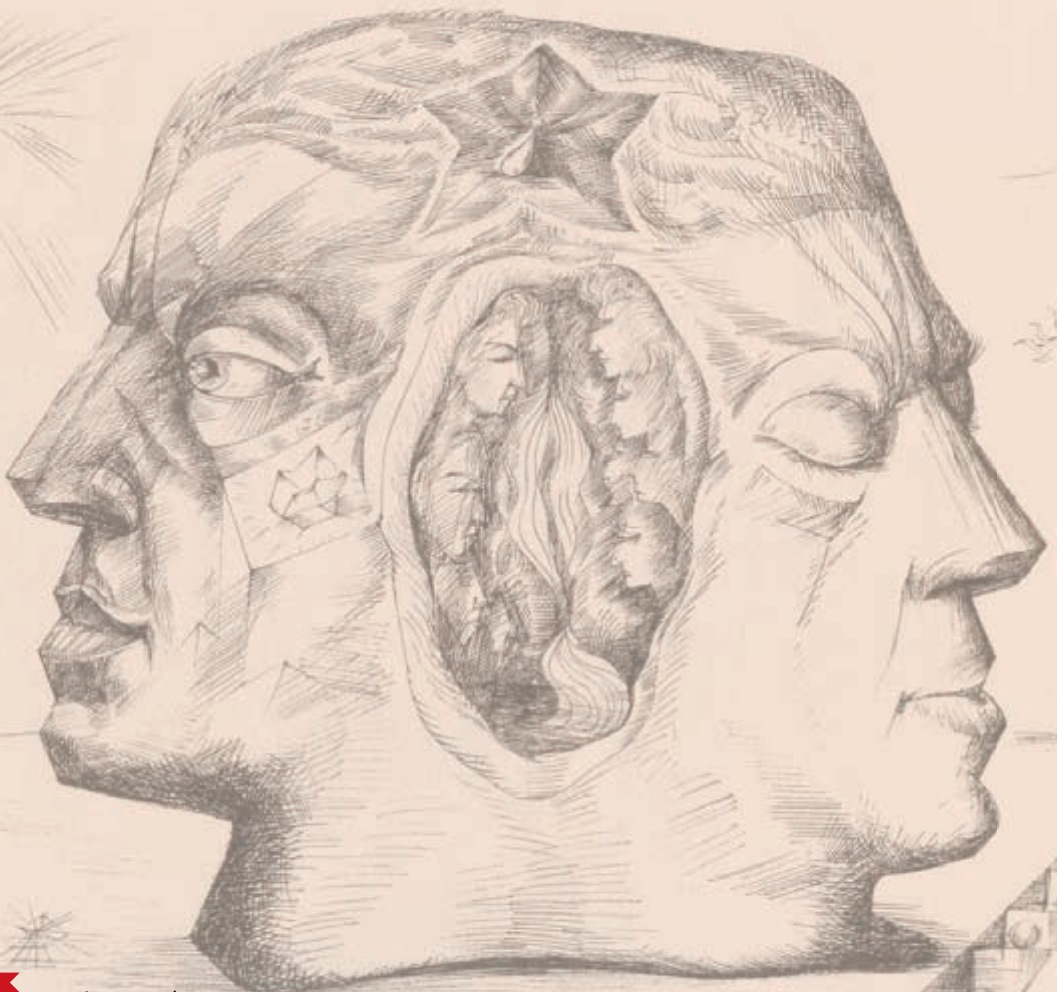Tessel M. Bauduin

SURREALISM
Occultism and Western
AND THE
Esotericism in the Work and
OCCULT
Movement of André Breton

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Tessel M. Bauduin

- For my parents -

Contents

Introduction: The Occultation of Surrealism

> Nothing can make [certain] people [...] understand the true nature of reality,
> that it is just an experience like any other, that the essence of things is not at
> all linked to their reality, that there are other experiences that the mind can
> embrace which are equally fundamental such as chance, illusion, the fantastic,
> dreams. These different types of experience are brought together
> and reconciled in one genre, Surreality.
>
> *Louis Aragon,* 'A Wave of Dreams.'

Prelude

Late in the summer of 1924 a small book was published in Paris. Although it
garnered little attention at the time, this *Manifesto of Surrealism* heralded
the existence of an avant-garde movement that would prove to be one of
the most influential of the twentieth century.[1]

A tiny movement of dissident writers at the time, Surrealism would grow
quickly and expansively into an international force to be reckoned with,
counting painters, sculptors, photographers, filmmakers and performers as
well as writers and poets among its ranks. In 1924, however, hardly anyone
had heard of Surrealism outside of a small group of fledgling surrealists
themselves and André Breton (1896-1966), the *Manifesto*'s author, could
only have dreamt of the way the adjective 'surreal' would pass into everyday
speech today. Possibly that would have been a nightmare – for all that he
intended Surrealism to be a revolution liberating mankind, and womankind
too, it was emphatically not meant for all and sundry. Even though Surreal-
ism celebrated elements of pop and mass culture, it was always positioned
in the vanguard of society. Indeed, in his *Second Manifesto* of 1929, Breton
insisted that 'the approval of the public must be avoided like the plague.'
After describing further concerns about Surrealism's openness, he made it
clear that access to Surrealism should be limited: 'I call for the profound,
the veritable occultation of Surrealism.'[2] While 'occultation' can refer to
concealing or hiding something, it may also be interpreted as indicating
an alliance with the occult or engaging occultism. This book is concerned
with the nature of Surrealism's 'occultation' in that sense: the presence of
occultism in Surrealism. It offers a history of Breton's relationship with

occultism and his integration of it into his own work as well as in the Surrealism under his leadership. Covering five decades of Surrealism, it is my aim to provide an overview of the particular occultisms that were relevant to Bretonian Surrealism, offering insight into the way in which Breton and his surrealists related to occultism and to what extent one can say Surrealism was really 'occulted.'

André Breton and other surrealists provided several definitions of Surrealism and the surreal throughout their career, and central to most of them is a concept of mind, or psyche, in combination with the notion that Surrealism acts through or in the mind. For instance, Breton provided the following definition of Surrealism in his *Manifesto*:

> ENCYCLOPEDIA. *Philosophy.* Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of the dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems of life.[3]

As 'dreams' and 'thought' indicate, mental processes form the heart of Surrealism. Surrealism should be understood foremost as a certain state of mind, hence Breton's insistence that Surrealism was a *psychic mechanism*. In the direct wake of the first French translations of Freud's works, as well as in response to continued developments in psychiatry arising from the discovery of the unconscious in the nineteenth century, the surrealists made the mind a seat of literary and artistic wonders. As veritable 'Marco Polos of the mind' or 'speleologists of the psyche,'[4] they set out to explore the mind and especially its subliminal states. In first instance, subliminal states were explored as a means towards a more imaginative approach to literature, but quickly also to the visual arts. Eventually, despite Surrealism being currently known predominantly as a visual arts movement, it transcended the arts and was intended to be a philosophy of life, or life style as it would perhaps be expressed today, informed by a political agenda and geared towards revolution. Being a surrealist is a choice about how to interact mentally with the experienced world, be it inner or outer, real or sur-real, and how to interpret it.[5] '[Surrealism] is a means of total liberation of the mind and of all that resembles it.'[6]

The mind could be liberated by various means, including by engaging the irrational rather than the rational, which was considered restrictive and bourgeois. Surrealism, Breton stated later, '[had opened] certain doors that rationalism boasted of having boarded up for good,'[7] those doors being a

variety of rejected mental states such as the dream, fantasy, hallucination or insanity, opening upon subliminal vistas of the wonderful, irrational, marvellous, mad and fantastic. Occultism and related disciplines could provide the means of opening such doors too. One can think of parapsychology, known at the time as psychical research, which sought to explore hidden and lucid powers of the mind. One can think of magic, which was thought to operate upon the same principles as the 'primitive' mind; namely, that of correspondences between things in the (phenomenal) world and between things in the mind and in the world. Or, too, of alchemy, which, according to surrealist interpretation going back to Romanticism, was primarily concerned with complex linguistic games, secret languages and metaphors. Mysticism, occultism and Western esotericism, therefore, be it in the form of tropes, images, books, ideas or worldviews, or in the form of a coherent current of thought – generally termed 'the hermetic tradition,' and later 'esotericism' – found a place in Bretonian Surrealism as well.

As the title already indicates, my primary concern is with Breton and the Surrealism as espoused and directed by him. This results in an almost exclusive focus upon French Surrealism, at the expense of the Surrealisms that arose in other countries. It further leads to a marginalisation of surrealists other than Breton, and to a near exclusion of the French Surrealisms under different leadership, such as Georges Bataille (1897-1962) or the group Grand Jeu. My choice is partly guided by the fact that there is no denying that the current perception of the discourse of Surrealism is defined for a significant part by Breton's writings. The particularly close-knit character of the surrealist group made them a true collective, practically as well as ideologically. Their intense contact, excellently analysed by Bandier, means I feel confident positing that (at least for his group) Breton functioned as the 'gatekeeper':[8] controlling the group's composition, activities, source material, input, output and ideology to a considerable extent.

Moreover, my focus upon Breton and 'his' Surrealism is particularly relevant in the context of occultism, in which some scholars have accorded Breton a central role. I have set out here to both define that role and question that which other authors have ascribed to him. Other artists whose interest in occultism was just as avid as that of Breton, or even surpassed it, such as Max Ernst (1891-1967) and Victor Brauner (1903-1966), have recently been recipients of thorough and excellent scholarly studies.[9] In Breton's case, however, scholars have, as a rule, either resorted to vague and generalising statements that beg for specification, or have argued in favour of a very occult Breton with which I disagree. I propose, therefore, to write an alternative history of Bretonian Surrealism; specifically, a history that not

only diverges from the view that the Surrealism of Breton had little to do with occultism, or esotericism, but also from the view that it had everything to do with it.

Staking out positions

By providing a certain view of the occultation of Bretonian Surrealism, I am locating myself in a field of study in which several positions have already been staked out. For instance, by Michel Carrouges (1910-1988) and Anna Balakian (1915-1997), whose respective studies *André Breton et les données fondamentales de surrealism* (1950, English translation *André Breton and the Basic Concepts of Surrealism*, 1974) and *André Breton: Magus of Surrealism* (1971) can be considered classics within this small field. *Basic Concepts* was the first French book-length study that advanced the concept of an intense investment by Breton (and his Surrealism) in esotericism. *André Breton: Magus* was the first English study to do the same.[10] Both insist on the far-reaching involvement and investment of Breton in what is variously called hermeticism, the hermetic tradition, esotericism, and, in Balakian's case, also magic.

Carrouges joined the surrealist group in 1949 on Breton's invitation, until his Catholicism caused such controversy in surrealist circles that he was ousted in 1951, during a very painful affair that damaged Breton's leadership position almost beyond repair.[11] He was (and is) considered controversial or downright suspect by Surrealism scholars too, not least because his work aims at squaring essential surrealist ideas with a specifically Christian understanding of esotericism. His discussion includes the Zohar, Christian kabala, Paracelsus, alchemy and Rosicrucianism as well as such concepts as the fall of mankind and grace. He wrote: 'It would be a [...] serious omission, however, to pass over in silence the influence of esoterism [sic] on Breton's thought. [...F]or, as one penetrates more and more profoundly into surrealism, one realises that hermeticism is the cornerstone that inspires its basic concepts.'[12] Carrouges' choice of books, authors and currents is determined by his personal Catholic convictions, and his classification of the occult science of magic as evil reveals his identification with clerical positions.[13] Coldly received by surrealists and French scholars in the 1960s and 70s, Anglophone scholars seemed hardly aware of his book – with the exception of Roger Shattuck, who counted Carrouges among 'the most perceptive French critics,' together with Jules Monnerot and Philippe Audoin.[14] One thing these three authors have in common is that they moved

in surrealist circles for a certain amount of time and can thus boast an insider's knowledge of what was *then* considered important by Breton and others. Monnerot's (1909-1995) study *La Poésie moderne et le sacré* (1945) proceeded from earlier investigations, together with Bataille and others, into concepts of the sacred, secret societies, and forms of primitive and Antique spirituality, Christian Gnosticism in particular. Well received in Bataille's circle, *La Poesie* was also commented upon favourably by Breton.[15] Audoin's comprehensive book *Breton* (1970) discusses several essential philosophies of life of Bretonian Surrealism, the centrality of the concept of the marvellous to it, and the pervasive presence and importance of themes such as ghosts and spectres, castles, quests and grails within the surrealist discourse.[16] In doing so, he shows how much Surrealism was committed to something intangible that may be described as a re-enchanted world, albeit without religion.

Balakian, in her turn, was not a surrealist but met and interviewed Breton at the end of his life.[17] In *André Breton: Magus*, as elsewhere, she pays significant attention to positioning Breton within what she terms the 'hermetic tradition,' a tradition also encompassing such literary luminaries as 'Shakespeare, Blake, Goethe, Novalis, Mallarmé, [and] Yeats.'[18] Balakian's *Breton: Magus* is a pivotal study because the author constructs a literary 'hermetic' pedigree, consisting of canonical, predominantly romantic, poets whose works show traces of occultism, culminating in Surrealism. She establishes a direct relation between Breton and historical occult-ism, specifically positing and elaborating upon a connection between his thought and that of Éliphas Lévi, the occultist author whose *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (1854-56), *Histoire de la Magie* (1860) and *La Clef des Grands Mystères* (1861) kick-started nineteenth-century French occultism.[19] Balakian argues that Breton first encountered Lévi's ideas in the works of symbolist poet Rimbaud, subsequently turning directly to *Dogme et Rituel*. She also contends that Breton modelled his 'surrealist coterie' on the structure of occult societies as described by Lévi – by implication, Bretonian Surrealism is just such a society, even if not necessarily secret.[20] Interestingly, Monnerot had earlier implied the opposite: that Surrealism was a secret(ive) society, even if not necessarily occult.[21] After naming Breton heir to the magical tradition of nineteenth-century occultism, Balakian subsequently extends that tradition backwards in time, all the way to fifteenth-century physician, astrologer and alchemist Paracelsus and fourteenth-century alchemist Nicolas Flamel. At the same time, Balakian brings her tradition closer to Breton's present and the twentieth century, by claiming the mysterious modern alchemist Fulcanelli as another precursor

of Breton.[22] In other words, she constructs a long, eminent and still living tradition with Breton at its apex.

Besides the topic of their study, Carrouges, Monnerot, Audoin and Balakian are further linked by the fact that they knew Breton personally. Their familiarity with him later in his life and, therefore, with what he considered important to his work and movement at that time, must surely have influenced the focus of their works. Indeed, when they knew him in the late 1940s and 1950s, Breton wrote and talked about his interest in a current he occasionally called 'esotericism', and his aim to align Surrealism with 'the hermetic tradition' so as to tread in the footsteps of Romanticism. Carrouges and Balakian are no exceptions in their appraisal of Bretonian Surrealism; rather, they are the rule, as is also shown by Sarane Alexandrian and Patrick Waldberg. Alexandrian (1927-2009) and Waldberg (1913-1985) had been part of the surrealist group around the 1950s. They also knew Breton personally and wrote books about him, both making a point of mentioning occult currents and figures in their discussions of Breton's thought and his Surrealism.[23] Clearly, something was occurring in this period – a sentiment confirmed by authors from the other end of the spectrum, who find confirmation of their understanding that, by the 1940s, Surrealism had undoubtedly ceased to be avant-garde precisely because of Breton's interest in the occult. The first historian of the movement, Maurice Nadeau (1911-2013), had canonised Surrealism as a movement and the 1930s as its 'Golden Age' by publishing his *Histoire du surréalisme* in 1944.[24] He and others considered the 1940s and after to be Surrealism's 'Hellenism' or waning, as it were, evidenced by the increasing prominence of esotericism, occultism and mysticism in Breton's later works, starting with *Arcanum 17* (1944). When Breton started 'treading in the waters of occultism' in earnest,[25] decline set in – or so it is thought. Such an opinion provides insight into how some scholars view(ed) occultism, even as it also reveals the underlying assumption that still cutting-edge avant-garde movements would *not* 'dabble' in it.

Judgements about occultism aside for the moment, it is indeed the case that Breton's engagement with it changed dramatically in the 1940s. In fact, the Second World War formed the catalyst for Breton's fascination for, deepening investment in, and literary and artistic employment of, esotericism (as he calls it at that time – as will be discussed below, I prefer 'occultism'). This development reached a climax in 1947, at precisely the moment when many critics were writing the movement off, and continued during the 1950s; developments that will be explored in Chapters Four and Five. Yet, I would point out that well before the 1940s Breton and other surrealists were familiar with occult figures, works and ideas. Below, I

1. 'Erutarettil', Littérature 11-12 (1923).

will discuss the occult sources that Bretonian Surrealism had, or may well have had, at its disposal throughout its long life under Breton's leadership. I argue that written sources – rather than, for instance, ritual practice – formed the main vehicle for the majority of information about the occult available to and appropriated in Surrealism. Breton in particular evinced a clear preference for (semi-)scholarly and French studies, such as histories and works of comparative religion. At the same time, knowledge about the occult, in particular occult tropes and concepts, was also available to Bretonian Surrealism by means of another, perhaps more implicit avenue: the literature of Romanticism and Symbolism, some of which is certainly indebted to the occultism of its time. As will become clear, in the 1940s these two avenues merged, at least for Breton, when he encountered a new wave of French scholarly studies focusing specifically on the relationships between occultism and romantic-symbolist literature.

