studying one of the long scrolls I have mentioned, and addressed them. For all answer, they bent closer above the scroll; and even when I plucked one of them by the sleeve, it was evident that he did not observe me. Much amazed, I peered into their faces, and was struck by the mingling of supreme perplexity and monomaniacal intentness which their expression displayed. There was much of the madman, and more of the scientist absorbed in some insoluble problem. Their eyes were fixed and fiery, their lips moved and mumbled in a fever of perpetual disquiet; and, following their gaze, I saw that the thing they were studying was a sort of chart or map, whose yellowing paper and faded inks were manifestly of past ages... These beings were so palpably astray and bewildered; it was so obvious that they knew as well as I that there was something wrong with the geography, and perhaps with the chronology, of their island.'

The poet wanders here in isolation in a silent, alien universe, striving vainly to communicate with his fellow-humans. They live in another age, another dimension, wrapped in their own perplexity. In other tales the

Parlah wreaks unspeakable revenge upon the Tyrant. In one story the magician calls forth a cavalcade of giant stallions.

'Like a many-turreted storm they came, and it seemed that the world sunk gulfward, tilted beneath the weight. Still as a man enchanted into marble, Zotulla stood and beheld the ruining that was wrought on his empire... Closer drew the gigantic stallions... and louder was the thundering of their footfalls, that now began to blot the green fields and fruited orchards lying for many miles to the west of Ummaos. And the shadow of the stallions climbed like an evil gloom of eclipse, till it covered Ummaos, and looking up, the emperor saw their eyes halfway between earth and zenith like baleful suns that glare down from soaring cumuli.'

'The City of the Singing Flame', a tale of trans-dimensional adventure, is weighted with allegorical and mystical implications. After venturing into alien dimensions, following the faraway alluring music of the 'singing flame', the narrator wonders why he came back again to the human world.

'Words are futile to express what I have beheld and experienced, and the change that has come upon me; beneath the play of incalculable forces is a world of which no other mortal is even cognisant. Literature is nothing more than a shadow. Life, with its drawn-out length of monotonous, reiterative days, is unreal and without meaning, now, in comparison with the splendid death which I might have had -- the glorious doom which is still in store.'

He ventures into the Inner Sphere, in which '... a whole range of new senses had been opened up to me, together with corresponding thought-symbols for which there are no words in human speech...'

He becomes 'a larger, stronger and freer entity, differing as much from my former self as the personality developed beneath the influence of hashish or kava would differ.' His dominant feeling is 'of immense joy and liberation, coupled with a sense of imperative haste, of the need to escape into other realms where the joy would endure eternal and unthreatened.' This trans-dimensional explorer discovers possibilities of 'boundless, unforeseeable realms, planet on planet, universe on universe, to which we might attain, and among whose prodigies and marvels we could dwell or wander indefinitely. In these worlds, our brains would be attuned to the comprehension of vaster and higher scientific laws, and states of entity beyond those of our present dimensional milieu.'

* * *

In our search for the typical, we are ineluctably led to the un-typical. Even in the naivest of pulp fiction, we detect the unending conflict between the conscious craft and the unconscious drives -- the controlled versus the uncontrollable. Were we adepts in academic research, we might trace the mongrel ancestry of this pseudo-scientific allegorizing back through Lord Dunsany and Algernon Blackwood, H. G. Wells, Samuel Butler and Jules Verne, the satirical 'futurists' like Eugene Zamiatin (author of We), the Voltaire of Micromegas, and the Swift of Gulliver. On and on, to ever more remote courses, we arrive finally at the Islamic, oral storytellers of the souks, or the anonymous compilers of The Book of a Thousand Nights and One Night.

POEMS

I.

Abandon to electrical dentitions

Our hands and the birds

The elevator carries off

The trees and the photographs

The river keeps our heads of hair

The night strangles itself to the banging of the doors

and you begin the adventure again.

II.

Put the earrings under the chair

and the flowers of the carpet

and all the old woman's bouquets

so that the sweat of the breezes

and the underwater trumpets

may survive at the precipice.

Etienne LERO



The origin of all modern expression is always far more ancient than we suppose -- even of the talking moving pictures. So the ephemeral pulps of the newsstands bear a striking analogy to the Arabian Nights. With its subjective universe dominated by Ifrits and djinn (with their magical powers of transforming themselves into beasts, plants or insects), its malicious negation of external morality, its sly fusion of magic and reality, and especially its bold suspension of distressingly insistent physical laws, that endless involuted Persian (or Indian) Labyrinth of narrative survives as the most audacious and most captivating revolt from the objective world even depicted. It entices the reader into a never-never land in which individual responsibility is swept aside, a realm of surcease from iron laws of the dismal sciences, where Euclid and Newton never ventured.

W. B. Yeats once wrote: 'Children play at being great and wonderful people, at the ambitions they will put away for one reason or another before they grow into ordinary men and women. Mankind as a whole had a like dream once; everybody and nobody built up the dream bit by bit, and the ancient storytellers are there to make us remember what mankind would have been like, had not fear and the falling will and the laws of nature tripped up its heels...' But right here and now, under our very eyes, between the lurid covers of the pulps, we find storytellers carrying on the same role -- transforming the concepts of micro-physics and astro-physics into horrendousimps, Ifrits and djinn endowed with the magical powers for enslaving or liberating mankind. Thirty millions or more addicts, through these vicarious adventures, still play, as in the childhood of mankind, at being 'great and wonderful people', still seek release from the world outside themselves, a holiday from the 'reality' of that external realm, despite the grandeur of all its miracles and the nobility of the myths.

The significance of all this is not limited to mere 'literature'. Large-scale communication has tended more and more to restrict and thwart the individual, be he writer or reader. The voice of the individual is lost in the whirl of the well-lubricated machinery of mass production -- even in the

mass production of fantasy. Individual can no longer commune with individual, but only with the 'masses' -- glib symbol of a non-existent entity! Driven to wholesale production of standardized merchandise, the pulp-fictioneer strives with all conscious craft to meet the demands and schedules of his publishers. Yet unconscious impulses and compulsions, suppressed and thwarted in seeking their natural outlet, take their revenge in unconscious ways. As in all fields of art and literature, this clash between conscious endeavor and unconscious revolt generates the reader's interest and focusses his attention. Knowingly or unknowingly, the isolated reader, in being reduced to means instead of being respected as an end in himself, shares the suppressed struggle of the writer toward emancipation. This must be one basic reason for the appeal of such writers as Clark Ashton Smith or H.P. Lovecraft, and for the phenomenal prosperity of the pulps.

The pulps are engaged in the mass production of mass dreams. They mock at the piddling, puny, hypocritical plausibility and credibility of the commercial product of the more honored castes of contemporary letters. Here among the ridiculed and rejected, impartial assay may discover craftsmen who are carrying on the ancient and cryptical tradition of the story-tellers of the Orient.

The pseudo-scientific tale is developing a new school of illustration. The draughtsman is challenged to use all the resources of his imagination -- with the most direct and most economical of means. The illustrations from the various pulp periodicals offer encouraging evidence of this super-realistic school. Especially noteworthy are the drawings of Hannes Bok, a young artist who was born near Seattle.

Robert Allerton PARKER

EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers are urged to write to Arkham House, Sauk City, Wisconsin 53583, and request their catalogue; several volumes by Lovecraft and Smith are currently available and more will be published in the future. They have also published many books by other collaborators on Lovecraft's Cthulhu Myths: Robert Bloch, August Derleth, Robert Howard, Frank Belknap Long, Donald Wandrei and others. Arkham House also publishes a periodical, The Arkham Collector (50¢ a copy), which reprints rare or unpublished Lovecraft texts, news, reviews, stories, etc. 'The City of Singing Flame' by Clark Ashton Smith was reprinted in the first issue of Famous Science Fiction, Winter 1966.



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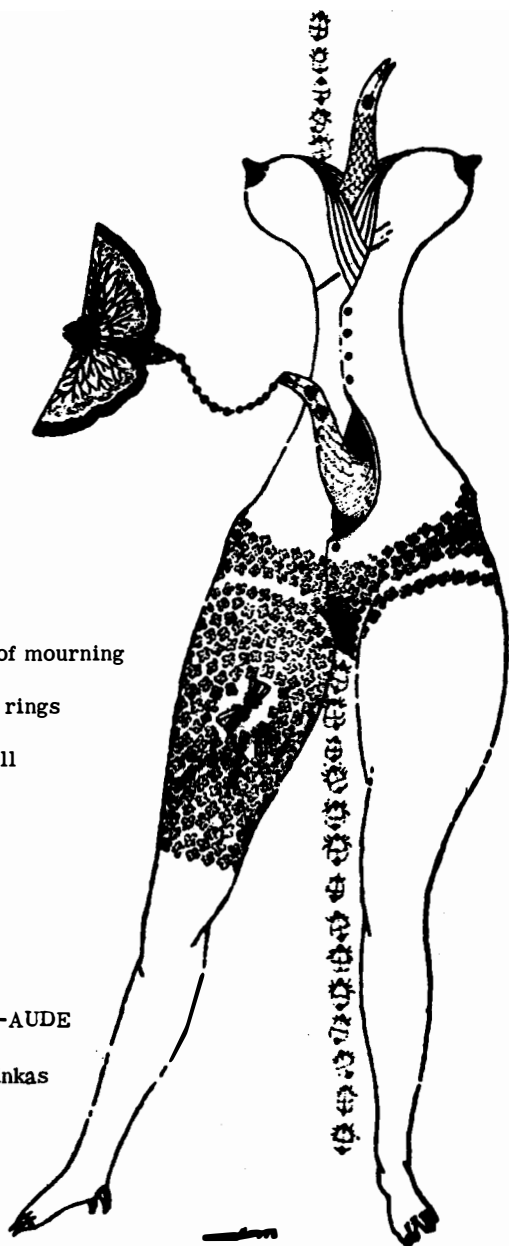
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Utterances

of my lamp and my emotion
provoked along the way
and of my truth
on the surface of the cloak of mourning
and the ponderous dignified rings
of the horseman with the bell
ringing from his elbow
artful, the pastel
of sun and soot on my wall.

Clement MAGLOIRE-SAINT-AUDE

translated: Almuth Palinkas



drawing by Max-Walter SVANBERG

The Neutral Man

ALTHOUGH I always promised myself to keep the secret about this episode, I ended up writing it down, inevitably. In any case, the reputation of certain very illustrious foreigners being at stake, I felt myself obliged to use fictitious names, which do not disguise anyone, for every reader familiar with the customs of the British in the tropics will have no difficulty in recognizing everyone.

I received an invitation asking me to attend a masked ball. Surprise being one of my habits, I greased my face heavily with a phosphorescent electric-green pomade. On this foundation layer I scattered some tiny false diamonds in order to powder myself with stars like a nocturnal sky, without other pretense.

Then, nervously, I got into a public conveyance which drove me up to the vicinity of the city, to General Epigastro Square. A splendid equestrian bust of the celebrated soldier dominated the square; the artist who was able to resolve the strange problem presented by this monument turned to a courageous archaic simplicity, limiting himself to making a marvelous portrait in the form of a bust of the General's horse. Generalissimo Don Epigastro remains imprinted in the public's imagination.

The castle of Mr. Mac Frolick occupied the entire western facade of General Epigastro Square. An Indian domestic showed me into a great reception hall of baroque style. I found myself among about a hundred persons. A rather oppressive atmosphere finally indicated to me that I was the only person to have taken the invitation seriously: I was the only one to have disguised myself.