Occult traces in romantic and symbolist precursors

Throughout its existence, canons of great writers, painters and thinkers who were considered forerunners of, or otherwise directly relevant to Surrealism,

were (re)defined in its discourse. Such a canon was first established in 1923 with the publication of the text-collage 'Erutarettil' in the proto-surrealist periodical *Littérature* 11-12 (1923) [pl. 1].[26] Four occult names are included in this word-cloud *avant la lettre*: Hermes Trismegistus, Flamel, Agrippa and Péladan. This last, Joséphin 'Sar' Péladan, is the most surprising, as Breton hardly ever referred to him again – although this has not stopped some from granting him the status of an occult inspiration for Surrealism.[27] Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535) is known within an esoteric context as a Renaissance magician, and Nicolas Flamel (1330-1480) as a great alchemist and one of the few who – allegedly – succeeded in creating both the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life.[28] Hermes Trismegistus is supposedly the author of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the core text of what is called the hermetic tradition, in turn central to esotericism. Still, the majority of those listed in 'Erutarettil' are poets and writers, mostly (but not exclusively) French, male and modern.[29] In the end, of a total of 71 names, only four can be squarely placed within the fields of esotericism and occultism – and Hermes, Agrippa and Flamel are so famous that they would be known to anyone just grazing the surface of occult history. Péladan, meanwhile, made quite an impact in the Parisian symbolist art scene only thirty years before the dawn of Surrealism and may well be mentioned here for that reason. In other words, the group Hermes-Agrippa-Flamel-Péladan is not necessarily very meaningful in the context of determining Surrealism's commitment to occultism.

At the same time, several of the remaining 67 names can, in fact, be found meaningful within that context and 'Erutarettil,' therefore, does highlight another possible avenue for the surrealists to encounter occult ideas: Romanticism and Symbolism. Surrealist heroes such as Rimbaud, Nerval, Hugo and Baudelaire, among others, were interested in the occult currents and movements of their time, incorporating elements of it in their work in one form or other.[30] Their works served the surrealists as a continuing source of inspiration, and it stands to reason that some, or perhaps much, of their occultism – such as it was – was absorbed by them. I will discuss them very briefly here.[31]

Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850) and Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) were characterised by Breton as being 'the only ones still able to hear Swedenborg's voice,' and, in fact, Swedenborgian themes permeate the works of both men.[32] Balzac's *Séraphita* (1834), a story about an androgynous character full of Swedenborgian references, was certainly read by Breton and probably by many other surrealists.[33] As Marguerite Bonnet has shown, Breton's citations of Swedenborg in his own work derive directly from *Séraphita*.[34]

In fact, Breton never turned to the original books by Swedenborg, although other novels by Balzac, such as *Louis Lambert* (1832), may have been a further source of knowledge about Swedenborg's ideas.[35] Breton was very probably alerted to the occult undercurrents in Balzac's story by an article by Albert Béguin in *Minotaure* (1938), which discusses the androgyne from Plato and Gnosticism to Boehme, another Christian mystic, to the Swedenborgians and thence to *Séraphita*.[36] Baudelaire, in turn, was influenced by Balzac's ideas, including those derived from Swedenborg, and subsequently turned to Swedenborg's original writing. Baudelaire's writings, and specifically the occultly inclined *Correspondences* (1857), made an impact upon the surrealists.[37]

Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855) and Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) both also engaged the occultism of their time in their own way. Rimbaud's poem 'Voyelles' (1873), for instance, is filled with alchemical references. Nerval's most occult work is *Les Chimères* (1877), a collection of poems. His autobiographical *Aurélia* (1855) has also been the subject of many esoteric interpretations; the surrealists must have appreciated it at least for its emphasis upon inner discourse, dreams and fantasy.[38] Rimbaud's work and ideas had a vigorous afterlife in Surrealism, as has been pointed out primarily by the surrealists themselves (and confirmed by scholars)[39], and although it is less well known, the appropriation of many of Nerval's ideas certainly took place as well.[40]

Victor Hugo (1802-1885) read widely on the occult and one can find echoes of Swedenborgianism, Pythagoreanism, Saint-Simonism and even the occultism of the disciples of Fourier in his work.[41] Breton read much of Hugo's oeuvre, particularly those poems, plays or novels that were critical of society, state and/or church, and recommended it to other surrealists. Most controversial, however, during Hugo's lifetime as well as during his subsequent canonisation, was his involvement with Spiritualism while in exile.[42] As will be explored in Chapter Two, the surrealists knew Hugo's spiritualist diary, choosing to read it as a work of poetry rather than metaphysics. Yet, Breton was only really introduced to Hugo's wide-ranging occult interests by Auguste Viatte's *Victor Hugo et les illuminés de son temps* (1942). This book was a turning point in his perception of occultism in Romanticism and Symbolism, and in general.[43]

Viatte's study became the first of many; very probably, to start with, Breton turned to Viatte's earlier seminal work *Les sources occultes du romantisme* (1928).[44] Breton also familiarised himself with the studies of Denis Saurat, who had touched upon Hugo's occultism in earlier books before devoting an article and two entire volumes to the topic just after the war.[45] In *Apertures*,

the 1947 addition to his *Arcanum 17*, as in the later *Conversations*, Breton listed
further sources: *Nerval, poète alchimique* by G. LeBreton, Jean Richer's studies
on Nerval and occultism, Albert Béguin's book on Nerval and his article 'Poetry
and Occultism', and studies by George Blin on Baudelaire and Jacques Gengoux
on Rimbaud, both elaborating on the occult in their respective poetry.[46]

During the 1940s and later, Breton depended rather heavily upon these
studies, referring other surrealists to them as well, as Cellier has shown.[47]
Clearly, romantic literature came to be seen in a new light. Viatte's *Victor
Hugo* in particular was very influential: it alerted Breton to the intercon-
nections between occultism, poetry, and radical social thought during the
second half of the nineteenth century. He wrote in 1947:

> [S]cholarly research [i.e. Viatte cum suis] has recently come to
> discover, at the junctions where the ideas of poets and those of
> visionary social thinkers meet ([...] Hugo, Nerval, Fourier), the endur-
> ing vitality of an esoteric view of the world (Martinès, Saint-Martin,
> Fabre d'Olivet, l'abbé Constant [Lévi]). [Soon it will become known]
> that this worldview more or less directly influenced the major poets
> of the second half of the nineteenth century (Lautréamont, Rimbaud,
> Mallarmé, Jarry).[48]

Clearly, as these 'major poets' were Surrealism's guiding lights, the world-
view that 'directly influenced' them became a major point of interest for
Breton, as in his Surrealism. After Viatte, Breton wrote *Ode to Fourier* (1945)
and added a chapter with extracts of Fourier's writings to the *Anthology of
Black Humour*.[49] He also started to refer to Fabre d'Olivet and Éliphas Lévi
in his work.[50] After his understanding of Hugo's debt to Lévi, premised upon
Viatte, Breton started to use Lévi's term the 'Word' (*Verbe*) in the occult
sense, referring to the word that is an action.[51] Similarly, Martinés and
Saint-Martin – founders of Martinism and Illuminism – are mentioned for
the first time.[52] Finally, whereas previously Breton had connected symbolist
poets such as Rimbaud to modernist poets such as Jarry solely because of
their shared precursor-ship to Surrealism, after Viatte he did so primarily
because of the influence of (what he termed) esotericism upon their thought
or work. Clearly, after having read Viatte, Breton's view of the romantic poets
and of occultism changed significantly, and that view was subsequently
further enhanced by the other sources he read.

Another important source is *Anthologie littéraire de l'occultisme* by
Robert Amadou and Robert Kanters (1950). This literary collection reads as
a who's who of important Western authors from Antiquity to the twentieth

century, including Apuleius, Chrétien de Troyes, da Vinci, Goethe, Blake, Fabre d'Olivet, Novalis, Balzac, Hugo, de Nerval, Poe, Baudelaire, Huysmans and Rimbaud – in other words, the cherished precursors of Surrealism and for good measure many other famous writers too, all of which were here considered occult writers in one way or other. The anthology is indicative of an appropriation of (High) literature by occultists and occult sympathisers. The last entry was by none other than Breton himself.[53] Leaving aside for the moment whether Breton considered *himself* an occult writer, by this time others certainly placed him in that category. This illustrates the fact that by the early 1950s, at least in the French discourse, literary and religious scholars, occultists and surrealists shared a view of an occult literary tradition to which Surrealism was, if not the direct successor, at least indebted to. Also at this time, Breton corresponded and became acquainted with practicing alchemists (to which I will return below); where previously occultism had perhaps been kept at something of a theoretical distance, it was now becoming integrated in the life of, at least, Breton.[54]

Some scholars have stated that Breton's 'real' interest in esotericism or occultism dates only from after the Second World War.[55] Indeed, only from Viatte onwards does one find references to occultism in the works of Breton that show broad knowledge of the field, and understanding of the reach and form of the influence of various esoteric and occult currents upon Romanticism and Symbolism. We can say that Breton, and through him other surrealists, were only really catching on to Romanticism's debt to occultism when they encountered contemporary French scholarship on the matter. As indicated above, during the 1950s, the gap between occultism and French literature generally and Bretonian Surrealism specifically was bridged from many sides.

However, I find that the fact that Viatte's book was such a watershed does not mean that there was no occultism in Surrealism at all before that time; it was simply of a different kind. First, while Breton may well have read his favourite poets with fresh eyes having read Viatte et al., the presence of occult and esoteric ideas, tropes and terminology in the works of the canonised precursors, as detailed above, would still have been latent in Surrealism.[56] Let me provide an example: even though Breton may only have learned of the specifically Swedenborgian influence precipitating Balzac's construction of his main character as an androgyne through the publications of Béguin of 1938 and later,[57] the Bretonian surrealists still appreciated and used the trope of the androgyne before that time. Not least because this (sexual) union of man and woman in one body fitted their own ideas of love, but also, because it is a recurring trope in romantic literature,

which frequently contains an occult and/or alchemical subtext to it too. That subtext may have been (again) latent in Surrealism, or even explicit in the case of alchemical illustrations, which were quite appreciated.[58]

Secondly, three compendia of information about the occult were known to the surrealists since the movement's early days. Thirdly, we also need to look beyond (historical) occultism and the well-trodden paths of determining the influence of Lévi or other occult high flyers; namely, to early anthropology and the comparative religion-view of tribal magic and similar practices, to parapsychology and to popular culture, for instance in the form of stage mediumism. Finally, and running on a parallel track to the paper trail, particular individuals who may have been knowledgeable about occult matters, moved in and may have shared that information within surrealist circles. All of these aspects will be discussed below.

Further sources

While Viatte et al. would have provided a scholarly perspective upon the interrelations between historical occultism and romantic and symbolist literature, two authors providing 'inside information' as it were – as they belonged to late-nineteenth century French literature and wrote about the occultism of their day – were available to Surrealism from the outset: Jules Michelet and Jules Bois. *La Sorcière* by French historian Michelet (1789-1874) had been published in 1862.[59] This book was particularly influential in the surrealist formulation of the notion of woman as a witch and sorceress, as was its fundamental premise that medieval witchcraft and magic were, in fact, revolutionary movements against the oppression of the (Catholic) church.[60] The Bataille camp was familiar with it too.[61] The Danish film *Häxan* (1922), directly based on Michelet's book, played in Parisian theatres under the name *La Sorcellerie à travers les âges*.[62] Breton and Aragon commented positively on this film in an article that celebrated hysteria, showing their adherence to the film's thesis (going back to Michelet) that there have never been witches, merely misunderstood hysterics suffering from delusions who were cruelly repressed by the Inquisition.[63]

Le Satanisme et la magie (1895) by Jules Bois (1868-1943), illustrated by Henry de Malvost, had already provided the surrealists with visual information before *Häxan*. Breton reproduced an illustration of succubi in a 1933 article.[64] In the book, Bois discusses many occult currents under the heading of 'Satanism,' and would have familiarised the surrealists with the names and publications of Hermes Trismegistus, Agrippa and Flamel, for instance.

Bois popularised the connection between Black Mass altars and woman – that is, a woman's body serves as, or is at least laid upon, the altar – which may possibly have contributed to the later surrealist association of woman with altars and sacred places.[65] The preface to *Le Satanisme* was written by Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907), whose novel *Là-bas* (1891) was based upon extensive research into the occultism and Satanism of his time. Set in a former convent, it describes the main character's growing involvement in Satanist Black Masses, and as the surrealists were avid fans of the Gothic genre, one can be sure they read *Là-bas* as well.[66]

Both *La Sorcière* and *Le Satanisme* were trumped at the end of the 1920s by *Le Musée des sorciers, mages et alchimistes* (1929) by Émile Grillot de Givry (1870-1929). It was enthusiastically received by surrealists from both the Breton and Bataille camps. Michel Leiris (1901-1990) immediately published a positive review of it in the surrealist periodical *Documents*.[67] *Le Musée* discusses topics ranging from witches and demon worship to tarot cards, other means of divination and alchemy, as well as Agrippa, Paracelsus, Flamel and Fludd.[68] Excerpts of works by these esoteric luminaries had already been published by Grillot de Givry in an edited volume in 1922, the *Anthologie de l'occultisme*. Leiris refers to it in his review and it seems probable others besides him read it; Breton certainly did. An important part of *Le Musée* are the images: lavishly illustrated, it would have familiarised the surrealists with the visual canon of Western esotericism, ranging from the diagrams of Agrippa, Paracelsus, Fludd and Boehme, to the alchemical illustrations of Michael Maier, Heinrich Kunrath and Abraham the Jew; and from paintings and woodcuts by Brueghel the Elder, Dürer, Holbein and Goya, appropriated as occult somehow, to Early Modern tarot cards.[69] It certainly served as the preeminent source of alchemical information for all the surrealists;[70] but, in fact, I think it served as the handbook of everything occult. Why consult another book when one had this monumental compendium at hand? Traces of it, or rather of its illustrations, are, for instance, the sudden vogue for chiromancy or palm-reading, which overtook the surrealists in 1935. *Minotaure* 6 contained an article by a Dr. Wolff on 'chirognomie,' including handprints of various surrealists and others.[71] Very similar illustrations can be found in Givry's chapter on 'La chiromancie.'[72]

These three sources alone provided the surrealists with a wealth of – more or less historicising – visual, textual and referential information about nineteenth-century occultism, including Satanism, as well as overviews of the history of witchcraft and esoteric history ranging back to the late Middle Ages. They construct a roughly similar lineage of important esoteric actors, i.e. Hermes Trismegistus, Agrippa and Flamel (as in 'Erutarettil').

The political subtexts on revolution, historical dissent, feminine hysteria as revolt and repression by institutions such as state and church, but also the gothic atmosphere of satanic rituals involving beautiful women taking place in haunted locations, would have fitted well the surrealist worldview and interests. Moreover, both Bois and Michelet could be read too as literature, sharing with the poetry and prose of revered predecessors such as Hugo or Rimbaud a milieu, a style and similar responses to French culture of the second half of the nineteenth century, in which occultism was very much a tangible presence. Givry's book, in turn, combines two tendencies: the interest for the occult that formed the basis of the occult revival, and the early twentieth-century interest in comparative religion, particularly of the West's own religious and spiritual historical cultural past. This leads to one of the additional groups of sources I have highlighted above, early anthropology.

Primitivism had been a central concern of Surrealism from the very outset. As the 1930s progressed, this developed into a genuine interest in cultures of non-Western peoples, in particular an increasing fascination with tribal myths, magic and rituals.[73] From the studies of their day, Surrealism adopted the idea that magic is a structure of thinking, of perceiving and interacting with the world. The (deep) past was treated as a foreign country too, and a comparative religion of the West's own 'primitive' culture and its myths and magical worldview in particular was bound up with Surrealism's preoccupation with 'primitive magic' in general. For instance, Leiris devoted another positive review to *L'Île magique*, a book on Haitian voodoo by occultist and adventurer William Seabrook (1884-1945).[74] Later, Breton would travel to Haiti and personally witness voodoo rituals, elements of which he introduced in the 1947 surrealist exhibition. Early in the 1930s, Seabrook became friendly with Leiris and Man Ray, and moved in surrealist circles for a while. It is impossible to pin down if he shared deep insights about occultism, rather than stories of his adventures – probably both – but it should be mentioned that he strongly leaned towards scientific, psychological and even occasionally pathological interpretations of occultism, witchcraft, voodoo and similar practices. Such a view (partly akin to Michelet's) was also current among the surrealists.[75]

Another important source in this regard is without a doubt *The Golden Bough* by James Frazer (1854-1941). Bretonian and Bataillian surrealists alike both read and enjoyed it, turning also to other works by Frazer such as *Totemism and Exogamy*.[76] In Chapter Three we will further explore the surrealist fascination with myth, the overarching category under which religious practices of the past and of tribal cultures, including magic, were

understood. Suffice it to say here that the borders between ethnography, mythology and occultism were rather blurred, and in selected articles in *Documents* and *Minotaure* anthropologist Marcel Griaule (1898-1965) and, predominantly, the intellectual Roger Caillois (1913-1978), referenced a number of sources about magic, usually scholarly and historic in nature.[77]

Even though reading was Breton's favourite method of appropriating occult pasts, and even though it is hard to find any evidence of interpersonal exchanges concerning occultism (as the Seabrook case shows), I will still mention others who were knowledgeable about occult matters, as their presence and possible willingness to share their knowledge may well have played a role in forming, focusing or directing the occult interests of Bretonian Surrealism. As cases in point, Leiris and Caillois were, in fact, surrealists, partaking in Bataille's and Breton's groups (although primarily the former); both published in surrealist journals. Leiris had a lifelong fascination with historical occultism, initiation and magic and fetishist practices in non-Western cultures.[78] His reviews, of Givry's *Le Musée* but also of key texts of esotericism such as the *Monas Hieroglyphica* (1564) by John Dee, offered surrealists across the board valuable information about the histories of occultism and esotericism.[79] The investigations of the sacred and secrecy that Leiris and Caillois undertook together with Bataille and Monnerot are well known, and although we can safely assume that the Bretonian camp would have read their articles and other works, it is impossible to say if they would have contributed in any other way to the Bretonian side of Surrealism in this respect. Leiris, Caillois and Bataille founded the *Collège de Sociologie*, a group of intellectuals organised around a series of lectures (1937-1939), where topics included the sacred, secrecy and occult eroticism.[80] They also established a secret society, 'Acéphale,' named after the already existing journal *Acéphale*; it had a political and revolutionary, rather than occult, agenda.[81] Breton in any case never joined Acéphale.

An important figure in Breton's direct circle is Max Ernst. Scholars now assume that alchemy informed much of Ernst's work in a very idiosyncratic manner. He may have consulted alchemical manuscripts and his alchemically informed auto-psychoanalysis perhaps influenced others in the early 1920s.[82] Yet, Ernst's alchemy is so personal that it is not necessarily easily shared or transmitted. This is even more the case with Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), who was certainly not a surrealist, despite Breton's continuing attempts to co-opt him for Surrealism; his occultism (alchemy in particular) is not undisputed and was in any case as highly idiosyncratic as anything else about him and so not easily transmissible – if he would have wanted to share it anyway.[83] *If* Breton were affected by personal influences, he would

have been most open to Ernst, Duchamp or to Pierre Mabille (1904-1952), doctor, anthropologist, writer and part-time surrealist. Mabille, who was on excellent terms with Breton, published in surrealist journals in the 1930s.[84] His primary interest was mythology, which he traced in religion and occultism alike, and a profound interest in and knowledge of occultism formed a considerable part of his mythological studies. In an article on luminous consciousness in *Minotaure* (1937), for instance, he discusses transcendental knowledge and contacting cosmic energies, referring to both ancient and medieval 'hermetists' in the process. He links luminous consciousness to painting, and a reproduction of an illustration from Fludd's *Philosophie Musique* precedes numerous paintings and objects by surrealist artists, including Dali, Tanguy, Ernst, Magritte and Remedios Varo, among many others.[85] Thus, Mabille explicitly connected occultism, a lineage of historical 'hermetists,' contemporary thought about consciousness and Renaissance esoteric diagrams to contemporary surrealist art, suggesting at the least shared views on consciousness (in art) among them. His 1940 book *Mirror of the Marvellous* was prefaced by Breton, who was much impressed with it, as were many other surrealists. This rather unique book celebrates the surrealist concept of the marvellous in a long reflection that is akin to comparative mythology, including certain occult elements and motifs. It is very hard to identify precisely how Mabille shared his occult knowledge with the Bretonian surrealists in the 1930s, other than by means of his written work. Sarane Alexandrian, however, is convinced that Mabille 'initi-ated' Breton into the secrets of geomancy and prophetical astrology, which seems probable.[86] In the 1930s, the Bretonian surrealists were increasingly concerned with the theme of initiation – which continued well into the 1950s – and it is quite probable that Mabille played an influential part in this, as initiation was one of his major mythological interests.[87]

A similar case, to a certain extent, is Kurt Seligmann (1900-1962). He associated with the surrealists only for a brief period in Paris from 1938 to 1940, and then occasionally in the United States until 1942. He wrote several books and articles on magic and occultism, among them one on the evil eye referenced by Caillois.[88] One can assume that he shared his occult knowledge with some surrealists; it is known, for instance, that he exchanged letters about such matters with Leonora Carrington, who also read his book,[89] and that he compiled a folder with documentation about the tarot for Breton. In any case, as there are hardly any studies of him available, the manner and extent of such sharing or more remains a mystery for now.[90]

A last, late – but certainly not least – group of individuals should be mentioned: the intellectual alchemists with whom Breton came into con-

tact in the 1950s: Eugène Canseliet (1899-1982), writer, alchemist and the only disciple of the famed and mysterious alchemist Fulcanelli;[91] occultist Claude d'Ygé (1912-1964); and historian, alchemist and writer René Alleau (1917).[92] Alleau was a regular in surrealist circles, while in their turn the surrealists, at the instigation of Breton, attended his lectures on alchemy.[93] Alleau organised a few philosophical dinner parties in 1950, which included Canseliet, d'Ygé and Breton.[94] Alleau, Canseliet and d'Ygé contributed to the occult journal *La Tour Saint-Jacques* (1955-63), founded by another occult specialist, Robert Amadou (1924-2006) – whose *Literary Anthology of Occultism* has been mentioned above.[95] Amadou attended surrealist gatherings occasionally and was acquainted with Breton. It seems quite probable that these men imparted occult and alchemical knowledge to Breton in person. Furthermore, they all published about alchemy and occultism, publications we can safely assume Breton would have read. Nonetheless, all of this occurred after 1947.

There is, moreover, an area of expertise in which Breton himself was the expert: parapsychology, or rather psychical research. Breton's original training was in medicine, and he always retained a fervent interest in (dynamic) psychiatry. He read many para-psychological journals, particularly in the 1920s and early 1930s, such as *La revue spiritite*; *La revue métapsychique*; *Annales des sciences psychiques*; and *Aesculape*, which are all referred to in the 1933 essay 'The Automatic Message'.[96] In many instances, he demonstrated his familiarity with medical studies involving mediums, particularly the studies written by Théodore Flournoy about the medium Hélène Smith, who was to become Breton's favourite medium.[97] Remarkably enough, psychical research is one area in which the interest moved beyond reading about the subject to actively experimenting. As will be discussed in Chapters One and Two, Breton attended experimental mediumistic sessions at the Institut de Métapsychique in Paris, and visited the parlour of a clairvoyant in the 1920s, together with other surrealists. He publicly debunked stage hypnotisers. He appropriated automatic writing, originally a mediumistic practice and, under his leadership, the surrealist collective experimented with trance states in séance-like sessions during the early 1920s.

Some final comments on Bretonian Surrealism's occult sources

After Breton's death his library was investigated by Marguerite Bonnet and Etienne-Alain Hubert, who compiled, among other lists, a list of works concerning the 'traditional sciences,' which roughly covers Western esoteri-

cism and occultism. René Alleau was consulted in compiling this list.[98] He suggested three categories to classify the material: the 'hermetical tradition,' 'history of religions' and 'occultism.' It is a rather small list, totalling only forty titles. The romantic works are not on this list, neither are those of Viatte and company, books like Frazer's, or (para-)psychological studies. As Breton's love for these works and his possession of them at one point or other are known from other sources (such as his own writings), it is clear that they must have been included on other lists, or no longer present at the time of list-making, which is, after all, only one moment in time. In compensation, a number of other titles from the category 'history of religions' are part of the list, such as *Gnostiques et gnosticisme* by de Faye (1925) and Dom Pernety's *Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique* of 1787. The list further yields the following sources: Grillot de Givry's French translation of Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica*, a French 1902 translation of the Zohar, a French translation of *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (1928) and all of Lévi's works.[99] Above, I have discussed mainly secondary sources, but the inclusion of these titles shows that by the end of his life Breton had finally turned to primary sources as well, albeit a small selection. Three more books stand out: first, a French translation of Dion Fortune, remarkable because Breton never referred to British magic or Fortune herself, at all.[100] Then, there are two books by Lotus de Païni: *La Magie et le mystère de la femme*, and *Les trois totémisations*.[101] The magical mystery of woman was, of course, something that must have greatly appealed to Breton, who entitled a 1962 collage for his daughter Aubé, 'Lotus de Païni.'[102] It is notable that Fortune and Païni are the only female authors in the collection. Just as remarkable, finally, is the presence of one book by Stanislas de Guaïta, and one about him.[103] Some (more speculative) authors have assumed that Guaïta's thought must have influenced that of Breton.[104] However, one specific image of water and fire united, which Breton took from the illustrations of Guaïta's *Le Serpent de la Genèse* by Oswald Wirth and used in the 1942 catalogue of *First Papers of Surrealism*, is the only evidence of possible influence; any appropriation of Guaïta's ideas can only be inferred from the presence of these books in Breton's library.[105]

We can draw a number of conclusions on the basis of this discussion of sources. Breton had a strong preference for secondary studies written by historians of literature, of occultism or of comparative religion. Surrealists and surrealist sympathisers such as Mabille and Seligmann wrote these types of books. This predominance of reference books, compendia and literary histories exemplifies, firstly, that Breton preferred his occultism (mainly) mediated. He spent a lot of time reading books about books. Although late in life Breton sought the company of practising occultists such as Canseliet,

they were just as erudite as the books he preferred. The difference with, for instance, a surrealist artist like Ithell Colquhoun (1906-1988), who was a practicing occultist,[106] is therefore not only immense but also unbridgeable. Breton's occultism was an intellectual pursuit, premised upon written sources, preferably in French. His reluctance to read other languages led to a limited body of available sources, many of which were focused on French developments anyway. It also led to an identification with French (academic) positions regarding the history of esotericism, including a positive standpoint towards the 'hermetic tradition' as proper and intellectual, and a negative valuation of 'occultist hodgepodge' or 'metaphysics of the music hall' (Spiritualism).[107] Thirdly, these sources are, in the main, scholarly and it is clear he had a strong preference for a learned, rational and (semi-)scientific approach. He relied upon scholars like Viatte to inform him about Illuminism and its influence upon Romanticism. When taken by a fancy for astrology, for example, he relied upon *Influence astrale* (1899-1900, 1926) by Paul Choisnard, a complex and technical book that advocates an experimental research-directed approach to astrology with the help of statistics.[108] However, I would also point out that – considering the breadth and depth of Breton's voracious reading – the sources discussed here form rather a small corpus. The relative scarcity of occult references in the first two decades of Surrealism and Breton's reliance on a small corpus of sources after the war show that occultism as such was never his main concern, certainly not before the 1940s; even then, his interest was subordinate to, on the one hand, the project of re-introducing myth into the world, and on the other, his all-encompassing fascination with Romanticism and Symbolism.

Occultism and brief outline of this study

Finally, we come to the question of what is meant by 'occultism', with regards to Breton's 'occultation.' Terms that have passed review include 'hermeticism,' 'the hermetic tradition,' 'esotericism' and 'occultism,' but also magic, for instance.

First, I will draw out a few lines from the sources discussed above. To begin with, a central idea is that of a 'hermetic tradition' that is essentially timeless and homogenous, and in which the usual suspects, such as Hermes, Agrippa and Flamel, make their appearance. As others have shown, concepts such as timelessness, universalism, original wisdom and perpetual truths are core ingredients of the entire notion of a 'hermetic' (esoteric) tradition (or 'Tradition') as employed in many, if not nearly all, esoteric

currents, as well as in occultism just as in contemporary New Age.[109] There is also a considerable intermingling of the 'hermetic tradition' with an idea of poetic lineage. Balakian, for one, succeeds quite well in painting a picture of a tradition that is home to magicians, alchemists and 'great poets' alike and which exists over vast oceans of time. The literary occult anthology of Amadou & Kanters exemplifies this conflation of the idea of a 'hermetic tradition', nineteenth-century occultism and nineteenth-century poetry, and it would have cemented this notion, which had been forming in Breton's mind since Viatte. There apparently exists a tradition, therefore, extending backwards in time, which Breton would refer to as 'esotericism' in 1947 and later. The romantic and symbolists poets employed, or even belonged to, this tradition, but so too did various revolutionary thinkers. Note this identification of said 'esotericism' with political heterodoxy and revolution, which also goes back to Micheletian ideas about magic and witchcraft as revolt. Furthermore, pursuits such as alchemy apparently belong to this tradition as well.

Next, the issue of magic. Within Bretonian Surrealism, occultism was associated with irrationalism and marginality, which reflects a view that was widespread at the time (and in some cases still is today). Briefly, many intellectuals in the twentieth century considered magic (and therefore occultism, which was seen as premised upon magic as worldview and practice) erroneous: a mistaken view of relations within the phenomenal world as well as one's own relation to it.[110] It is irrational, illogical and, basically, just primitive, a mistake of the inferior or childish mind and, therefore, as I will explore at length in Chapter Five, that is exactly why magic and occult ideas were so relevant for Breton and why he aimed to incorporate them in his Surrealism. The very fact that it was perceived as *anti*-modern – made magic so attractive to Surrealism. Irrationality, pre-rationality and an illogically working mind; that was the answer to the political situation of the day, the means of the surrealist revolution, the magical psychic mechanism by way of which the surreal could be discovered and manifested in the real.

Thirdly, as discussed, late Bretonian Surrealism and roughly contemporary scholarship (including such authors as Carrouges, Balakian, Alexandrian and Waldberg) were rather closely connected, and not only did they adhere to similar views of a 'hermetic tradition,' they also shared a blind spot: Anglo-American historical occultism. The only people belonging to historical occultism we find in the relevant sources are nineteenth-century Frenchmen, such as Lévi or Papus and Eteilla (the last two rarely mentioned in Surrealism). Historical occultism encompassed much more than developments in France after the 1850s, and includes developments such as modern

Theosophy, British magical initiatory societies such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and modern witchcraft.[111] Yet, this remains entirely obscured in Surrealism, as in French scholarship of the time and works with a decidedly French orientation, such as those by Balakian. Theosophy and Anthroposophy, to name two important movements that attracted many artists during Breton's early lifetime,[112] make no appearance at all in Surrealism. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the Bretonian surrealists gained most of their initial knowledge of occultism, as well as of earlier esotericism, from *La Sorcière* and *Le Satanisme*, nineteenth-century works deeply informed by the historical occultism of their time. Also, from twentieth-century compendia, such as Givry's *Le Musée* – that presents a long and inclusive extra-temporal magical tradition, strongly influenced by historical occultism – on the one hand; and scholarly studies of romantic poets and their involvement in occultism on the other. Nineteenth-century occultism, and scholarly perceptions of it, therefore strongly influenced the Bretonian surrealist view. Occult Romanticism was the golden standard against which every surrealist step in their process of occultation became measured. Nevertheless, after 1940 and the blossoming of Breton's more pro-found interest in occultism, one might perhaps have expected him to show an interest in fin-de-siècle and twentieth-century occultism. Certainly, some information on such movements was available, not least because of connections with the British surrealist group, where a few artists were actively engaging contemporary occultism. But Breton remained focused upon the established French hermetic tradition alone; his only concession to twentieth-century developments was his inclusion of the mysterious alchemist Fulcanelli among the canon of 'hermetists.'

Several shared characteristics among the movements that do not make their appearance in Bretonian Surrealism are quite telling: they are not French, often practice-based, include women very prominently, are frequently concerned with progressive or liberal issues (although usually not those close to the heart of Surrealism[113]), and/or are focused upon wisdom-traditions from the East. The occultism relevant to Surrealism, in contrast, was something intellectually stimulating, book-based, informed by earlier esoteric movements, based upon thought considered heterodox, propelled by white male Europeans positioned as geniuses, heteronormative, strictly Western, of the past, and sanctioned – even rather exclusively mediated – by the *poètes maudites*.

Current scholarly research focuses upon the constructed scholarly category of Western esotericism as a whole and its characteristics, as well as upon currents that are placed under its overall heading, such as Neo-

Platonism, Swedenborgianism, Christian theosophy and Illuminism, for instance.[114] Reception, appropriation and invention of tradition are recurring processes in this construct that is esotericism, from the Renaissance reception of neo-platonic ideas, as well as scholastic and Islamic thought and Gnosticism, to the historically related currents in turn developing out of that. Scholarship usually extends 'Western esotericism' into modernity and even the present day, meaning that movements such as Spiritualism, modern Theosophy, occultism, New Age and Neo-Paganism, to mention only the more prominent ones, are also included under its heading. For the purposes of this study, however, I understand 'esotericism' to refer primarily to early modern developments; and 'occultism' to modern developments beginning in the nineteenth-century, which were significantly informed by such forces as modernity, secularisation, globalisation and the invention of the unconscious, and should therefore be distinguished from earlier movements.[115] Occultism is a modern cultural phenomenon that found its origin in what has been called the occult revival, starting in France but quickly spreading to other (Western) countries. Developments within occultism include the Theosophical Society, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and similar movements, and modern witchcraft.[116]As I hope to make clear in this study, historical occultism – the developments in France from the mid-nineteenth century onwards – became the most important reference point for Bretonian Surrealism, the lens through which other periods and currents were viewed. Occultism was not a contained, inward-looking development divorced from other cultural developments. Indeed, it pervaded, for instance, psychiatry and popular culture as well, even as it was in turn informed by it. As the first few chapters will show, if taken rather broadly there are clear traces of an occultation of Surrealism in its first decade as well.

This brings us, finally, to the structure of this book. Each chapter covers a particular period, starting with the 'time of slumbers,' the early years of the 1920s; followed by the 'period of reason,' or the late 1920s and the early 1930s; the 'Golden Age' of the 1930s; the period of exile, covering the late 1930s and war years; and finally, in Chapter Five, the late 1940s, with 1947 as its climax and some additional comments about the 1950s. In line with my understanding of Surrealism as a revolution of the mind, each chapter discusses a mental process or state. Each chapter also covers a stage within the surrealist trajectory of 'occultation' – or 'occult process' as Breton would refer to it later in life.[117] Allow me to point out, however, that a recourse to the occult and esoteric was only one of several avenues that were explored to find total freedom of mind and thought, albeit the avenue in focus here.