'Really,' said the master of the house, Mister Mac Frolick, to me, 'did you have the sly intention of resembling a certain Princess of Tibet, mistress of a King who prevailed over the solemn rituals of the Bon, happily lost in the most distant part? I would hesitate to recount the atrocious exploits of the Green Princess in the presence of women; let it suffice to say that she died under mysterious circumstances, around which various legends still circulate in the Far East. Some hold that the corpse was carried away by bees who still preserve it in a clear honey of flowers-of-Venus. Others say that the painted coffin does not contain the princess, but the body of a crane with a woman's face. Still others affirm that the princess returns in the form of a sow.' Mr. Mac Frolick stopped himself brusquely, while staring at me severely: 'I shall not say more about it, Madame,' he says to me, 'for we are Catholic.'

Confused, I gave up the thought of any explanation and lowered my head; my feet were bathed in a rain of cold sweat which fell from my forehead. Mister Mac Frolick watched me with a lustreless eye. He had small bluish eyes, a big, thick, slight snub nose. It was difficult not to notice that this very distinguished man, devout, of impeccable morality, was the human portrait of a great white pig. An enormous mustache hung on his chin, well en-

dowed with flesh but a bit receding. Yes, Mister Mac Frolick looked like a pig, but a beautiful pig, a devout and distinguished pig. As these dangerous thoughts marched past behind my green face, a young man with a celtic appearance took me by the hand, saying: 'Come, dear lady, do not torment yourself, inevitably we all resemble the bestial orders; you are certainly conscious of your own horse-like appearance, so... so do not torment yourself, everything is confused on our planet. Do you know M. D...?'

'No,' I say, very confused, 'I don't know him.'

'D... is here tonight,' says the young man, 'he is a magician, and I am his pupil. Say, he's just over there, seated next to a tall blonde dressed in violet satin, do you see him?'

I see a man of such neutral demeanor that it strikes the glance as violently as a salmon on the head of the Sphinx seen in a railway station. The extraordinary neutrality of this personage gave such a disagreeable impression that I staggered toward a chair.

'Do you want to make D...'s acquaintance?' asked the young man. 'He is a very remarkable man.' I was going to reply when a woman like a shepherd of the Sun King, with an extremely harsh look, took me by the shoulder and pushed me straight ahead into a gaming room.

'We need a fourth at bridge,' she tells me. 'Of course, you know how to play bridge?' I didn't know at all, but fear silenced me. I would have wanted to leave, but I was too timid, so I explained that I could only play with felt cards because of an allergy in the little finger of my left hand. Outside, the orchestra was playing a waltz which I detested so much that I did not have the courage to say I was hungry. A high ecclesiastical dignitary seated at my right drew a pork cutlet from the inside of his rich purple ha-ha: 'Well, my girl,' he says to me, 'Charity dispenses Mercy equally on cats, the poor, and women with a green face.' The cutlet, which certainly had sojourned a very long time near the ecclesiastic's abdomen, did not at all make me desirous, but I take it with the intention of burying it in the garden. As I went outside with the cutlet I found myself in the night faintly illuminated by the planet Venus. I was walking near a stagnant fountain full of perished bees when I saw I was opposite the magician, the neutral man.

'So, you are walking?' he says in a very contemptuous tone. 'It's always the same thing among English expatriates; they go to pot.'

I admitted shamefully that I too was English, and the neutral man gave a sarcastic little laugh: 'It's hardly your fault if you are English,' he says. 'The congenital idiocy of the inhabitants of the British Isles is so well woven into their blood that they themselves are no longer conscious of it.' Vaguely irritated, I replied that it rained more in England, but that this country had engendered the best poets of our planet. Then, to change the conversation: 'I just met one of your pupils. He told me you are an adept of magic.'

'Indeed,' says the neutral man, 'I am a spiritual instructor, one in the know, if you wish, but this poor boy will never amount to anything. Know, my poor girl, that the Esoteric Path is hard, strewn with catastrophes. Many

are called, few are chosen. I advise you to limit yourself to your charming feminine foolishnesses and to forget everything which belongs to a superior order of things.'

While the neutral man talked to me, I sought to hide the pork cutlet, which was dripping horrible blobs of grease between my fingers. I succeeded in putting it in my pocket. Relieved, I understood that this man would never take me seriously if he knew that I went walking with cutlets. Nevertheless, I feared the neutral man like the plague, while wanting to make a good impression on him.

'I would like to know something about your magic, perhaps to study with you. Until now...' With a superb gesture, he brusquely cut me off: 'THERE IS NOTHING,' he tells me. 'Try to understand that, there is nothing, absolutely nothing.'

It is then that I felt myself evaporated in an opaque mass, colorless and endless. When I regained my breath, the neutral man had disappeared. I wanted to return home, but I was lost in this garden heavy with the perfume of a certain shrub which they call Scent of Night here. I wandered rather a long time on the paths until coming to a tower through a half-open gate from which I saw a winding staircase. Someone called me from the inside of the tower, and I climbed the staircase, thinking that fundamentally I had no great thing to lose. I was certainly too foolish to flee like the hare in triangular teeth. I thought bitterly: 'At this moment I am poorer than a beggar, although the bees may have done everything to warn me off. See there, how I have lost the honey of an entire year and Venus in the sky.'

At the top of the staircase I found myself in the private boudoir of Mister Mac Frolick. He received me amiably, and I could not explain the change in attitude to myself. With a gesture borrowed from the courtesies of former times, Mr. Mac Frolick offered me an earthenware dish (quite fine) on which lay his own mustache. I hesitated to accept the mustache, thinking that he perhaps wanted me to eat it. 'He is an eccentric,' I thought. I quickly excused myself: 'I thank you infinitely, Sir, but I am no longer hungry, after having tasted the delicious cutlet which the Bishop so kindly offered me...'