Breton made his demand for a 'profound, veritable occultation' in 1929. While it found its effect in the 1930s and particularly in the 1940s, it is important to realise that the stage for an occultation was already set in the early 1920s. One concept that lies at the absolute basis of Surrealism is the practice of automatism. As I will show in Chapter One, Bretonian Surrealism adopted automatism from psychology and psychiatry, particularly from these disciplines' own, now marginalised, occult histories of psychical (or parapsychological) research and experimental research involving mediums. Closely associated with psychical research is Spiritualism, which left clear traces in early Surrealism. Relevant too is popular somnambulism because, around the turn of the twentieth century, displays of mediumism were not only limited to environments of medical or psychical research or the spiritualist séance, but also present in popular culture in the form of novels, plays, stage performances and plays. Underlying all these different areas is the shared paradigm of somnambulism, going back to mesmerism, a development with its own esoteric history.

Around 1925, it became clear that pure verbal automatism was not sufficient as a means of surrealist expression, as I will argue in Chapter Two. A growing emphasis upon the visual arts, among other things, led the Bretonian surrealists to further explore other faculties of the mind, such as the imagination. This was linked closely to ideas about clairvoyance, on the one hand, and the romantic understanding of the artist as a seer or prophet, on the other. Female clairvoyants and mediums were served up as 'seers' whose example the surrealists should follow. Becoming a seer was important, because after the experiments with automatism – a surreality existing solely within the mind – the new issue now was how to 'see' the surreality that is immanent within the world experienced outside of the mind; that is to say, surreality within reality. Ideas about mediums and mediumism, therefore, continued to remain relevant. Breton eventually positioned mediumistic artists as outsider artists, precipitated entirely upon the understanding of mediums as automatists, possibly mad and hysteric too. There is no metaphysical element to the communications of the mediumistic; on the contrary, all that is communicated is the subliminal mind. This illustrates the rigorous secularising of ideas and elements appropriated from occultism that occurred in Surrealism, where each and everything was furthermore reconceived within the format of the mind and its psychic mechanisms. At the same time, it illustrates how romantic ideas about artists being seers and clairvoyance, with its attendant but perhaps latent occultism, were reconfigured and repurposed in Surrealism.

For Surrealism's next decade, the 1930s, I have maintained the classical designation 'Golden Age'. Rather than designating it a 'golden age' of the arts or literature (although it was that, too), I discuss the period here primarily as a golden age of the *mind*, as it was in that decade that Breton firmly established the surrealist mind as the 'psychic mechanism' par excellence. The overriding concern for the interaction of mind with surreality in reality – or sur/reality – defined this decade. It raised the question of which meta-structure would allow for creative interaction between mind and world. To facilitate this interaction, Breton constructed a surrealist universe based upon principles of correspondence, in which everything is related and various acts and things can be symbolic and meaningful. Desires within the mind can merge with signs in the outside world. Preferably, the established connections are illogical, irrational and primitive, or 'magical.' Hence, the magical worldview became firmly associated with the surrealist worldview in this decade. The anthropological studies of the magical worldviews of primitive societies, as well as the primitive past of the West, played a significant role here.

Close to the turn of the decade several developments converged. Several artists other than Breton turned to, or deepened their study of, occultisms, including twentieth-century developments such as the occult fourth dimension and Gurdjieffian thought. This did not influence Breton at that time; he, for his part, was delving into Christian mysticism and heresy, as part of his decisive turn towards the heterodox that was prompted by rising political tensions and the eventual outbreak of the Second World War. The war forced him into exile, but also towards a more serious consideration of occultism. He studied the tarot, for instance, which was invented as occult during the height of the occult revival in France during the second half of the nineteenth century. He also encountered the – already oft mentioned – book by Viatte. Lévi, whose publications kick-started occultism in France, suddenly appeared on Breton's radar and stayed. I would argue, therefore, that an 'occultation' of Surrealism, in the sense of a direct confrontation with and deep interest in the developments of historical occultism in France, occurred around this time. The developments discussed in Chapters One, Two and Three, in turn, deal with movements that belong to the category of occultism in a broader sense, such as Spiritualism, popular somnambulism and psychical research. All of these developed in parallel, proceeding from a new understanding of the mind and the new paradigm of the existence of the unconscious, upon which historical occultism itself was also based.

During the war, Breton came to appreciate the important role of a current of thought, frequently called 'the hermetic tradition' or 'traditional

thought,' but also 'esotericism,' in romantic and symbolist literature. He was strengthened in his view that esotericism could offer valuable ideas and symbols for his own movement. Meanwhile, proceeding along paths taken already during the 1930s, the surrealist artist had become a magician during the war, someone who effects changes that are desired mentally in the world through her/his art.

By 1947, Breton thought it necessary to share the magical surrealist world-view with the public in general by means of an exhibition, constructed as an initiatory trajectory. As I will discuss in Chapter Five, this exhibition and the way in which various occult elements were positioned and employed in it, showcases his appropriation of the heterodox current 'esotericism' (occultism, in my view) within an overarching politically motivated plan; such irrational, primitive, magical and also *feminine* thought will prove the antidote to the masculine rationalism of the day and the crisis it had caused. Interestingly – and ironically – at the same time, Breton turned more decisively and overtly towards the occult to reinvigorate Surrealism's avant-gardism; his occult investment was the one element that convinced many critics, scholars and other intellectuals that the avant-garde days were finally over. An entrenching in existing positions took place during the 1950s, as I will discuss at the end of Chapter Five.

I have two closing comments. A lengthier and more detailed treatment of several of my arguments and sources is to be found in the dissertation that forms the basis for the present book.[118] Finally, all emphasis is mine unless otherwise mentioned.

1.   The Time of Slumbers: Psychic automatism and surrealist research

Introduction

On the night of 25 September 1922, André Breton and his wife Simone Kahn (1897-1988) entertained young poets René Crevel (1900-1935), Max Morise (1900-1973) and Robert Desnos (1900-1945) at their house on 42, rue Fontaine, Paris. The party proceeded to conduct what appeared to be a séance: at 9 pm, the lights were dimmed and all sat around a table holding hands. After a while, Crevel, the instigator of the whole adventure, entered a trance-like state, uttering cries, words and sentences. A second attempt was made immediately: Desnos now entered a trance state, during which he too uttered some words and scratched at the table. Later, Breton would call the trance state a 'sleeping state,' and the séance a 'sleeping session.' At the time, this first sleeping session was considered a success and well worth repeating. Over the following days, weeks and then months, well into the spring of 1923, a varying group of people gathered for more. They included, besides those mentioned above, Gala Diakonova (1894-1982) and Paul Éluard (1895-1952), Benjamin Péret (1899-1959), Max Ernst (1891-1976), Louis Aragon (1897-1982), Roger Vitrac (1899-1952), Man Ray (1890-1976) and Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978), among others. Some attended a few sessions, others many. Crevel, Desnos and Péret proved to be the most adept, entering trances again and again; while entranced, they recounted stories, answered questions and wrote or drew things on paper. Desnos allegedly established telepathic contact with Marcel Duchamp's alter ego Rrose Sélavy. Other committed participants, such as Breton, Ernst, Éluard and Morise, however, never entered a 'sleeping state,' 'despite their goodwill.'[1]

The sessions became increasingly dark in tone and even violent. Crevel prophesied that all those present would get tuberculosis and die. To general dismay, some of the participants became ill in the next few days. Desnos proved more and more difficult to wake up and even required the aid of a hastily summoned doctor on one occasion. On another, apparently still entranced, he tried to stab Éluard with a penknife after the latter had resorted to emptying a jug of water over him to awaken him. When, at a certain point, Breton discovered several members of the group in a side room preparing to hang themselves on Crevel's instigation, it became clear that things were getting out of hand. He put an end to the sessions.[2]

During and immediately after the sleeping sessions two accounts were published describing the events: 'The Mediums Enter' by Breton, and 'A Wave of Dreams' by Louis Aragon.[3] Both refer to sleep, slumber, hypnosis and the 'subliminal' in relation to these sessions. In 1928, Breton dubbed the entire period during which the sessions took place (autumn 1922-spring 1923) *l'époque des sommeils*, the time of slumbers, and the mental state *sommeil hypnotique* (hypnotic sleep or slumber).[4] Scholarly sources currently write of 'trances' and 'hypnotic sleep sessions' through which this early surrealist collective explored 'unconscious states.'[5]

Automatism was the main investigative means during the sessions, primarily automatic writing.[6] Breton and Soupault had started experimenting with automatic writing in 1919, and by 1924 automatism was considered such a success that Breton established it as the fundamental core of Surrealism in his first *Manifesto*:

> SURREALISM, *n*. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express – verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.[7]

Surrealism is here defined as automatism, 'psychic' even; which, in turn, is defined as thought outside of the control of reason. We should note that psychic automatism serves a double function in Surrealism: it is both a mental state and a means of expression. The surrealists had appropriated automatism from the medical science of their day, specifically from dynamic psychiatry, the precursor to modern psychiatry. There automatism served two functions as well, first being employed as a therapeutic practice, and secondly as a tool for studying particular states of consciousness.[8]

The adjective 'psychic,' in turn, was adapted from the discipline of psychical research, now often known as parapsychology and at the time intertwined with dynamic psychiatry. However, the combination of the two terms and entire concept of *psychic automatism* is a surrealist invention. It departs considerably from the practices of psychiatry and psychical research. Psychic automatism is the surrealist poetic response to the discovery and investigation of the unconscious in the nineteenth century, and an attempt to appropriate it for revolutionary art. The sleeping sessions were part of the early surrealist experiments with automatism and can be considered one form of psychic automatism.

However, there is a further field underlying surrealist psychic automa-
tism, besides (experimental) medicine: Spiritualism. Indeed, automatic
writing originated as a spiritualist practice.[9] Spiritualism is even more
relevant for the sleeping sessions, as Crevel, their instigator, had been 'initi-
ated' by a spiritualist:

> Two weeks ago [...] René Crevel described to us the beginnings of a
> 'spiritualist' initiation he had had, thanks to a certain Madame D. This
> person, having discerned particular mediumistic qualities in him, had
> taught him how to develop these qualities; so it was that, in the condi-
> tions necessary for the production of such phenomena (darkness and
> silence in the room, a 'chain' of hands around the table), he had soon
> fallen asleep and uttered words that were organised into a generally
> coherent discourse, to which the usual waking techniques put a stop at
> a given moment.[10]

Breton continues his description by immediately making it clear that their
involvement with Spiritualism went no further than the acceptance of the
'necessary conditions':

> It goes without saying that at no time, starting with the day we agreed
> to try these experiments, have we ever adopted the spiritualistic
> viewpoint. As far as I'm concerned, I absolutely refuse to admit that
> any communication whatsoever can exist between the living and the
> dead.[11]

Other surrealists also emphasised their disbelief in Spiritualism, and
throughout his career Breton insisted upon his refusal to believe in com-
munication with spirits. Still, this does not preclude that there were, in fact,
correspondences between the sleeping sessions and Spiritualism, which I
shall touch upon in this chapter.

The three disciplines that lie at the basis of the sleeping sessions, Spir-
itualism, dynamic psychiatry and psychical research, are, in turn, linked
by an underlying development: somnambulism. The connecting element
here is sleep. Aragon described the particular trance state of the sessions as
'something like sleepwalking.'[12] The idea that a trance state is similar to the
state of sleepwalking can be traced back to the early practice of artificial
somnambulism, which was based upon mesmerism or animal magnetism.
I will recapture that development here briefly. One day, in 1784, Armand de
Chastenet, Marquis de Puységur (1761-1825) tried healing one of his farmers,

Victor Race (1760-c. 1818), with animal magnetism. Colloquially known as mesmerism after its inventor, Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), this healing technique presupposed the existence of a 'magnetic fluid' flowing through bodies, the readjustment of which could potentially effect healing. After being magnetised, however, Race entered a previously unreported trance state, rather than the expected mesmeric state of convulsions. De Puységur called it 'artificial' or 'magnetic' somnambulism, distinct from natural somnambulism or sleepwalking.[13] This discovery led to what Adam Crabtree has termed the 'alternate-consciousness paradigm': the idea that a second, or alternate and usually hidden consciousness exists. Prior to this, consciousness was perceived as undivided.[14] Investigations of this second consciousness reached a key point in the nineteenth century with the discovery of the unconscious. Besides unconscious, the alternate consciousness was and is also called subconscious, subliminal, dissociated, altered or double consciousness; properly speaking, one is dealing with alterations of consciousness.[15]

Throughout the long nineteenth century, 'somnambulism' frequently functioned as a generic term for (induced) alterations of consciousness, and it was still more or less current by the time the surrealists started their experiments. Several characteristics distinguish artificial somnambulism from a naturally occurring alternate state;[16] one relevant here is a *rapport* between magnetised and the magnetiser. Far from a neutral relationship, the rapport implies an unequal power balance between (in this case) the somnambulist and magnetiser, frequently based in part upon the social difference between them.[17] However, the balance could also fall the other way: for instance, in social situations the entranced somnambulist, while lower in social status than the magnetiser, was often still the centre of attention and, apparently, capable of rather remarkable feats, including telepathy, clairvoyance across time, across space or into bodies, clairaudience, or awareness of spiritual beings.

Over time, such feats became increasingly important. Some magnetisers, including Mesmer and Puységur, thought them to be largely or entirely a power of the mind. Apparently exceeding the limits of science at *that* time, the expectation was that such capacities would later be explained as natural and understandable phenomena.[18] Still, distinctly metaphysical or occult understandings of it were in play too, and in France somnambulism had been employed as a means to investigate the metaphysical almost since the time of Puységur.[19] Indeed, for all its medical cachet, several elements of Mesmer's practice, not least his notion of magnetic 'fluid,' were rooted in earlier esoteric developments.[20] In any case, by the middle of the nineteenth

century it had become clear that the (entranced) mind was a powerful instrument, capable of extraordinary feats such as – apparent – clairvoyance, and super-sensory experiences of a transcendent realm or spiritual communications occurred during somnambulist states. This gave rise to the idea that by training the mind and cultivating particular alternate states one could do (or see, or know, etc.) extraordinary things, which was to become a key ingredient of occultism, but also paved the way for the development of Spiritualism, for instance.[21]

In medicine, meanwhile, the discovery of the unconscious also gave rise to a frenzied investigation of the mind, leading in part to the rise of new disciplines such as psychiatry, and eventually psychoanalysis and psychology, as well as psychical research. Artificial somnambulism eventually developed into hypnotism, among other things.[22] Parisian psychiatrist, Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), head of mental hospital la Salpêtrière, was a firm believer in the efficacy of hypnotism as a treatment, turning it into a great medical success for treating, for example, epilepsy, hysteria and paralysis.[23] He also turned hypnotic treatment into a spectacle, staging weekly public lectures on various neurological ailments during the 1880s in which he would manipulate (female) patients of the Salpêtrière into attacks of epilepsy or hysteria. Contemporaries commented on the theatrical qualities of Charcot's lectures. Not only did they consider hysteria and hypnotic manipulation of it partly, if not entirely, a spectacle, Charcot and his staff did too. In fact, Charcot had compiled an extensive photographic almanac of his patients in various stages of attack, the *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*.[24]

By 1922, the time of the surrealist sleeping sessions, the somnambulist had been a fixture in the French cultural landscape for over a century and a half. Even though the concept was losing currency in medical discourse, the somnambulist was still a regular and fashionable cultural presence, not least because of the many fin-de-siècle novels that, in the wake of Charcot, detailed the adventures of young (and lovely) women under the spell of evil magnetisers. Somnambulism reached unprecedented popularity by the end of the nineteenth century and became an integral part of (popular) culture.[25] Literary characters soon rivalled real-life somnambulists for celebrity. A famous example is the character of Trilby, who made her debut in the 1894 novel *Trilby* by George du Maurier.[26] This story of a beautiful young woman under the influence of an evil hypnotist, Svengali, immediately struck a chord with audiences and was quickly made into plays and films. Historian Rae Beth Gordon speaks of 'Trilby-mania'; I would argue that this was part of a larger phenomenon extending across the long nineteenth century,

somnambulism-mania.[27] By the turn of the twentieth century performers posing as doctors would magnetise people on stage, and a cultural industry had sprung up in which magic shows, stage spiritualism, stage magnetism and shows of cabaret and dance incorporating hypnotism and hysteria jostled for the public's attention.

Somnambulism-mania spread to cinema in the early decades of the twentieth century, reaching a climax with the 1920 German expressionist film *Das Kabinet des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*). It revolves around a hypnotiser, Caligari, and Césare the somnambulist who commits crimes at his suggestion.[28] The particular expressionistic style of the film's decors was so unique that it came to be called '*le caligarisme*' in France.[29] *Dr. Caligari* is an example of the post-World War One tendency to explore alternate and possibly pathological states of consciousness, such as insanity or the dream, *aesthetically*. Importantly, Surrealism is another example of this tendency to focus on the aesthetic potential of psychiatric phenomena. Indeed, Surrealism in its entirety is not only predicated on the very existence of an alternate state of consciousness – i.e. the unconscious – but specifically upon its creative and therefore aesthetic potential.

Dr. Caligari is possibly the first cinematographic rendering of alterations of consciousness; in this case, first somnambulism, but secondly, madness, as it is revealed that the story's narrator Francis is an inmate of mental institute.[30] The two appear closely linked in the film. This combination of somnambulism and a pathological state such as madness not only foreshadows surrealist developments, but is also indicative of the fact that, by that time, all somnambulisms had become jumbled together in popular somnambulism, with little concern for the differences between stage hypnotism, stage Spiritualism, séance Spiritualism, medical hypnotism, psychiatric ailments or treatments, etc.