Mac Frolick appeared slightly offended: 'Madame,' he says to me, 'It is a souvenir of this summer soiree, and I dared to think that you would perhaps keep it in some box suitable for this purpose. I should add that this mustache has no magical power, but that its important volume differentiates it from common objects.' Seeing that I had made a faux-pas, I took the mustache and carefully put it in my pocket, where it glued itself immediately to the disgusting pork cutlet. Mac Frolick pushed me onto the couch then and, resting heavily on my stomach, says to me in a confidential tone: 'Green Woman, know that there are different kinds of magic: black magic, white magic, and, the worst of all, gray magic. It is indispensable that you know that among us tonight there is a dangerous gray magician, one named D... This man, this vampire of velvet words, is responsible for the murder of numerous souls, human and otherwise. At several revivals, D... wormed his way through the walls of this castle to rob us of our vital materials.' I had difficulty in concealing a slight smile, for I have lived with a vampire from Transylvania for a long time, and my step-mother, a werewolf, taught me all the culinary secrets necessary to treat and satisfy the most rapacious vampires.

Mac Frolick leaned more heavily on me, while hissing: 'I must absolutely rid myself of D... Unfortunately, the church forbids private assassination: I am therefore obliged to ask you to come to my aid. You are Protestant, aren't you?'

'Not at all,' I replied, 'I am not Christian, Mister Frolick. Besides, I don't wish to kill D..., even if I had the least chance to do it before he pulverized me ten times.'

Mac Frolick's countenance became mobile with rage: 'Then leave!' he roared, 'I do not receive unbelievers in my home. Leave, Madame!'

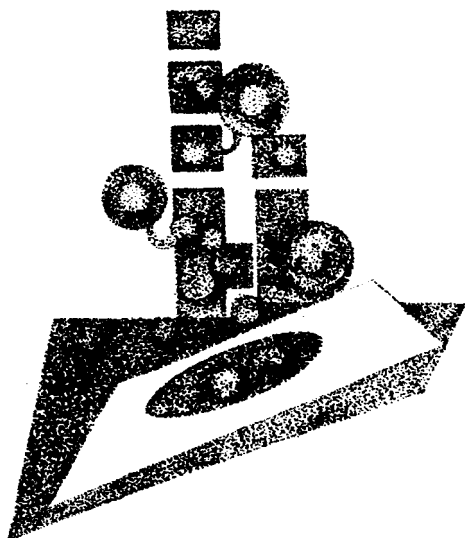
I left as quickly as the stairs permitted, while Mac Frolick leaned out his door insulting me in a very rich manner for such a devout man.

There is no precise ending to this story which I recount as a simple incident in the summer. There is no end because the incident is authentic, because all its personages are still alive and each follows his fate. All, except the ecclesiastic who tragically drowned himself in the castle swimming pool: they say that he was lured by some sirens disguised as choir children.

Mr. Mac Frolick has not ever invited me to the castle, but they assure me that he is in good health.

Leonora CARRINGTON

translated by A. P.



drawing by Eric MATHESON

brumes

Bureau de Recherches
Surréalistes
33 Binnenkant
AMSTERDAM

blondes

dialectic of dialectic

Message to the International Surrealist Movement

SEPARATED from our friends since the beginning of the imperialist world war, we know nothing more about them. But we have always guarded the secret hope that, on this planet, where our existence seems to become more untenable each day, the real functioning of thought has not ceased to guide the group which holds in its hands the highest ideological freedom which has ever existed: the international surrealist movement.

We address ourselves particularly to André Breton, sending to him our most ardent message, and communicating at the same time to the entire international surrealist movement certain theoretical results at which we have arrived during these last few years of solitude, in the indefatigable pursuit of new dialectical solutions which permit us to surpass the abusive conflict which exists between the world and us.

As surrealists, we have continued to see the possibility of these permanent confrontations between interior reality and exterior reality in our adherence to dialectical materialism, in the historical destiny of the international proletariat and in the sublime theoretical conquests of surrealism.

* * * * *

In this effort to reconcile interior reality and exterior reality, we untiringly resume certain sublime discoveries which exalt our positions. In the first place we are thinking of the materialist (leninist) position of the relative-absolute and of objective chance, in its acceptance of the encounter of human finality with universal causality.

Objective chance constitutes for us the most terrible means of locating the relative-absolute aspects of reality, and it alone ceaselessly offers possibilities of discovering the contradictions of a society divided into classes.

Objective chance has led us to see in love the general revolutionary method proper to surrealism.

After several fruitless attempts to find a concrete revolutionary method, unblemished by any idealist residue, we have finally come to consider erotic magnetism as our most valuable insurrectional support.

It is evident that to have arrived at this general conclusion our position regarding love has developed itself in an unprecedented manner. This position implies all known states of love up to the present day, but it demands, at the same time, the dialectical negation of these states.

We accept, but we surpass (at least theoretically) all the known states of love: libertinage, unique love, complexual love, the psychopathology of love. In attempting to capture love in its most violent and most decisive aspects, the most attractive and the most impossible, we no longer content ourselves with seeing in it the great disturber, which succeeds sometimes

in shattering, here and there, the divisions of class society. The destructive power of love against all established order contains and surpasses the revolutionary needs of our epoch.

We proclaim love, delivered of all its constraints - social and individual, psychological and theoretical, religious or sentimental - as our principal method of knowledge and action. Its methodical exasperation, its limitless development, its overwhelming fascination, of which we have previously cleared the first steps with Sade, Engels, Freud and Breton, offer monstrous digressions and scandalous efforts which put in our hands, and in the hands of every revolutionary, the most efficacious means of action.

This dialecticized and materialized love constitutes the revolutionary relative-absolute method that surrealism has disclosed to us, and in the discovery of new erotic possibilities, which surpass social, medical or psychological love, we are approaching the knowledge of the first aspects of objective love. Even in its most immediate aspects, we believe that the limitless eroticization of the proletariat constitutes the most precious means one can find of assuring it, across the miserable epoch which we are now traversing, a real revolutionary development.