The early surrealists were well read in medical literature, admirers of experimental psychiatry, familiar with the practices of Spiritualism, but also well attuned to trends in popular culture. Entering into a 'sleepwalking state' so as to experiment with a certain mind-set appeared therefore only logical. They experimented daily with automatism at this time, and by opting for somnambulism they placed themselves in a long tradition of experimenting with an alternate state – one that had started originally with artificial somnambulism and ranged all the way to psychical research and stage somnambulism in the surrealists' own time. Below, I will discuss the development of psychic automatism and the sleeping sessions in Surrealism. Surrealist psychic automatism was located unequivocally in the mind, the seat of all thoughts, whether conscious or unconscious, rational or

subliminal. Nonetheless, traces of artificial somnambulism's occult and esoteric history were certainly present in the surrealist sleeping sessions and automatism; but, as I will make clear, Breton and his surrealists stripped automatism, research of the psyche and the somnambulist states of the séance of their original occult context, to refashion them into a unique aesthetic surrealist experience.

Surrealism, psychiatry, automatism

Breton studied medicine, specialising in psychiatry. Several textbooks introduced him to the early ideas of Sigmund Freud as well as to the ideas and methods of other trailblazers of the discipline known as dynamic psychiatry – the forerunner of contemporary psychiatry, psychology, psychoanalysis and parapsychology. This included Frenchmen Pierre Janet, Jean-Martin Charcot and Charles Richet, Swiss Théodore Flournoy, American Frederic Myers and British William James.[31] The question which of these psychiatrists has extended the most influence over Breton is an on-going scholarly debate; for all that Freud was most frequently acknowledged by the surrealists themselves, it is clear that especially Janet, Flournoy and Myers, all of whom Breton had read by 1922, left their traces as well.[32] During the First World War Breton trained at various hospitals, such as the psychiatric ward of St. Dizier in Nantes. By the end of the war he moved to the Salpêtrière-la Pitié in Paris, where he trained under Joseph Babinski, a disciple of Charcot.

If Breton had taken his medical degree and continued in psychiatry, he might very well have become 'the founder of a new trend of dynamic psychiatry,' according to eminent historian of psychiatry Ellenberger.[33] Even more so because he was the centre of a group with a similar background, a 'doctor's club' within Surrealism: Louis Aragon had trained in psychiatry as well, Max Ernst had studied psychology in Bonn and Pierre Naville and Philippe Soupault had some background in medicine too.[34] However, Breton and his fellows pursued the practices and theories of dynamic psychiatry to *creative*, primarily literary, ends, and automatism, which they had been introduced to as a therapeutic practice, became an autonomous creative expression in Surrealism.

As is documented in the letters he sent to various renowned doctors, Breton was fascinated by mental states and mental illness.[35] Already at St. Dizier, Breton had been impressed by what he considered the imaginative and original 'fantasies' of shell-shocked soldiers, in particular their ability to fashion 'the most distant relations between ideas, the rarest

verbal alliances.'[36] He considered how to further explore such apparently authentic and wholly original creativity, which was thought to derive from the unconscious. Breton was familiar with the theory of the 'hidden creative self' formulated by Flournoy, a pioneer in dynamic psychiatry.[37] The latter had developed this idea during his extensive research with Swiss medium Hélène Smith (pseud. of Catherine-Élise Müller, 1861-1929), the results of which were published first in 1900.[38] At the time, it was quite common for psychiatrists to work with (self-proclaimed) mediums. While some, such as Pierre Janet several decades earlier, preferred to work with mediums in the institutional setting of the mental hospital, and others created laboratory-like settings, others again, like Flournoy, opted for the setting of the séance. He yearned for a psychology that would 'embrace the whole personality, including its transcendent dimensions', and considered the experimental séance, in which the medium would be so at ease that all dimensions of the personality could be displayed, as a fruitful setting.[39] During the collaboration of Smith and Flournoy, the medium wrote and drew in a dissociated state; she spoke and sang in tongues, related long accounts of past lives and undertook astral journeys. Travelling to what she described as Mars, she took down an alphabet and made drawings of its inhabitants and landscapes.[40] In 1895, Flournoy wrote to William James: 'This woman is a veritable museum of all possible phenomena and has a repertoire of illimitable variety.'[41] To Flournoy, Smith was a 'museum' of *mental* phenomena; in his book *From India to the Planet Mars* he made it very clear that his object of research had been Smith's unconscious – not her spiritualist qualities, much to her subsequent dismay. Confident that he had indeed been able to study 'the whole personality,' Flournoy identified the functions of the unconscious as creative, protective, compensatory and ludic (playful) or mytho-poetic, and illustrated his book with samples of Smith's writings and drawings.[42]

Breton, working from Flournoy's and other psychiatrists' theories, celebrated Smith as a creative automaton. He was in awe of her 'beautiful subliminal poems,' 'subliminal imaginative' romances and 'invented' languages, perhaps made all the more beautiful and certainly authentic because of her lack of any artistic training.[43] Introducing her into the surrealist discourse, he referred to her frequently, reproduced her artistic work and, by 1940, immortalised her as a surrealist heroine by including her in a surrealist deck of cards.[44]

Automatism, or expressions of the subliminal or unconscious, could take various forms and, at least from a medical standpoint, occurred in mediums and patients alike. Hysteria, for instance, was considered an

automatic 'subliminal uprush,' based on the theories of Myers.[45] This was enough of a criterion to reinvent it as a creative act in Surrealism. In the 1920s, when it had become obsolete as a medical condition, Breton and Aragon celebrated it as poetical expression: 'Hysteria is not a pathological phenomenon and may in all respects be considered as a supreme means of expression.'[46] The 'dismemberment of the concept appears to be complete,' the authors noted, which allowed them to divest the concept of pathology, insist that it existed independently from the medical establishment, and grant it aesthetic rebirth as a poetical performance.[47] They illustrated their essay with photographs of hysterical poses performed by Augustine, one of Charcot's star-patients, taken from the *Iconographie photographique* [plate 2]. Aragon and Breton did more than aestheticise the condition of hysteria; they also elevated the hysteric herself to a new position of (erotic) power. The authors position her as someone undermining and subverting patriarchal order by means of her body, by starring in her own creative performance. This appropriation of an originally medical condition exemplifies, in my opinion, the interaction of early Surrealism with late nineteenth and early twentieth-century psychiatry: relatively knowledgeable about the subjects, familiar with relevant medical and scientific theories and practice and with access to appropriate sources, the surrealists appropriated the ideas and concepts that suited their own practice, for creative ends. They radically reinvented them as art, criticising established medical practices in the process. This is typical of the way many psychiatric phenomena were reconfigured in Surrealism and, in my opinion, were an essential part of the surrealist worldview: expressions of the subliminal, considered to be expressions of unrestrained creativity, in whatever form, means or context, were always framed as poetical.

If the subliminal self was creative, and if automatism seemed the key to unlocking such a self, it was clearly high time for the young surrealists to start experimenting with automatism. Breton quickly found out how easy it was to enter an automatic state. One afternoon in 1919 when on the verge of falling asleep, slumbering one might say, he was suddenly overcome by a poetic insight.[48] The poetic potential of the intermediate state between dreaming and waking, 'that hypnagogic state where scattered words and images occur to the mind,' was revealed to him.[49] Not only did it function as a gateway to the subliminal, it was also available to those of 'normal' mind – such as Breton and his friends, who were not shell-shocked, hysteric, or mentally unbalanced for other reasons, nor spiritualist mediums either.[50] Breton and fellow poet Philippe Soupault immediately decided to 'voluntarily re-create in [themselves] the state in which [such words and images]

2. 'Les attitudes passionelles', La Révolution Surréaliste 11 (1928).

took form': 'all [they] had to do was shut out the external world,' and when thus suspended in an extended moment of almost-falling-asleep, words or sentences sprung to their mind. They wrote quickly and immediately, without apparent thought or pause for re-reading or editing (or so it was declared later).[51] The first surrealist experiments with automatic writing were a fact. The tangible result was *The Magnetic Fields* (1920), a composition consisting entirely of automatic writing. It is a milestone in surrealist exploration of automatic writing – in fact, a milestone of automatic writing in modern literature generally.[52] In the writing of *The Magnetic Fields*, said Aragon, 'Surrealism was invented. The thing itself. Not the word.'[53]

That 'thing itself' was creative automatism, or 'pure psychic automatism' as Breton would dub it in his famous definition a few years later. Automatic writing specifically became the quintessential surrealist practice. Breton and Soupault were both poets, and accordingly their dissociated state yielded *words* and *sentences* that they captured in *writing*. Just as important is that Breton connected surrealist subliminal creativity to a state related to sleeping from the outset. Shutting out the external world by closing one's eyes was the means to enter into an intermediate state located between dreaming and waking; as a symbolic act, it signifies turning inward and opening one's *inner* eyes upon a landscape of dreams or the imagination. While the surrealists inherited this notion from their romantic and symbolist predecessors, it was their own idea that the inner landscape would be one akin to that of mental patients.

The sleeping sessions: Lucid dreaming

The Magnetic Fields was only the beginning. With the surrealist interest in Freud and dreams as gateways to one's subconscious, the experiments with automatism were quickly broadened to include dream-work too; indeed, dreaming came to dominate the early surrealist discourse so much that Ellenberger speaks of an 'oneiric climate' in Surrealism.[54] I argue that this climate proved the impetus for the sleeping sessions; that is, for the exploration of a particular mental state akin to dreaming. Early Surrealism's focus upon dreams was fuelled by Max Ernst, who had joined the (proto-) surrealist collective just before the time of slumbers and who was deeply involved in dream-work. A graduate in psychology and philosophy, besides art, and very interested in the psychoanalytical theories of Freud – whom he could read in the German original, unlike the French surrealists – and others in psychiatry, Ernst practised a form of auto-psychoanalysis. He

studied his dreams and used them as a departure point for his art.[55] Ernst found himself faced with a specific problem: how to truly recapture a dream upon waking? The issue also worried Breton and many others too. They primarily tried to capture the pure automatic hallucination of dreams by dream description afterwards; but, as Breton lamented, this was an unreliable method as memory negatively influenced such narration – not to mention revision, editing or other interventions on the writer's part.[56]

Dawn Ades has suggested that in response to this problem the group may well have turned to the practice of the sleeping sessions as an exploration of the creative unconscious that was direct and instantaneous, i.e. unedited or undistorted; I agree.[57] Furthermore, I would specify that, in fact, they were trying to *dream lucidly*.[58] Psychiatry had differentiated between passive sensory automatism, such as dreaming or hallucination, and active motor automatism, such as writing or walking. By combining sensory (dreaming) and motor automatism (speaking or writing), the surrealists were attempting to give a 'live' account of the hallucinatory state of dreaming. In view of that, the sleeping sessions should not be considered just another form of experimentation with automatism, but rather a directed and serious effort to explore the specific automatic state of dreaming directly and verbally. This is borne out by the fact that terms such as 'sleep,' 'slumber' and 'dream' abound in the descriptions of the sessions by Aragon and Breton. Aragon's essay is purposefully entitled 'A Wave of *Dreams*.' Those who were entranced during the sessions are called 'dreamers.'[59] Throughout Breton's 'The Mediums Enter' we find an emphasis upon sleeping and on its opposite, waking, too. The anecdote about Breton being overcome by a poetic insight when almost falling asleep, the first surrealist automatic state that eventually led to *The Magnetic Fields*, precedes the actual account of the sleeping sessions, and thereby not only embeds the whole narrative of those sessions in a larger discourse on sleeping, slumbering, dreaming, and dream-narration, but also explicitly links it to earlier automatic experimentation and automatic writing specifically. The sleeping sessions represent the next experimental step. Breton may have mastered the art of writing down the dream without editing, Aragon wrote, but during the sleeping sessions Desnos mastered the art of *dreaming without sleeping*. '[H]e contrives to speak his dreams at will.'[60] That is the objective of the sleeping sessions: speaking your dreams. It squares with the definition of Surrealism Breton provided in 1923: Surrealism is the term that designates 'a certain psychic automatism that corresponds rather well to the dream state.'[61]

The spoken dream represents a form of uncensored pure thought, a unique surrealist form of automatism that is practiced with eyes closed

but not asleep, accessed by means of a slumbering state. This is almost as close to the surreal as one can get: 'Desnos speaks surrealist as will,' Breton wrote, admiringly.[62] There is no doubt that speaking while aslumber was considered an automatic act; it was another of Myers' 'subliminal uprushes;' namely, 'utterances of spontaneous trance.'[63] Without a doubt, it was also a poetical act – within this context of young poets everything involving words is potentially literature – and in 'The Mediums Enter' Breton called automatism a 'magic dictation.'[64] Pure thought itself dictates. Not to be limited to automatic speaking only, during the sessions the entranced person would be given pencil and paper almost every time, to facilitate automatic writing and drawing.

A further impetus for the sleeping sessions may have been the presence of somnambulism in popular culture, discussed above. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* reached Paris just before the onset of the time of slumbers and the film surely impressed the surrealists on many accounts.[65] Furthermore, the surrealists were familiar with other forms of somnambulism – all developed out of artificial somnambulism, as I have detailed above – too. They were well aware of contemporary practices of Spiritualism and psychical research, as will be discussed below. Last, but not least, they had had their taste of popular stage-practices of somnambulism too; just days before the first sleeping session, for example, Breton and Desnos had publicly debunked two alleged stage-hypnotisers as frauds.[66] In other words, in 1922 dreaming, sleepwalking and sleepwalkers were very much part of their frame of reference and perhaps their daily world. Somnambulism, with its medical, literary, artistic and pop culture roots, may have seemed the obvious way to proceed.

In Surrealism, to sum up, automatism was divested of its medical framework. It served the (proto-) surrealists in an artistic – initially, chiefly literary – capacity, something exemplified by *The Magnetic Fields*, which was, after all, published as avant-garde poetry. *The Magnetic Fields* further testifies to the fact that the surrealists easily moved between automatisms Myers had defined as sensory and passive – a hypnagogic moment, for instance, or a hallucination – and motoric and active, such as automatic writing.[67] Even more distinctive is that, in Surrealism, automatic acts are typically followed up with conscious, i.e. rational and wilful, action. Not only was *The Magnetic Fields* written, it was also published, which requires a certain amount of editing even if minimal. This twofold combination of, firstly, passive with active automatism, and secondly, automatism with conscious action, was rather uncommon in dynamic psychiatry and can be taken as typically surrealist. The surrealists explored many forms of automatism, as we will see, and in each case we find this combination of

passive with active and automatic with conscious. The dream, too, was an automatic (and passive, sensory and hallucinatory) state. While awake and rational, the surrealists would write down those dreams, recount them to others and even publish them. Many of the automatic events of the sleeping sessions were written down too, first in transcript and subsequently in the condensed (and romanticised) essays the 'Wave of Dreams' and 'The Mediums Enter', in turn published in surrealist journals. As the 1920s progressed, the surrealists would begin to automatically create (visual) art, which was reproduced in publications, exhibited or otherwise made public. In other words, the very practice of automatism was embedded in a rational context of planning and publicising. Again, this is a distinctive surrealist practice and indicative of the fact that automatism and its creative products were strategically employed in an artistic discourse, as strategies of distinction.

The sleeping sessions: The psychical research-connection

Lucid dreaming might be practised in many a setting. The group opted, however, for a very specific one; namely, the séance-like setting. This was primarily inspired, I argue, by contemporary psychodynamic practices and grounded upon the understanding of Surrealism as an experimental and (semi-)scientific undertaking. Surrealism was a mode of research.[68] There is no doubt that experimentation was on their mind, something Aragon made clear at the time and which scholars have emphasised.[69] As far as Breton was concerned surrealist psychic experimentation, that is with the mind and its subliminal states, had started in 1919 with *The Magnetic Fields*. He had sent Freud an inscribed copy of it, writing that he considered himself and Freud 'fellow explorers of the hidden mind.'[70] He was committed to pursuing his goals by means of experimentation and research: unlocking the hidden mind could only lead to uncovering new sources of literary and artistic inspiration. Now, by the onset of the time of slumbers, early Surrealism was surrounded by successful and inspirational examples of scientific experimental investigations of the 'hidden mind': the experimental séances of psychical research.

In 1920, Charles Richet had founded the Institut Métapsychique in Paris, where experimental séances were carried out.[71] In his 1922 best seller *Traité de métapsychique*, Richet reported on his experiments with the famous medium 'Eva C.,' best known for her manifestations of ectoplasm.[72] Breton certainly read Richet's *Traité* and appropriated his term 'métapsychique' and seminal concept of *cryptesthesia* for Surrealism.[73] He also attended

sessions at the Institute (although this is documented for 1927 only).[74] Scattered comments show that the surrealists were certainly familiar with the term ectoplasm and probably also with the experimental practices that generated it.[75] In addition to Richet's interesting experiments, studies such as Flournoy's suggested that experimental séances yielded the best creative results, resulting not only in creative, but also ludic and mytho-poetic explorations of the hidden self, which I assume must have appealed to the group, for whom games were already a daily staple.[76] If these important and innovative psychologists found the laboratory much too limiting for studying 'the whole personality' and resorted to the experimental séance, it only stood to reason that the surrealists – rather more keen on new and/or controversial science than traditional scientific avenues anyway – would do the same. They upheld the superficial trappings of the spiritualist séance, and the sessions took place in the quintessential locale of the séance, the home (in this case of the Bretons and the Éluards). Lights were dimmed, hands were held, etc.; such were the 'conditions necessary for such [automatic] phenomena,' apparently.[77] Breton called these conditions 'imbecilic,'[78] but even so they worked; very quickly the experimental surrealist séances led to psychic success – not psychic in a spiritualist sense, but psychic automatic in a surrealist sense. Desnos claimed to have established telepathic contact with Duchamp in New York, and presented poems and spoonerisms as if by Duchamp's alter-ego Rrose. The phenomena the sleeping session brought forth were 'words organised into a discourse,' according to Breton – and, added Aragon, 'equations' and 'facts' 'human reason can't work out.'[79] Literary expressions of irrational origin, in other words.