* * * * *

The necessity of discovering love, which can uninterruptedly overthrow social and national obstacles, leads us to a non-oedipal position. The existence of natal traumatism and the oedipus complex, as discovered by Freudian psychoanalysis, constitute natural and amnesic limits, the unfavorable unconscious undulations which determine, unknown to us, our attitude toward the exterior world. We have posed the problem of the integral deliverance of man, conditioning this deliverance by the destruction of our initial complexes.

The necessities of revolution demand the extension of the non-oedipal attitude on a general plane concerning the intrapsychic position of revolutionaries in their immediate struggle.

As long as the proletariat keeps within it the fundamental initial complexes that we combat, its struggle and its victory will be illusory, because its class enemy will remain hidden, unknown to it, in its very blood. Oedipal limitations fix the proletariat in a position of purely symmetrical negation of the bourgeoisie, who thus come to inculcate in it, in a manner as dangerous as it is unknown, its odious fundamental attitudes.

* * * * *

Although they remain separated one from the other, we envision the secret accord which must exist between dream and the fourth dimension, between desire and brownian movements, between the hypnotic glance of love and space-time. In agreement with science in its attractive and crypt-aesthetic aspects, the surrealist movement overthrows, at the same time, its mathematical rigidity, with the assurance which recalls the voyages of somnambulists toward the interior of their own mystery, identified for a moment with the secret destiny of humanity.

Gherasim LUCA and TROST

(excerpts)

Bucharest, 1945

SURREALISM:

A New Sensibility

IT IS TIME to ask whether surrealist tendencies are still viable, whether they are still relevant to reality and show signs of development. To listen to the art critics, surrealism was merely a transitory and long-dead school of aesthetics, a school comparable to cubism, abstractivism, dadaism.

This conception is not entirely false. Like its predecessors, surrealism had its manifestoes, its irregular and short-lived reviews, its demonstrations. Following the nineteenth century tradition, it made its round of a few cafés, it had its internal intrigues, it received support from a few bourgeois snobs. For a great many of its participants, it was an adolescent adventure followed by a sobered return to bourgeois conformity.

In the face of the exceptional vitality of surrealism, the official critics have sought to identify it as being within the bounds of normal intellectual evolution, thereby to minimize its significance. (I do not speak of the imbeciles who view the whole affair as a conspiracy for the purpose of acquiring notoriety by means of exhibitionism. The exhibitionists of course exist but that is not the question.) Well dissected on the autopsy tables of the academics, surrealism is revealed as a continuation of the well-known romantic tradition. So identified, it is given its armchair in the great assembly of European culture. This kind of assimilation is a typical bourgeois maneuver: the academies are always willing to honor a few nonconformists along with the assurance that they are no longer dangerous.

If surrealism were no more than an artistic school it would be quite appropriate to set aside a place for it in the museums. It is however a more important phenomenon, one with a role to play in the drama of the real world. It is the first collective sign of a total rupture with the classical outlook, a new climate of sensibility that calls into question the very foundations of society.

The authenticity of surrealism is proved by the spontaneity of its origins. Before the appearance of any communication among the surrealists, there were those who turned aside from the life-aims of their contemporaries. For my part, before having ever come into the surrealist milieu, I found myself the victim of what seemed to me a singular outlook, one which I felt disposed to hide like an embarrassing disease. Others like myself appeared in great numbers but found themselves at the margins of society, living apart whatever effort they might make to reintegrate themselves. Strangely isolated, mournful. Surrealism achieved this miracle, that when these people met they found themselves from the first moment in a communion of outlook, loving and detesting in common, ready to bind their lives in the same undertaking.

It is my belief that what each of us felt within ourselves was the announcement of a drama which will yet manifest itself in the real world, the drama of a culture that has known its most brilliant successes, achieved its masterpieces and exhausted its possibilities of expansion, and which is now called upon to undergo a total transmutation.

The collapse of Europe is foreseen by no one but ourselves because it is we who experienced within ourselves the essence of a change that is even now taking place. We know too well the fragility of that which appears to the immense majority to be placed under the sign of immutable eternity.

If Europe wishes simply to survive, it will continue to belittle surrealism. If Europe wishes to undergo a fiery death and thereby experience a renaissance in the literal sense of that word, it will embrace surrealism, for only in this way can it utilize the permanent values of the past, those that will serve as the future basis of a new civilization.

Pierre MABILLE



drawing by E. F. GRANELLE

We Don't EAR It That Way

AN INTERNATIONAL exhibition of surrealism is now being held in New York at the D'Arcy Galleries. Its opening has been marked by a very unexpected and annoying event: Salvador Dali's appearance on the premises, his formal introduction with respects due to a high-ranking guest, and, most of all, the deliberate intrusion, amongst the other exhibits, of a portentous Madonna (entitled by him: 'The Anti-Matter Ear'), painted in his most clerical manner, and which its large dimensions, added to its recent execution, should have excluded from such a gathering.

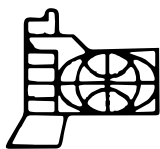
Of the exhibition's four organizers (Marcel Duchamp, André Breton, Edouard Jaguer and José Pierre) only the first was present on the spot, and able to take any last-minute decision as befitted the incident. The last three still ignore, at this very minute, under which pressures, on which strategical motives he could concede Dali, in such a collective demonstration, this exorbitant part.

We respect him too much, we have too long respected the resources of his mind to believe he could yield, were it a second, to such deceptive dialectics following which conformism should provide nowadays the only yeast of subversion.

France's present political climate in these very first days of December 1960, make it imperative for us to issue this protest at once. Never less than now have the aesthetic adventure and its cheap, notorious 'asides' appeared self-sufficient. At the particular moment when qualified intellectuals are consciously fighting for the defense of whatever freedom of thought and expression as is yet left to them, we remind everyone concerned that Salvador Dali, more than twenty years ago, was expelled from surrealism. More than ever do we see in this man Hitler's former apologist, the fascist painter, the religious bigot, the avowed racist and friend of Franco who opened Spain as a drill-ground for the most abominable surge of barbarism the world has yet endured.

Robert BENAYOUN	Jean BENOIT	Guido BIASI	Vincent BOUNOURE
André BRETON	CORNEILLE	Adrien DAX	Gianni DOVA
Yves ELLEOUE	Roland GIGUERE	Radovan IVSIC	Edouard JAGUER
Alain JOUBERT	Jacques LACOMBLEZ	Juan LANGLOIS	
Gerard LEGRAND	Julio LLINAS	E. L. T. MESENS	Mimi PARENT
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(surrealist tract, December 1960)



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The Invisible Ray

SURREALISM is above all an attack on those systems which contract consciousness -- rationalism, utilitarianism, dogmatism, all of which are based on fictions which justify what is in fact detestable in life. Such systems sacrifice everything, including man, to an abstraction known variously as public order, the free world, general welfare, the well-being of humanity, Christian civilization or technical progress.

It is in surrealism that the idea prevails that man alone is the measure of all things -- not man considered as an abstraction, but rather as the center of 'passional attraction' (Charles Fourier), the palpable, living reality of the individual. It is thus that surrealism has indicated a way out of the total defeat of the previously mentioned spiritual techniques. And this way out is not toward some vague 'progress' nor toward a mystical and cosmic future (as is suggested in the detestable periodical PLANETE) but simply toward a living reality in which, on principle, one may do as he pleases.

André Breton has compared the painting of poetic inspiration to 'an admirable corridor' through which we return 'as we return to an anterior life'. Surrealist works are torches and signposts halfway to the omnipotence of attraction, where the idea of 'duty' has lost all its sense. ART also has disappeared, leaving no trace; a 'surrealist art' cannot exist: only creations exist.

The fiction of aesthetics is annihilated, and BEAUTY is no longer synonymous with sterility, but rather finds its source in ardent contrast, in the convulsive unity which reveals itself to us like a sudden flash.

* * *

Surrealism is not interested in 'anti-art' (op, pop, happening) because, although anti-art is the far-fetched proof of the impotence toward which artistic evolution has led, bribed down a blind alley, it is also an erroneous and often fatal reaction against certain anachronistic psychic mechanisms. Anti-art is not only the annihilation of art, it is at the same time the suicide of creativity and the imagination.

* * *

Surrealism is unceasingly the 'invisible ray' which since the Manifesto of 1924 has been the common weapon in a permanent revolution which will reduce total reality to its living essence.

Laurens VANCREVEL

(excerpt)

(Preface to the SURREALIST EXHIBITION, Velp, Holland, 1967)

The Platform of Prague

(The following declaration was prepared in Spring 1968 by the surrealist groups of Prague and Paris on the occasion of a major exhibition, "The Pleasure Principle," which remained one month each in Bratislava, Brno and Prague. The emancipatory activity of surrealism in Czechoslovakia, as outlined in the Platform, was brutally interrupted by the Soviet imperialist invasion and the subsequent restalinization. These excerpts are translated from the French text in L'ARCHIBRAS.)

THE REPRESSIVE system monopolizes language to return it to men only after it has been reduced to its utilitarian function or turned toward ends of mere distraction. Thus, men are deprived of the real power of their own thoughts; they are forced - and soon become resigned to it - to rely on cultural agents who provide them with patterns of thinking which naturally conform to the good and efficient functioning of the system. In this way people are made to turn away, with suspicion and contempt, from the interior domain most personal to them, in which their identity is anchored... With such a vacuous language men cannot formulate the ardent images that make the satisfaction of their real desires absolutely imperative. Responsibility for this situation rests in part with contemporary art, as well as with the liberal arts and sciences, for they often reflect the present devaluation of language only passively - even in so-called avant-garde formulas - and consequently contribute to the obscuring of thought.

The role of surrealism is to tear language away from the repressive system and to make it the instrument of desire. Thus, what is called surrealist 'art' has no other goal than to liberate words, or more generally the signs, from the codes of usefulness or entertainment, in order to restore them as bearers of revelation of subjective reality and of the essential intersubjectivity of desire in the public mind.

* * * * *

...the surrealists do not hesitate to put forward the examples of the revolutionaries who, like Fourier, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky or Che Guevara, have given revolutionary dynamism its greatest social resonance. They will support, with all their energy, the new movements advancing in the same direction...

* * * * *

The surrealists believe that thought interprets the world and contributes to its transformation according to several ways which do not exclude one another.

The only philosophical way is, in their eyes - as far as western thought is concerned - transitorily divided into exoteric and esoteric philosophy. In relation to the first, they take (as their integral basis) Hegelian dialectic

tics, which they recognize as irreproachably organizing the evolutive faculties of the mind. From the second, they retain above all its capacity to give this very mind indispensable keys to the analogical interpretation of the various realms of nature, in their mutual relationships and in their development. Dialectics and analogy are the foundation of a new theory of knowledge which must liberate man, not from what is vital in reason, but from what paralyzes it into alienating systems: the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of identity.

* * * * *

For us, surrealists, there is a poetic thought as there is a philosophical thought or a scientific thought. If at times it is difficult to distinguish poetic from philosophical thought, it has its own laws, nevertheless, and consequently its rigor. But its relations with the Reality Principle are free, whereas philosophical and scientific thought - even the most daring - are permanently submitted to it. Poetic thought escapes time to give man the power of prophecy. It is thought - practical thought - at the moment when, formulating the imaginary, it aims at transforming reality. For 'every creative force... leading to a new knowledge and to a new interpretation of the universe, has its source in man's essential and irrevocable discontent with the kingdom of necessity' (Karel Teige).