A few scholars have a different take on the spiritualist trappings and on the events that occurred. Yvonne Duplessis and Jean Clair, for instance, have focused on the prophetic clairvoyance and telepathy on the part of Desnos and the possibility of their veracity.[80] The surrealists themselves, however, and Breton certainly, did not take Desnos' predictions seriously at all, but instead appreciated them as part of the process of creative expression.[81] Years later it appeared that a few remarks had turned out to be prophetic after all; their marvellous and clairvoyant character was celebrated, but only retrospectively. As will be shown in Chapter Three, prophets could be hailed in Surrealism only after the fact, as the realm of 'the marvellous' whence such predictions spring is of a secular nature and, therefore, never supernatural, although always super-real. Meanwhile, Desnos' spoonerisms were appreciated for their inventiveness and his attribution of them to Rrose was treated as the joke (telepathic contact with an alter-ego) it was.[82] Polizzotti has argued that Desnos might have opted for apparent telepathic

contact with such an esteemed and living predecessor as Duchamp in an attempt to best Crevel, with whom he was embroiled in a rivalry of entranced feats.[83] Another argument, put forward by Katherine Conley, is that Desnos' appropriation of a specifically *female* alter-ego may have been a way to deal with his increasing investment in something traditionally considered a feminine pursuit; namely, automatism.[84] I find both explanations probable and mutually inclusive. Conley has further pointed out that Desnos may also have been reacting to the uncanny technology of the radio, which was just being introduced in Paris at the time. He claimed to hear Duchamp's voice and contact was only possible if Duchamp was 'wide awake;'[85] it may well be that he acted as if a radio's microphone to Duchamp/Rrose's voice speaking on the air.[86] There seems to be a parallel here with Spiritualism, which was also partly predicated upon the perception of technological inventions as uncanny. It remains on the surface, however; no surrealist took Desnos' 'contact' for actual telepathy; and this episode aside, no other surrealist dreamer ever claimed to communicate with anyone other than themselves – or rather, their subliminal.

Still, clearly the sleeping sessions are, nonetheless, partly indebted to Spiritualism. 'Necessary conditions' and such aside, René Crevel, the instigator of the experiment's form, had been 'initiated' by a spiritualist medium and used this knowledge in arraying the sleeping séances. Spiritualism had been enjoying a renewed and widespread popularity in France after the First World War and it is very probable that other surrealists besides Crevel also had some familiarity with it. Many surrealists, Breton foremost among them, visited the parlour of a clairvoyant, a certain Mme Sacco. While these visits started in 1925, it may well be that some of them were acquainted with mediums and clairvoyants earlier. As I will argue in the following chapter, Mme Sacco was not visited for her knowledge of the future, but rather for her imaginative predictions; that is, for the fantasies of her hidden mind. Again, the mediumistic setting served literary ends.[87]

The practice of automatic writing is also a bone of contention; the aforementioned Clair considers it an essentially spiritualist practice and capitalises on its pre-eminent position in Surrealism to accuse the movement of 'salon Spiritualism.'[88] On the other side of the spectrum we find Ellenberger, who insists that the surrealist 'technique of automatic writing had nothing in common with that of the spiritualists.'[89] Many art historians share his position and usually a psychodynamic origin is provided for automatic writing. While that is certainly correct, it is also true that automatic writing as such did originate in spiritualist circles, whence Janet appropriated it for psychiatry. Accordingly, psychiatric automatism

and spiritualist automatism are, in fact, related and do have something in common: the assumption that the one doing the writing is not in their normal state – although opinions differ with regards to the particularities of that state. At one point, Breton would state, accurately enough, that surrealist automatism was 'inherited from the mediums.'[90] It was. Surrealism inherited it from dynamic psychiatrists such as Myers, Flournoy, Richet and Janet, who all carried out a large part of their research with people who considered themselves, and were known to others including the doctors, as mediums. Hence, the title of Breton's essay documenting the sleeping sessions: 'The Mediums Enter.' In his opinion, Desnos, Crevel and others had really tried to emulate mediums – those of Flournoy (in the séance) and of Janet (in the psych ward), that is. Those authors who are keen to use Breton's statement to establish associations between Surrealism and occultism are right, too;[91] but, it is a second-hand connection, as the automatic writing of spiritualists and spiritual mesmerists arrived in Surrealism only mediated by dynamic psychiatry.

What it comes down to is that the surrealists made use of certain 'spiritualist techniques while abandoning all expectations about content.'[92] In my opinion, this distinction between technique and content – or belief – is essential, and one should not mistake a practice for a belief, nor treat mediums in Spiritualism and those in experimental psychiatry as all alike. One can see why this might happen; in the psychodynamic séance, the boundaries between Spiritualism, metaphysics, parapsychology and science were often blurred. Early Surrealism, in turn, blurred dynamic psychiatry, its experimental séances, notions of the 'hidden creative self,' explorations of somnambulist states and automatic experiments with dreaming, and some trappings of Spiritualism. All of this does not detract from the fact that surrealist automatism was always a fundamentally creative literary practice anchored in a secular here and now.

Surrealist psychical research

Lucid dreaming was just one form of psychic automatism. Surrealist psychic automatism, I argue, should be considered an investigative field, modelled upon dynamic psychiatry generally and, in particular, upon psychical research carried out by dynamic psychiatrists. Indeed, the early surrealists created their own form of psychical research experiments. They departed from psychodynamic practices in a variety of ways, primarily by focusing upon unchained creativity, rather than therapy. Bretonian surrealists

considered their pursuits a parallel to psychical-psychiatric research, and themselves 'fellow-explorers' to Myers, Flournoy and Richet as well as Freud. The adjective 'psychic' derives from psychical research.[93] It should be noted that the modern scholarly division between parapsychology, on the one hand, and psychology and psychiatry, on the other, is a construction that did not exist for Breton, who considered them all one discipline concerned with the mind – as he was too.

The surrealist efforts to create a proper investigative field of their own reached full fruition a year after the time of slumbers. 11 October 1924, just days before the first *Manifesto* of Surrealism was to be published, the Bureau of Surrealist Research (BRS) opened its doors at 15, Rue de Grenelle, Paris. It was to be at once office of the fledgling movement, meeting place of members, ticket window for interested parties and location for surrealist experiments with automatism. Bertrand Méheust argues that the Bureau of Surrealist Research was modelled directly on the Institut Métapsychique of Richet, which I find convincing enough.[94] Certainly, the BRS functioned as a sort of experimental research facility: experiments with automatic writing were taken down in a logbook, dreams were recounted and plans were made. The Bureau, it was declared in the press, was to be engaged in

> collecting by all appropriate means communications concerning
> the diverse forms taken by the mind's unconscious activity [*l'activité
> inconsciente de l'esprit*]. No specific field has been defined for this
> project and surrealism plans to assemble as much experimental data
> as possible, without knowing yet what the end result might be.[95]

The statement confirms that, at least at this stage, Surrealism was concerned with 'the mind's unconscious activity.' It should be noted that surrealist terminology is somewhat fluid; 'the hidden mind' and 'the hidden self' are also current, but all point to the same: exploration of the alternate consciousness expressed via automatism. The declaration of the BRS also testifies to Surrealism's twofold attitude towards science; on the one hand, the surrealists wanted to collect 'experimental data,' as is proper to science, on the other, the unwillingness to define a 'specific field' and the declaration of an open-ended result represent a significant departure from traditional scientific practice. Moreover, they were remarkably democratic about their data: the BRS specifically aimed at collecting communications from the public at large, which was invited to contribute accounts of dreams, for instance.[96] In contrast to psychodynamic practice, and more in conformity

with Spiritualism, anyone and everyone could, in theory, provide informa-
tion of possible value.

They documented their experiments and published the results. To this
end, they founded their own journal, *La Révolution Surréaliste* (1924-29),
another embodiment of their scientific aspirations and much longer lived
than the Bureau itself. Explicitly modelled upon scientific reviews such as
Nature, rigidly laid out in columns and featuring only a few illustrations
and photographs, it was distinctly different from other art journals of the
time. A good part of the journal's content can be read as reports of research
in progress: written recitations of dreams (under the heading 'surrealist
text'), experiments with automatic writing, questionnaires and reports on
other surrealist experiments and group activities.[97] In a similar vein, Breton's
essay 'The Mediums Enter' in *Littérature* had documented the successes
and dangers of the sleeping sessions and served further to point out that
the surrealists took their explorations of all forms and states of automatism
very seriously, and were willing to try many approaches. For good measure,
a sleeping session was restaged at the Bureau and photographed by Man Ray;
the photograph, in turn, was reproduced on the cover of the first issue of *La
Révolution Surréaliste*, 1924 [plate 3, right-hand photograph]. On a certain
level, this photograph is just like those that were sometimes taken by psychi-
cal researchers at séances with spiritualist mediums: 'objective evidence,'
predicated upon the assumption that a camera is an objective instrument.[98]
We see Simone Kahn centre stage, transcribing verbatim all that transpired
on a typewriter. The typewriter functions as the equivalent of levitating
furniture or ectoplasm: proof that something really special happened, in this
case, authentic poetry, recited live in the instant of creation and immediately
'objectively' documented. It is important to note that this photograph does
not document an actual session, but only a restaged one, made after the actual
sessions had already ended. It is a performance that served to emphasise the
experimental nature of surrealist automatism to third parties.

As a method of research, I find that psychic automatism was furthermore
considered automatic in the sense of mechanical and, as a result, not just
objective but beyond concerns such as morals or aesthetics. As said earlier,
psychic automatism is a creative expression in itself, as well as a strategy
to attack rationalism and bourgeois society. Not too long after the sessions,
Breton made the point that the surrealist poet should be like a device:
'simple receptacles of so many echoes' or 'modest recording instruments.'
As such, the surrealist would be 'without talent.'[99] Desnos, acting as a radio
to the talented Duchamp/Rrose, fits this objective to be an untalented
instrument. 'Modest instruments' paraphrases a contemporary psychiatric

handbook,[100] but also Hélène Smith, who had referred to herself as a 'modest instrument' in Flournoy's glory.[101] Within Spiritualism, mediums were also considered instruments, which all goes back to artificial somnambulistic practices where the somnambulist had already been positioned sometimes as if an instrument.[102] The construction of humans as instruments touches upon deep Freudian anxieties over the uncanny nature of machines, where machines (automata in particular) appear to be animate, while human beings act as machines. Human automatism raised moral, ethical and judicial issues of responsibility, which were only compounded with the advent of hypnosis and the – publicly demonstrated – full mental control of doctors over patients.[103] In a long footnote in his *Manifesto*, Breton showed awareness of these 'medico-legal considerations' on the question of whether an automatist can be held responsible for their actions or not.[104] In line with the reasoning that surrealists have no talent, they should, obviously, *not* be held accountable for their psychical automatic acts either.[105] Responsibility for one's acts is only another bourgeois construction.

(Auto-)suggestion and the conflation of subject and object

Surrealist experimentation with automatism differs in a few essential aspects from the practices of earlier forms of artificial somnambulism; primarily in the objective, which was creative rather than therapeutic, communicative, revelatory or entertaining. There are two further differences: the rapport and the veracity of the particular alternate state. The significant changes the surrealists made to extant practices illustrate, I think, the creative objective of the sleeping sessions, in particular, and of psychical automatism in general. They radically reinvented the power-balance of the rapport in such a way as to create something new, unique and wholly surrealist. This fits well with the radical character of the sessions overall; while none of the individual components is original to Surrealism, but rather adapted from extant practices, together they were turned into a quite particular – and inherently surrealist – experimental séance of poetical lucid dreaming.

A first break with the rapport is the surrealist reliance upon the democracy of the collective and the uniqueness of the individual at the same time. The surrealists' non-conformity to traditional gender divisions, emphasis on group activity and belief in each individual's potential led to a series of séances in which, in principle, each and every one could become a dreamer: female or male, regular or incidental attendant, well-educated or less so,

surrealists or guest. All have a creative hidden self. We find here a parallel
with the spiritualist understanding that communication with the other
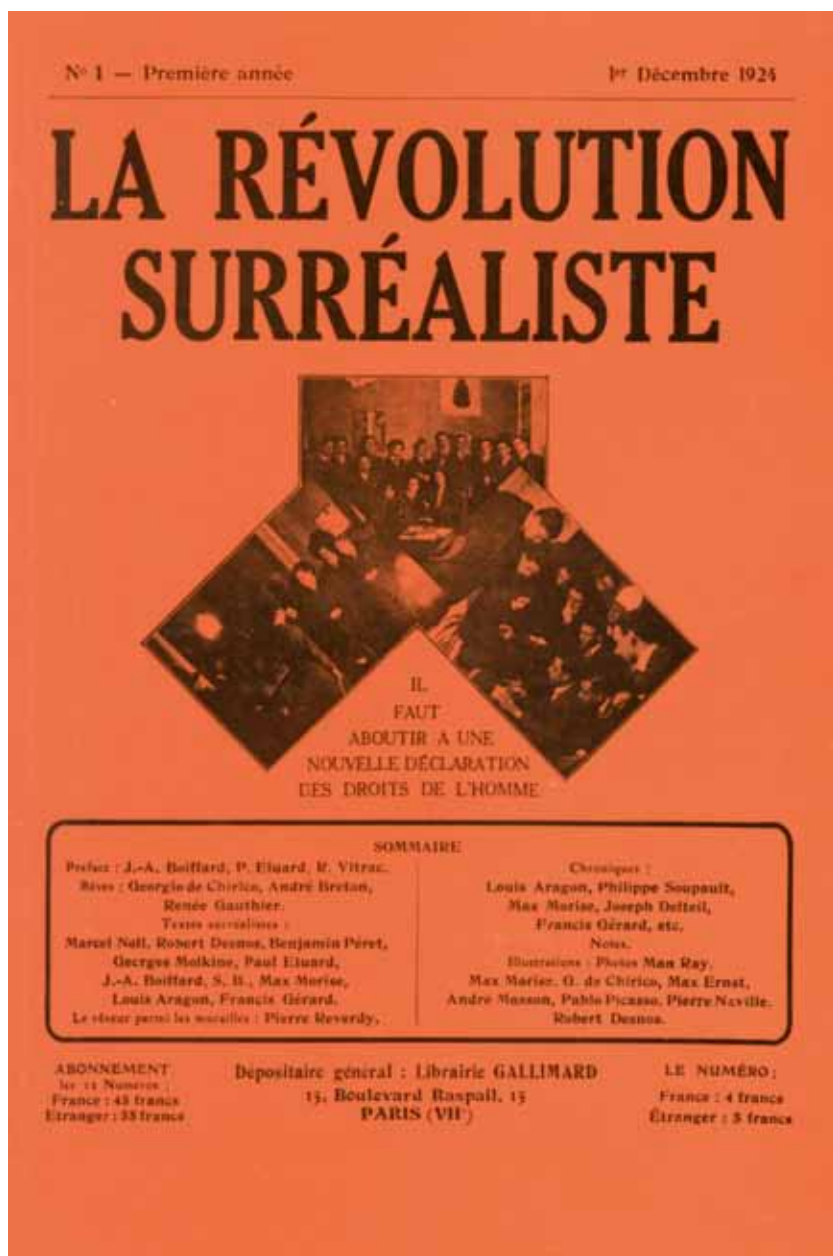
3. *Cover of* La Révolution Surréaliste *1, 1924.*

side is, in principle, possible for all. Likewise, both the spiritualist and surrealist séance depended upon the collective and shared enthusiasm for the procedures and possible outcome.[106]

Further typical for the surrealist rapport is that there is none – or at least, this is suggested by some scholars, who, in line with Dawn Ades, consider the 'hypnotic trances' 'self-induced' or otherwise caused by (partial or complete) autohypnosis.[107] This autohypnosis theory is, however, undermined by those who ascribe a 'mesmerising personality' to Breton. In the context of the history of artificial somnambulism, 'mesmerising' clearly indicates active agency; Breton was the hypnotiser, apparently, albeit perhaps unwittingly. I certainly acknowledge that emotional or psychological dependency upon Breton on the part of some may well have played a part in their willingness to participate, ability to slip into trance, actions performed while entranced, and/or willingness to simulate. Breton had a forceful personality and his *présence* should be recognised, and it is quite possible that a mild form of rapport existed between Breton and Crevel and/or Desnos, in particular.[108] Dumas compares Desnos to Augustine; both performed to please a domineering male father figure (Breton and Charcot, respectively) and both their performances were captured on camera. Desnos was photographed aslumber multiple times by Man Ray, and these photographs were published in various surrealist sources throughout the 1920s; while photographs of Augustine were reproduced in *La Révolution Surréaliste* [plate 2] and thereby explicitly claimed for Surrealism. Embedded within an artistic discourse as they were, the actions of Augustine and Desnos both became reified as poetical performances, thereby nullifying any possible original intentions the two might have had.[109] Desnos-as-Augustine makes of Breton a Charcot, and it is quite possible that Breton's encouragement of Desnos operated as suggestion (as was the case with Augustine), inciting Desnos to continuously develop or even embellish his sleeping states.