* * * * *

The question of the relations between art (or poetry or literature) and revolution is the pretext for a burlesque of polemics among the partisans of extreme solutions who, generation after generation, do nothing but perfect their vocabularies in an effort to revive dead ideas. Opposed to the theory of Art for Art's sake, as well as to the theory of engaged art, surrealism reaffirms that in the present state of reality (in which men possess only a fragmented and alienated perception), art, to be revolutionary, can seek its substance only on unknown terrain, essentially in the most obscure zones of psychic reality. To subordinate it to purely practical ends would be to deviate its energy, to submit it to external constraint which would deprive it of any truth while giving it only a fictitious efficacy. The only revolutionary ideology which might englobe artistic creation would be one which would recognize its immanent autonomy, particularly in the determination of its sphere of intervention. Such an ideology would require that artists fulfill their specific function: to liberate the powers and desires immobilized in the unconscious; this would also, at the same time, ruin what authority still remains to the priests of Art for Art's sake.

* * * * *

L'ARCHIBRAS in Paris and AURA, forthcoming in Prague, are not only the organs of surrealist groups constituted in these cities, but above all the global expressions of the surrealist movement as it defines itself today, notwithstanding geographical distances. These forms of intervention remain, it seems to us, insufficient; they must be completed in each situation by interventions adapted to the audience to be reached and to the mes-

sage to be transmitted. It is up to surrealist spontaneity to suggest or to take any initiative called for by circumstances.

We salute our comrades, isolated in the world; Franklin and Penelope Rosemont who publish SURREALIST INSURRECTION in Chicago; Nicolas Calas in New York; Aldo Pellegrini in Buenos Aires; Georges Gronier in Brussels; and our surrealist friends in Cuba.

On April 9, 1935, in Prague, the International Surrealist Bulletin was published.

On April 9, 1968, in Prague, opens the surrealist exhibition under the title, 'The Pleasure Principle'.

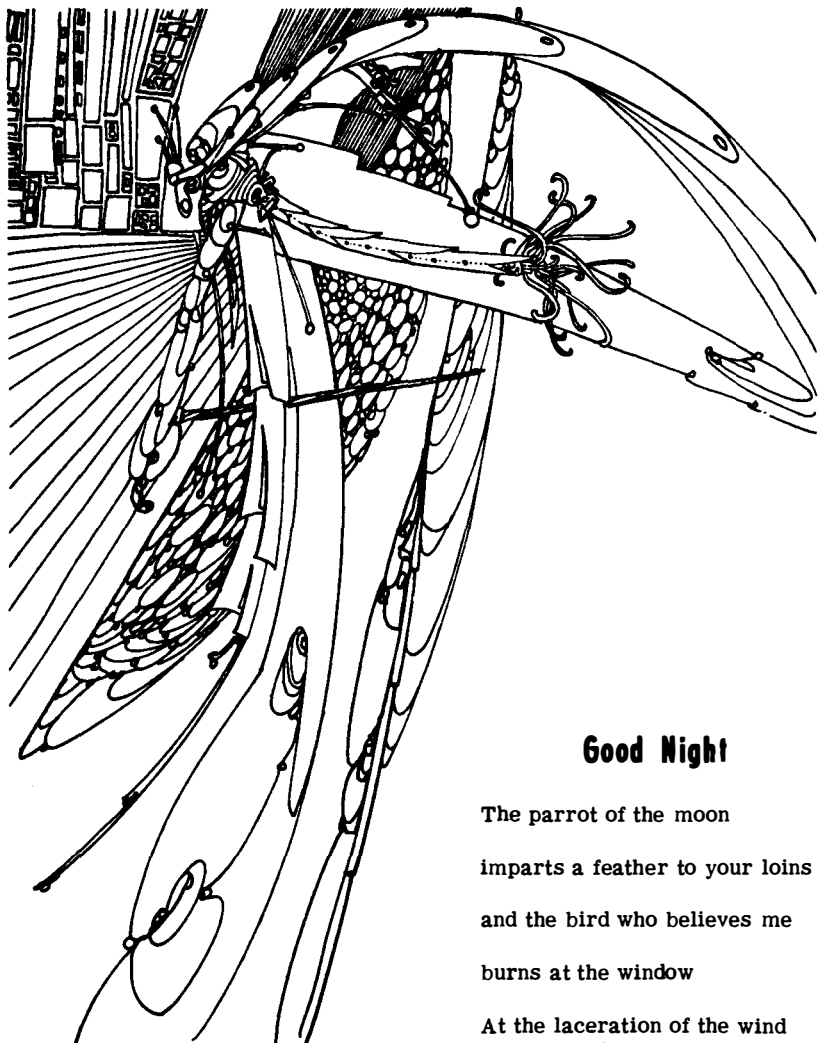
"THE VESSELS COMMUNICATE FOREVER"
(André Breton)

Prague-Paris
April 1968

(translated by Guy Ducornet)



drawing by Mimi PARENT



La révérence dans l'angle

drawing by Adrien DAX

Good Night

The parrot of the moon
imparts a feather to your loins
and the bird who believes me
burns at the window
At the laceration of the wind
a thistle
red as the handkerchief
of your first love
consumes itself.