An even better parallel can be drawn with the Smith-Flournoy case, with Breton acting as the constantly impressed Flournoy to Desnos' Hélène Smith. Breton made Desnos essential to his surrealist undertaking by stating that he (alone) 'spoke surrealist' and that 'more than any of us... [Desnos] perhaps got closest to the surrealist truth.'[110] While that is no small praise, it is no mean burden to bear either. Breton reported on all Desnos' actions and always maintained a detached and 'scientific' position, similar to that of Flournoy (or Richet or Janet, for that matter), never crossing the line into entering trances himself, but constantly depending upon Desnos to take it to even further (creative) lengths – at the cost of Desnos' stability of mind. When Flournoy had gathered enough material, he ended his visits to

Smith's séances; similarly, when Breton had been sufficiently amazed and the experiments were breaking through the limits of acceptable behaviour (even for *avant-gardistes*), he ended the sessions. As far as he was concerned, this particular experimental phase had been successful and was now over, regardless of the fact that Desnos, for one, still wanted to continue. Taking the position of the rational well intentioned doctor, Breton decided unilaterally to protect Desnos from himself.[111] Still, whatever their rapport, that is not sufficient to turn Breton into a Svengali. Besides, incidental guests who were hardly emotionally dependent upon Breton, such as Man Ray's girlfriend Kiki, also entered sleeping states. More to the point, the Breton couple went on a holiday for a couple of weeks while the sessions continued at Éluard's home.[112] Breton may have (unwittingly) exercised a degree of suggestion upon one or a few individual(s), but only sometimes. Furthermore, Desnos could eventually dispense with the 'necessary conditions': near the end of the time of slumbers he could enter a sleeping state everywhere, even in noisy cafés, independently of whether Breton was there or not.[113] Autosuggestion seems probable, the more so when taking into account that, in line with medical opinion, the surrealists may well have thought that Smith also auto-hypnotised, emulating her in that way too.[114]

The most important characteristic of the surrealist non-rapport is that the surrealists claimed direction of their own unconscious. In another departure from psychodynamic practice as well as artificial somnambulism and mesmerism, experiments were carried out with *oneself*, rather than a second party. Through autosuggestion, the surrealist dreamer became researcher and object of research in one, object and subject united. Primed by their Dada-days to reject all forms of authority and committed to upsetting, forcibly if need be, bourgeois order, there was no question they would implement such an old-fashioned and hierarchical power relation as the rapport. No one controlled their unconscious but themselves. The dreamers initiated, directed and experienced their own trance – and generally reaped the benefits of it and credit with their artistic peers, too.[115]

This integration of subject and object can be considered one of Surrealism's main objectives, which I will explore further in the following chapters. The early experiments with psychic automatism paved the way and, even though surrealist somnambulism came to an end, it had still been proven possible. In merging object and subject as they did, the surrealists transgressed traditional models going back at least to the Enlightenment. It was distinctly at odds with the established practice in medicine, indeed in science, of separating rational from irrational, consciousness from the unconscious, doctor from patient, sane from pathological, researcher from object. Not so

for the early surrealists, who could create from their unconscious one mo-
ment and discuss it consciously and rationally the next. Psychic automatism,
in Surrealism, means total ownership of one's own 'hidden creative self.'
Avenging in a way all the patients and somnambulists who had had to submit
their consciousness to the Charcots and Puységurs, Surrealism made every
automatic word and act an individual creative expression of poetry. Janet
had considered 'all manifestations of a second self' a degradation of normal
mental activity;[116] half a century later, Surrealism designated normal mental
activity the dead end and emancipated the automatic manifestations of the
alternate self as personal, relevant and creative.

Surrealism also flouted that most essential of dualistic models, male
versus female. The unconscious, the irrational, somnambulist (alternate)
states, mediumship, etc.; all of these had, since the eighteenth century, been
associated nearly exclusively with *femininity*, whereas the role of the con-
scious and rational doctor/researcher/hypnotist had been exclusively male.
Automatic writing was considered a feminine practice, while intellectual
pursuits such as 'serious' (read: literary) writing was a masculine pursuit.
Surrealism's dedication to automatic techniques entailed a significant break
with gendered tradition, while the aim of integrating the observed and the
observer, and the unconscious and consciousness, is an even more radical
transgression of gendered categories.[117] Breton and Aragon's wartime experi-
ence with shell-shocked soldiers may have contributed to their willingness to
pursue 'feminine' practices, as such 'hysterical' men had shown them that the
gender boundary of hysteria could be crossed, and that 'hysterical delusions'
of men could be just as poetic and innovative as those of women.[118] Still, the
surrealists were hardly paragons of women's emancipation – on the contrary,
in most cases. They appropriated a 'feminine' practice for themselves *as men*.
They would do the same two decades later too, when the magical powers of
the (female) witch were assumed by the (male) surrealist magician.

However, speaking one's dreams within the collective setting of the
group made the dreamers into performers, and the others the audience.
It is important to note that this dual opposition between performer and
audience remained more or less intact. Breton, someone who never entered
a sleeping state, was part of that audience, another sign that rather than the
magnetiser, he *was* mesmerised, along with everyone else. The dreamers
held the reins of power during the time of slumbers; 'dazed and broken' after
a session, the participants could still not think of anything else than 'putting
[themselves] back in that catastrophic atmosphere.'[119] This squares with the
popular cultural notion of the time that stage performers such as musicians,
and visual artists such as the cinematographer in particular, were thought

to influence the consciousness of their audiences.[120] Without a doubt, the surrealists enjoyed this idea that they might influence the consciousness of others through poetic performance. They were highly aware of the value of performance, not only as poetical inspiration, but also a strategy of distinction in the intellectual field. The restaged sleeping sessions at the BRS and their subsequent publication in print and photographs, showing off their artistic originality as well as their scientific approach, testifies to such awareness. It further shows that the positions of performer and audience were fluid: an audience of Desnos in one instance, they changed to a collectively performing group for the benefit of non-surrealists in another.

Simulation and the reality of thought

The third and final essential difference between surrealist somnambulism and automatism, on the one hand, and disciplines such as psychical research and dynamic psychiatry, on the other, is the veracity of the trance states. The entire discipline of psychical research revolves around the idea that the metaphysical claims of Spiritualism, for instance, can and should be scientifically tested and verified. Likewise, the question of simulation had dogged the medical practice of hypnosis from the outset and led many dynamic psychiatrists to disavow hysteria in the first two decades of the twentieth century.[121] But the surrealist consideration of the mental states was different, and again supported their fundamentally creative conception of automatism. Some scholars have cast doubt upon the reality of the sleeping states, claiming that certain participants of the sessions simulated them for Breton's benefit, as some former participants indicated years later.[122] The sessions did turn very quickly into a notable struggle between the two most prodigious dreamers, Desnos and Crevel, which might have been an incentive for simulation, as Polizzotti points out.[123] As he further suggests – convincingly, in my opinion – the trance-states might well have been genuine in the beginning but simulated in part or entirely at a later stage, possibly under the increasing demand for ever more marvellous displays of unconscious creativity.[124]

Still, the 'veracity' of trance-states is, from the surrealist point of view, a rather moot point. Louis Aragon pointed out: 'Is simulating something any different than thinking it? And once something has been thought, it exists.'[125] I find it hardly coincidental that Aragon's recognition of the possibility of simulation and subsequent acknowledgment of it as a genuine experience nonetheless is found in his account of the time of slumbers.

Even while scholars continue to debate the issue of simulation today, the surrealists were aware of the possibility at the time and considered it a creative expression in its own right. I would like to draw a parallel with hysteria here. By the 1920s, hysteria 'was widely regarded within the medical mainstream as a *simulated* illness.'[126] Aragon, Breton and other surrealists would certainly have known the medical opinion of hysteria as simulation.[127] As a poetical performance, however, hysteria is just as much of a creative act when simulated, perhaps even more so.[128] As Man Ray stated of Desnos' performances during the time of slumbers, even *if* those had been 'previously practiced and memorised,' they were 'miraculous' still.[129] Precisely because automatism is pure thought, and simulation is such thought too, unmediated by such things as 'talent,' 'morals,' 'aesthetics' or 'responsibility,' it is creative and valuable.

A couple of years later, Éluard and Breton put the principle that simulation is still thought and, therefore, of (possible) poetic value to the test. During long sessions of automatic writing they simulated the following mental illnesses, in order: 'mental debility,' 'acute mania,' 'general paralysis,' 'interpretive delirium' and 'dementia praecox.' The result was included in the automatic novel *The Immaculate Conception* (1930), in a section entitled 'The possessions.'[130] Note that the authors are the *possessors*, rather than the possessed. William James had referred to 'mediumistic possession' as a 'perfectly natural special type of alternate personality,' where the possession is passively experienced.[131] Surrealism practiced *active* 'poetical possession,' the mechanism to turn pathological phenomena into aesthetic expressions. With the literary results of the 'possessions,' Breton and Éluard proved that 'the mind of a normal person when poetically primed is capable of reproducing the main features of the most paradoxical and eccentric verbal expressions and that it is possible for such a mind to assume at will the characteristic ideas of delirium without suffering any lasting disturbance [...].'[132]

Scholars may debate whether the simulated illnesses yielded only mere pastiches;[133] as far as the surrealists were concerned, mental illness was a gateway to poetry, in just the same way as hysteria, lucid dreaming and automatic writing were.[134] Those are, after all, just different forms of Myers' 'subliminal uprushes,' and the avenue of experimentation with psychic automatism that had started with *The Magnetic Fields* reached a new landmark in *The Immaculate Conception*. Surrealist experimentation had started with the practice of automatic writing only, had moved on to experiment with further techniques – automatic speaking and lucid dreaming – and a particular state of mind – somnambulism – during the time of slumbers, to

arrive at the full blown assumption, albeit temporary, of madness. Psychic automatism really mined the psyche for all its poetic worth. And surrealist minds are 'poetically primed' and also normal (importantly enough), as Breton and Éluard claimed; unfortunate side-effects such as actual madness or hospitalisation are avoided.[135] Simulation is a useful mental process in this regard. By validating simulation as thought, and therefore potentially equally creative as other thought processes, they rejected psychiatry's pathologisation of the psyche, stage-somnambulism's pitfalls as well as the traditional artistic emphasis upon academic training and the particular personality of the mind, while stressing that pure thought alone was their touchstone. The new genre was psychic automatism, or 'the dictation of pure thought': automatically generated and thought-based. Once thought, something is real; once expressed, it is surreal(alistic).

In the end, the surrealist sleeping sessions were an investigation of lucid dreaming under the aegis of surrealist psychic automatism, Surrealism's own creative somnambulism. Psychic automatism in Surrealism is an investigation of the creative unconscious. It can be considered the surrealist equivalent of '*le caligarisme*': an aesthetic form expressing alternations of consciousness. It was based on the premises that pure unmediated thought is authentic and original and thereby the best departure point for art, that the subliminal self is the locus of pure thought, and that automatism is the best way to access it experimentally. The automatic techniques through which psychic automatism is expressed were manifold, although automatic writing was the most important one. In creating their sleeping sessions and automatic techniques, the early surrealists based themselves upon various disciplines that all evolved out of artificial somnambulism, including dynamic psychiatry and psychical research, Spiritualism and popular somnambulism. Yet, for all that, psychic automatism went far beyond therapeutic, pathological, psychiatric, scientific and certainly metaphysical aims.

2.   The Period of Reason: Mediums and seers

Introduction: Nadja

One day in October 1926, André Breton was walking the streets of Paris. He encountered a woman:

> Suddenly, perhaps still ten feet away, I saw a young, poorly dressed woman walking towards me, she had noticed me too, or perhaps had been watching me for several moments. [...] She was curiously made up, as though beginning with her eyes, she had not had time to finish, though the rims of her eyes were dark for a blonde, the rims only, and not the lids [...] I had never seen such eyes. Without a moment's hesitation, I spoke to this unknown woman, though I must admit that I expected the worst. [...] I took a better look at her. What was so extraordinary about what was happening in those eyes?[1]

Compelled by those extraordinary eyes, Breton accosted this woman whom he would call Nadja. They started a brief affair. Breton was fascinated by her. Through her, he felt close to the marvellous, that quintessential yet so ephemeral something Surrealism was always after. After several weeks her glamour faded, however, and the affair ended badly. Less than a year later, the person upon whom the character of Nadja was based, Léona Delcourt (1902-1941), was institutionalised in a mental hospital, while Breton, for his part, had published *Nadja*, a semi-documentary pseudo-autobiographical novel that appears to document their affair.[2]

Nadja is a complex book; here I will briefly recap selected elements from the story of the affair (only one part of the novel's multi-layered narrative). Around a third of the way into the novel the narrator, André, meets Nadja for the first time. During the second meeting on the next day, Nadja states that she 'sees' André's home, seeing – correctly, the author assures us – that his wife is a brunette and has two pets.[3] On their third encounter, Nadja tells André of the powers he has over her, of making her think and do what he wants. When they have dinner, she seems to see a crowd of dead people and, subsequently, predicts that a red light will come on behind a certain window. Almost immediately, it does. During a late-night walk, Nadja is petrified by an iron grille in the wall. She wonders if, in a distant past, she

might have been imprisoned as part of Queen Marie-Antoinette's retinue. When they cross the Seine, she sees a flaming hand floating over the water. Arriving in the Garden of the Tuileries near midnight, Nadja describes something André was reading about earlier, astonishing him, as he is sure she could not have known of it.[4] On the fourth day (7 October 1926), a troubled André encounters Nadja not at the agreed time and place but on the street by chance. This had happened the day before as well, and 'it is apparent', the author writes, 'that she is at my mercy': their encounters seem unavoidable, perhaps even providential.[5] On 10 October, they have dinner and it appears as if Nadja influences people and events around her, making the waiter spill wine and drop plates. 'She knows her powers over certain men,' the author remarks.[6] Later, when they are out walking once again, she distraughtly tells André that he will write a book about her (and obviously, from our side of the story as readers, we know that this prediction will come true). On 12 October, Nadja gives André some of her automatic drawings, which she has started making since they met. Their relationship quickly deteriorates. At an unspecified time Nadja visits André at home. She admires his art collection and then proceeds to reveal information about some of the artefacts that he thinks she could not have known; she even 'recognises' important works, as if she has seen them before, and offers an interpretation of Max Ernst's painting *Of this men shall know nothing* in words similar to those Ernst had written on the back of the canvas.[7] The story of the affair ends when the author states, quite matter-of-factly, that he was informed that Nadja has gone mad.[8]

Scholars of Surrealism regularly position the novel *Nadja* at the centre of Breton's oeuvre, and often also at the centre of surrealist literature generally, as a *roman à clef* that exemplifies the objectives of (Bretonian) Surrealism: an elusive search for something undefined, uncanny encounters with the marvellous, relationships with mysterious muses. Scholars consider Nadja to be the archetypal surrealist character and 'prototype of the surrealist heroine.'[9] Based on Breton's suggestive but evanescent descriptions, Nadja is interpreted as a medium, a clairvoyant, a muse, a powerful witch, a madwoman, the Other, a typical bohemian character, or a combination of these. She is also a 'mascot for Breton's ideas', 'the most powerful and the most negative representation of Woman in Surrealism', or an example of the (male) surrealist's objectification of women.[10] Decades later, Breton called her a 'sorceress' with 'magic powers,' thereby retroactively creating the possibility that her strange behaviour should be interpreted in a magical light.[11] Nadja is considered a clairvoyant or a medium on account of her apparent clairvoyance (she sees into André's home and, later, his art col-

lection), precognition (the window turning red), prophecy ('you will write a book about me'), remembrance of past lives (the incident at the grille in the wall) and telepathy (the incident at the Tuileries).[12] Breton never uses terms such as 'telepathy' in *Nadja*, providing only implicit suggestions. Nadja is further considered mentally unstable or outright mad, a judgement based not least on Breton's comment that she 'had gone mad,' besides his descriptions of her erratic behaviour.[13] There is also the question of whether Nadja is even present at all in what is after all a fictional account only posing as autobiographical. Nadja is interpreted as the unconscious, as Other and probably Breton's other.[14] Fittingly enough, *Nadja* opens with the author asking 'Who am I? Whom do I haunt?'; questions pointing towards the fact that his narrative may well be about himself and his relation to his Other.[15] Not just a muse, Nadja functions as Breton's gateway into surreality, because engaging one's own Other is engaging the surreal. As Breton's/ André's unconscious, Nadja can be described as Surrealism or as surrealistic, but never as a surrealist, an artist in her own right. She is obviously *sur*real, not real, which is perhaps also why Breton suppressed information about the real Delcourt.

In this chapter, I am concerned with Nadja the madwoman just as much as Nadja the clairvoyant and the medium. As will be demonstrated, from the surrealist point of view, being clairvoyant, mediumistic or mad is more or less the same. During the second half of the 1920s, the idea of the artist as a seer was developed in Bretonian Surrealism. This seer is capable of a particular type of vision I would term 'surrealist vision,' a constructed notion predicated upon an interaction with other seers, such as clairvoyants, mediums, and also those known as '*aliénés*' (the mad). Such people were thought to possess a particular form of vision closely similar to surrealist vision. In this chapter, I will explore how and why mediums, clairvoyants and the mad were associated with visions and why they were considered to be of a kind as well. Furthermore, there is the issue of why the surrealist need to become a seer, possessed of surrealist vision, became pressing. Three developments are important, I believe. The maturation of surrealist visual art meant that the surrealist model upon which all art should be based became internalised once and for all, and evidently this required inner vision. Secondly, surreality became immanent in reality, whereas before it had been located in the mind alone. *Nadja* is, in fact, an account of the search for and subsequent uncanny encounter with the surreal in the real. This immanence of surreality also required a means of perception and, as Surrealism favoured the eye above all other senses, every sensory perception is essentially reduced to a visual one. Finally, in his continual

exploration of what surreality might be and might mean, Breton developed the notion of a state of grace, a theoretical position wherein opposition is transcended: perception and representation become one. This 'representative perception' is again visual and, more specifically, visionary. As will become clear, there is a gender dimension in play too. The surrealists are seers, just as the clairvoyants and mad mediums. They, however, are also seen: the surrealist artist desires to look upon woman just a he desires to look upon the surreal. At the same time, as an active visionary, the surrealist can also perform alchemy of the word or alchemy of the visual image, both of which are determined by a visual quality.