Jean-Claude SILBERMANN

translated; Almuth Palinkas

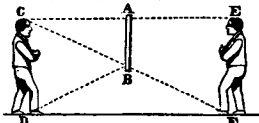
Notes on Contributors

An English translation of Antonin ARTAUD's Complete Works is being published in England. ☸ Robert BENAYOUN's books include Le Dessin animé apres Walt Disney and Erotique du Surréalisme (Pauvert, Paris). ☹ Vincent BOUNOURE is one of the leading theorists of contemporary surrealism in France, especially interested in hermetic and primitive art. ☼ Victor BRAUNER was a Roumanian surrealist painter. ☒ Among the works of André BRETON available in English translation are Nadja (Grove Press), The Manifestoes of Surrealism and Young Cherry Trees Secured Against Hares (U. of Mich.), Fata Morgana (Black Swan Press) and Selected Poems (Cape Editions). ☾ Nicolas CALAS was an active promoter of surrealism in the U.S. throughout the 40s. Author of Fovers d'Incendie (1939) and Confound the Wise (1942), and editor of the surrealist section of New Directions 1940, his most recent collection of articles, only a few of which relate to surrealism, entitled Art in the Age of Risk, was published last year by Dutton. ☼ Jorge CAMACHO is a young Cuban surrealist painter. ☹ The Black Swan Press intends to publish a collection of the marvelous stories by the surrealist painter Leonora CARRINGTON. ★ The poem by Aimé CESAIRE is from his 1946 collection Les Armes Miraculeuses. Best known as a pioneer of the Negritude movement, he contributed frequently to surrealist publications in the 1940s, and edited the surrealist journal Tropiques. He is presently one of the principal animators of the review Présence Africaine. ✱ Claude COURTOT is a young surrealist living in Paris, author of the Introduction à la Lecture de Benjamin Péret and more recently (1969) a study of René CREVEL (1900-1935), one of the most important theorists of the first decade of surrealism, none of whose works, unfortunately, are currently available in English translation. ♪ Adrien DAX has participated actively as a writer and painter in the surrealist movement since the late 40s. ✕ Indonesian painter and poet Schlechter DUVALL lived for a time in Holland, where he was associated with the comrades of the Bureau des Recherches Surréalistes in Amsterdam; presently he lives in the U.S., where he participates in all surrealist activities. He had a one-man show at the Gallery Bugs Bunny in Chicago last spring. ☺ Paul GARON is editing a collection of Peetie Wheatstraw's songs to be published next year by Black Swan Press. ☼ Arshile GORKY, "the eye-spring...the first painter to whom the secret had been completely revealed," in the words of André Breton, committed suicide in 1948. The best full-length study of his work is Julien Levy's large volume published by Abrams. ☹ E. F. GRANELL, from Spain, fought in the Spanish Revolution, later lived in Puerto Rico and Guatemala, and presently lives in New York. He has participated in surrealist activities since the second World War. ♪ Ted JOANS' Black Pow-Wow has just been published by Hill & Wang. ☹ Zavis KALANDRA was a member of the Communist Press Directorate in Prague in the 1930s; he was murdered by the stalinists after World War II. ☼ Wifredo LAM is a Cuban painter who has participated in surrealism since the 30s. ☼ Gérard LEGRAND directed the surrealist journal BIEF (1958-60); prepared with Georges Goldfayn an important annotated edition of Lautréamont's Poésies; and most recently has published a collection of poems, Marche du Lierre, from which the poem here has been translated. ✕ Etienne LERO (1909-39), a native of Martinique, organized in the early 30s the Legitime Defense group, combining a marxist-leninist

anti-colonialist political viewpoint with the revolutionary cultural combat of surrealism. The poems here appeared originally in Le Surréalisme au Service de la Revolution. ♀ Gherasim LUCA (and TROST) were the principal animators of surrealism in Roumania throughout the 1930s and 40s. Luca's works include Le Vampire Passif, Quantitativement aimée, and others; he lives today in Paris. ♀ Pierre MABILLE was active in surrealism in the 30s and 40s; among his books are Egrégores and Le Miroir du Merveilleux. The article here originally appeared in 1957 in the Courier du centre international d'Etudes poétiques; the translation appeared in the mimeographed New York anarchist magazine Resurgence in 1964. ♀ Conroy MADDOX has been active in surrealism in England for three decades; he is presently co-editor, with John Lyle, of Surrealist Transformation. ● Clement MAGLOIRE-SAINT-AUDE was born and lives in Haiti; he is the author of several collections of poetry. ☼ Joyce MANSOUR was born in Egypt, later lived in England, and presently lives in Paris; she is the author of many books of surrealist poems and tales. ☼ Eric MATHESON is a young New York painter who has participated in surrealist activity in the U.S. ♯ E. L. T. MESENS was among the original surrealist group in Belgium but has lived for many years in London. → J.-H. MOESMAN lives in Holland. † Mimi PARENT, originally from Quebec, presently lives in Paris, surrounded by birds. ♀ Robert Allerton PARKER contributed to surrealist and sympathetic magazines in the early 40s. Ⓛ Benjamin PERET (1899-1959), the magnificent insulter of priests, who fought as a militiaman in the Spanish Revolution, was one of the purest surrealist poets and theoreticians. Ⓛ Franklin ROSEMONT has published a collection of poems and drawings, The Morning of a Machine Gun, and edits, with Penelope ROSEMONT, the periodical wall-poster Surrealist Insurrection. ♯♯♯ Jean SCHUSTER, one of the leading post-war surrealists, edited the important political journal Le 14 Juillet; he has just published a collection of texts, ARCHIVES 57-68 (le terrain vague). ☼ Jean-Claude SILBERMANN's Le Ravisseur was published in 1966. ♯♯ Max-Walter SVANBERG lives in Sweden. He has illustrated the illuminations of Rimbaud. ♀ TOYEN was active in the Prague surrealist group in the 30s but has lived for years in Paris. She has illustrated the works of many surrealist writers, and remains one of the lighthouses of visionary painting today. ▼ Laurens VANCREVEL is one of the leading animators of surrealism in Holland, co-editor (with Her de Vries) of the Dutch surrealist journal Brumes Blondes. ↔ Martha ZUIK is a young Argentine painter.

Analagon

Journal of the Surrealist Movement
in CZECHOSLOVAKIA



Edited by Vratislav Effenberger

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Edited by

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✱

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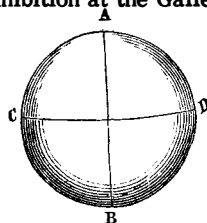
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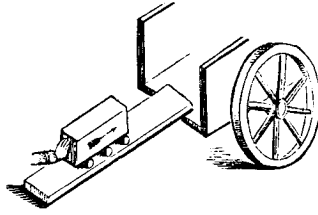
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Au Grand Jour

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René CREVEL