Mad, mediumistic, clairvoyant

In 1925, Breton, Ernst and Michel Leiris, among others, started paying regular visits to the parlour of the previously mentioned local clairvoyant and fortune-teller, Madame Sacco.[16] Breton recounted a number of anecdotes involving her in *Nadja* and included a dramatic stage photograph.[17] At one time, Sacco told him that a certain 'Hélène' occupied his thoughts. He wondered if that might be Hélène Smith, but when he shared this with Nadja, she insisted that *she* was this Hélène.[18] This is a clear sign that one should interpret Nadja as a clairvoyant, as well as mad. Note that little distinction was made between mental patients and mediums in Surrealism; the Augustines and Hélène Smiths of this world were all thought to be in a state of automatism, often if not constantly, whereby their expressions could be interpreted as poetical and artistic.

In *Nadja*, Breton further recounts that he asked Ernst to paint Nadja's portrait; Ernst refused because Sacco had warned him to beware of a certain 'Nadia or Natasha.'[19] In a letter to his wife and in the 'Letter to Seers' (1925), Breton wrote enthusiastically about Sacco's predictions, including that his life would change drastically around 1931, that he would die, that he would live in China for twenty years and that he would be the head of a political party.[20] Just as some scholars today take issue with Surrealism's recourse to mediums and Spiritualism, so did a prominent intellectual at the time, Walter Benjamin (1892-1940):

> Now, I concede that the breakneck career of Surrealism over rooftops,
> lightning conductors, gutters, verandas, weathercocks, stucco work
> – all ornaments are grist to the cat burglar's mill – may have taken it
> also into the humid backroom of spiritualism. But I am not pleased to

> hear it cautiously tapping on the window-panes to inquire about its
> future. Who would not wish to see these adoptive children of revolu-
> tion most rigorously severed from all the goings-on in the conventicles
> [sic] of down-at-heel dowagers, retired majors, and *émigré* profiteers?[21]

Ernst, Breton and others were indeed braving 'humid backrooms' to hear
their future, but not for the objectives one might think. They came for the
imaginative stories of the clairvoyants and, more precisely, for the effect of
those stories upon their *own* imagination. An example serves to clarify this.
Breton reflected upon the predictions that he would die and also travel to
China: 'I do not think that it must be one way or the other [either dying or
going to China]. I have faith in everything you [the clairvoyant seers] have
told me. I would not try to resist the temptation you have aroused in me,
let's say to wait for myself in China, for anything in the world. For thanks
to you, *I am already there*'.[22]

The thing to understand about the surrealist attitude towards mediumis-
tic and clairvoyant prediction, I suggest, is that the medium was taken at
her word, literally. The result is two-fold: firstly, the words of the mediums
have an effect on the surrealist poet himself. The very fact that Sacco's
prediction had made Breton consider going to China in his imagination,
had caused him to go there in thought.[23] And, in Surrealism, as we know,
'once something has been thought, it exists.'[24] This is the supreme reality
of surrealist thought, which also made simulation during the sleeping ses-
sions perfectly acceptable. Superiority of thought was, furthermore, the
mechanism behind the successful assumption of mental illnesses by Éluard
and Breton during the period they composed *The Immaculate Conception*.[25]
Prophecy is cast in the same mould. The distinctions between what will
be and what is, between real and virtual, between possible, probable and
factual, are blurred by the prophesies of the seers.[26] 'It is your role, Mes-
dames,' Breton addressed them, 'to make us confuse the accomplishable
fact and the accomplished fact.'[27] The resulting confusion in the mind is
surreal – and note, it exists *in the mind alone*, which, as that is superior, is
all the existence that matters for the surrealist anyway.[28]

The second way the surrealists took the clairvoyants at their literal word
is that they interpreted the predictions as verbal expressions of the hidden
creative self. They were judged on their merits as poets: by the original-
ity and creativity of their language.[29] Whether they predicted the future
correctly or even could at all, is therefore just not relevant. It is not about
believing, but about the words. Everything in Surrealism was literature;
hence, prophecy is a speech act. Automatic text is, by definition, surrealist

text. In fact, being able to produce an automatically written 'surrealist text' was the *rite de passage* for joining Surrealism.[30] And because automatism is the determinant, not only surrealists write (or speak) surrealist texts, but other automatists like mediums and the mentally ill do too. Breton regards the letters of Nadja (crazy and clairvoyant) as automatically written and, therefore, reads them 'the same way I read all kinds of *surrealist text.*'[31] There is no pathology but only aesthetics in Surrealism: automatism is not a talking or writing cure; it is talking (full stop). It is writing. Surrealist automatisms were all textualised in one form or other and so framed as literature.[32] In a similar vein, expressions of others who were considered automatists were also treated as text, and possibly, even probably, as literature.

We are provided with an insight into the process of surrealist secularisation: interpreting automatic expression as literary and/or poetical text springing from the hidden creative self, thereby divesting it of any originally spiritual, religious, or metaphysical context. It is about the veracity, even the materiality, of language. I will provide another example. Victor Hugo, one of Surrealism's revered precursors, was involved in spiritualist séances during his exile on the Isle of Jersey in the 1850s.[33] At this time, communication with spirits or other entities still happened, mainly through turning and rapping tables, and Hugo was convinced that he had established with his deceased daughter, among others, in this way. He kept notebooks of those sessions, which, as they were considered damaging to his reputation, remained locked away. When finally published in 1923, their impact in Surrealism was immediate and significant, as a particular reference demonstrates. In the essay 'The Mediums Enter,' Breton refers (somewhat obliquely) to Hugo's 'poem' *Ce que dit la Bouche de l'Ombre* ('What the Mouth of Shadow Says').[34] Interestingly, at the time Hugo himself thought it a transcription of what a spirit known as the 'Mouth of Shadows' had, apparently, tapped out.[35] As far as the surrealists were concerned, however, it was an automatic 'poem' stemming from Hugo's unconscious. Within Surrealism 'getting the mouth of shadow to speak' became code for automatism.[36] In a 1933 essay Breton included a reproduction of the word *aube* ('dawn'), written by Hugo's hand during a séance as a spirit communication, as an example of *automatic writing*, besides chastising the Hugo family for giving their 'unthinking support' to such a 'pathetic joke' as the belief that spirits would guide automatic writing for good measure.[37]

Automatism being the determining factor leads to the surrealists, and Breton in particular, regularly using designations such as 'medium', 'clairvoyant' and 'seer' interchangeably. Spiritualist mediums, the mediums of dynamic psychiatry, 'dowagers' in their 'humid back rooms,' and

clairvoyants are generally treated the same. Breton's 1925 'Letter to the Seers' addresses all such 'seers.'[38] In it, Breton discussed their 'disgrace': the 'vulgar hoaxes' they have let themselves be caught in. Even worse is that they 'have been submitted' (as a result of such instances of apparent fraud) to 'doctors, "scholars" and other illiterates.'[39] Doctors and scholars are only concerned with veracity claims or curing supposed mental problems and, therefore, cannot truly understand the medium-seers and their powers. The surrealists, on the other hand, know how to filter out the creative automatism from the 'necessary conditions.' Breton celebrates the seers' 'immense power.' Poets, too, he asserts, possess a 'small bit of clairvoyance, hardly different from your [the seers'] own.'[40]

As the 1920s progressed, these 'seers' became increasingly important to Surrealism because they were thought to possess a particular kind of *vision* that originated in their unconscious and was expressed automatically. The surrealists needed to become seers themselves. They should look to the mediums and the madmen as inspirational examples – or so Max Morise contended in 1924: 'Let's admire the madmen, the mediums who find some way to fix their *most fugitive visions*, as the man given to Surrealism tends to do, with a slightly different motive.'[41] The question is, how did the madmen-mediums 'fix' their 'visions,' and what is the 'slightly different motive' behind the surrealist need to become a seer? As I will discuss below, the increasing prominence of painting within Surrealism led to an increased emphasis upon inner vision. Secondly, Surrealism became immanent in reality, which also demanded another form of vision.

Surrealist painting and the medium-painters

Originally, Surrealism's inclination was literary. In 1925, Pierre Naville stated in an essay for *La Révolution Surréaliste* (*LRS*) that 'there is no such thing as surrealist painting'.[42] Even though certain paintings might be surrealistic in image, their expression (the medium and process of painting), it was thought, was not, as painting was just too complex to be done automatically. Speaking or writing, on the other hand, could be done rapidly and seemingly without thought, i.e. automatically.[43] Yet, the reality was that 'surrealist painting' was already established by 1925. André Masson had been making automatic drawings since 1923, while some of the dreamers, such as Desnos, had made drawings during the sleeping sessions.[44] First-hour surrealists such as Man Ray and Max Ernst had been steadily creating visual art since the dawn of the 1920s.[45] In addition, reproductions of works and illustrations

by Masson, Ray, Ernst and Chirico had been adorning the pages of *LRS* since its first 1924 issue. Surrealist party policy regarding the visual arts was clearly in serious need of adjustment, promptly provided by Breton in a serialised essay 'Surrealism and Painting.'[46]

One of the important results of the alteration of Surrealism from a literary movement to one where the visual arts where equally (if not more) important, I find, was the internalisation of the surrealist model once and for all. As Breton remarks, 'the plastic work of art will either refer to a *purely internal model* or will cease to exist.'[47] Internal models are dreams, fantasies, visions, hallucinations and, generally speaking, most products of the imagination, preferably generated 'automatically'; that is to say, by the unconscious. Without a doubt, the surrealist model had been internal from the outset; *The Magnetic Fields* already resulted from a turn inwards, while the sleeping sessions revolved around a state in which the eyes were closed and the entranced person was dreaming lucidly. Sight (or vision) was the sense preferred above all in Surrealism. To bring this point home, Breton opened 'Surrealism and Painting' with the statement that '[t]he eye exists in its savage state.'[48] It is only by being 'savage' (irrational) that true *sight* can be developed: seeing differently from anyone else, even seeing what is not visible.[49] In literature the inner model had become current since Romanticism. The visual arts, however, had only relatively recently started rejecting traditional modes of representation and its supposed basis in visual reality, arguably with Impressionism and certainly with the advent of the avant-gardes.[50] After the First World War, France's state-sponsored call for a 'return to order' had led to a return of realism in art, something Surrealism could not wait to foreswear.[51] Also, the pervasive presence of photography and film meant that mimesis of reality had already been co-opted anyway. Therefore, wrote Breton, 'the only domain left for the artist to exploit [had become] that of *pure mental representation*.'[52] However, how does one go about representing something 'purely mental'? How to paint purely internal models? Just as they had done before, the surrealists turned to those automatists they so admired: the mediums. They possessed, as Morise implied, 'enchanted eyes' that opened upon 'fugitive visions.' The 'madmen and mediums' were once more ahead of Surrealism and had already found materialistic, even artistic ways to fix their visions; namely, in painting, drawing and sculpture. And if they were already painting automatically, there should no longer be any reason why there was no such a thing as surrealist painting.

The source to bring this point home to Surrealism was *Artistry of the Mentally Ill*, a ground-breaking study of art by the insane by Hans Prinzhorn of the Heidelberg asylum.[53] The year it was published, 1922, Ernst took the

book with him to Paris; although few surrealists could read German, they could study the images in this lavishly illustrated book – 187 illustrations – perfectly well. There is significant evidence that several surrealist works were directly inspired by illustrations in Prinzhorn's *Artistry*. One of the most convincing cases concerns Ernst's *Oedipus* (1931), which obviously echoes *Miracle Shepherd* (1911-13) by August Natterer (1868-1933).[54] *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* also stressed that artistic works by patients could, or perhaps even should, be considered art.[55] Appreciation for the art of 'innocents,' that is to say, those not tainted by education and western culture, had been growing since the nineteenth century, first encompassing children's art, before including the art of 'primitives' (non-western tribal peoples) and around the 1920s the art of the mentally ill or 'asylum art' as well. Surrealism was one of the first avant-gardes to become interested in asylum art.[56] And while *L'Art chez les fous* (1907) had circulated among the surrealists too, that focuses mainly on literature and hence it was only Prinzhorn's *Artistry* that provided Surrealism with irrefutable proof that 'madmen' were creating automatic expressions in painting and drawing.[57] *Artistry* also facilitated the surrealist appreciation of mediumistic art. Probably, the 'doctor's club' within Surrealism was already familiar with the fact that spiritualist and psychodynamic mediums had been making drawings since the middle of the nineteenth century; but, it is only from 1925 onwards that we find mediumistic drawings in surrealist sources. I interpret this as a direct result of the confrontation with, first, the examples in *Artistry* and, secondly, the need for ratification of painting in Surrealism. The very first page of *LRS* 4 (1925) is illustrated with art by a medium, captioned as: 'mediumistic drawing obtained by Mme Fondrillon, medium draughtswoman, in her 79th year, Paris, March 1909' [plate 4].[58] Although no further text accompanies it, I find it no coincidence that this drawing, both automatic and mediumistic, is reproduced so prominently in the same issue as the first instalment of Breton's *Surrealism and Painting*. Mediums could also be said to be seers, in Surrealism, and their vision was understood to be internal – all of which ties nicely with Morise's 1924 claim that the surrealists should fix their visions like the mad and mediumistic, and Breton's 1925 assertion that surrealist visual art would refer only to internal models.

I say one must be a seer

The title of Breton's 'A Letter to Seers' is a direct play upon a poetical manifesto by Rimbaud, colloquially known as the 'Letters of the Seer'.[59] It deeply

DESSIN MÉDIANIMIQUE OBTENU PAR Mᵐᵉ FONDRILLON, MÉDIUM DESSINATEUR
DANS SA 79ᵉ ANNÉE, PARIS, MARS 1909

4. Drawing, captioned: 'mediumistic drawing obtained by Mme Fondrillon, medium draughtswoman, in her 79th year, Paris, March 1909', La Révolution Surréaliste 4 (1925).

impressed the surrealists, for whom Rimbaud and Baudelaire were – in this decade at least – the principal precursors they revered and tried to emulate. Rimbaud's words were like scripture for the surrealists and none more so than a core passage from his 'Letters':

> I say one must be a *seer*, make oneself a *seer*.
> The Poet makes himself a *seer* by a long, gigantic and rational derangement of all the senses. All forms of love, suffering and madness.[60]

Around 1925, Rimbaud's directive to become a seer was a task taken up in earnest in Surrealism, prompted by the developments discussed above. The Rimbaudian view of the poet as a seer is based upon the Romantic conception of poet-seers. In French and German Romanticism poets were considered outsiders, operating on the margins of rationalism because they perceived its limitations and appreciated what had come to be called 'irrational' means of knowing the world, such as dreams and intuition.[61]

In these early decades of the nineteenth century, some occultists too were generally considered to be outsiders, or positioned themselves as such, just as their worldview was thought to be contrary to rationalism. The similar social status and, in particular, a shared worldview proved to be the ground for a fruitful and comprehensive sharing of ideas between poets and occultists; or, perhaps more properly, an appropriation by the poets of concepts from the esoteric discourse, in particular drawn from Boehme, Swedenborg and Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin. The esoteric notions they appropriated or otherwise adapted to their own discourse included: validation of intuition and imagination above reason, an emphasis upon visionary powers, a preference for the subjective approach, a celebration of the cosmos as living and mysterious, and an appreciation of poetry and analogical language as mystical, transformative or revelatory.[62] These were integrated into the idea of the poet as a seer or *voyant*.[63]

As Romanticism's 'tail' – as Breton posited his movement to be[64] – Surrealism was familiar with the romantic notion of the *poète-voyant*, although it is important to realise that any occultism inherent to it was only latently present in Surrealism at this time. In the 1920s, the focus of Bretonian Surrealism was primarily directed towards the symbolist poet-seer as proposed by Baudelaire and Rimbaud.[65] As Albert Béguin has demonstrated, the whole concept of the poet-seer, paralleled by the understanding that poetry is a near magical transformative discipline and that the imagination is its main constituent faculty, was really only explicitly formulated by Baudelaire and Rimbaud, as it had been fairly implicit in earlier thought.[66] In Rimbaud's view, poetry leads to a transformation of the poet and, subsequently, to a transformation of the world. The poet should become a seer out of Promethean duty, create a new universal language and bring about a new utopian age.[67] So far, nothing new, perhaps. But what is more particular to the Rimbaudian poet-seer, and which would have a far-reaching influence upon Surrealism, is that all the poet's powers stem from the mind only, instead of any outside, and possibly supernatural, agency. The Rimbaudian poet-seer is secular, their visionary powers sourced in the psyche. They should hone the mind by means of a 'derangement of the senses,' long and rational. Visions, dreams, imagination and intuition in particular were important, as they had been strongly associated with the irrational since the Enlightenment and, therefore, highly prized by Rimbaud, as they had been by Romantic poets generally before him.

Surrealism was deeply beholden to the secular and revolutionary interpretation of the seer by Rimbaud, and to honing the mind by means of a long sensual derangement, in particular through love and madness.[68] Breton summarised in 1934:

Thus the whole technical effort of Surrealism, from its very begin-
ning up to the present day, has consisted of multiplying the ways to
penetrate the deepest layers of the mental. "I say that we must be *seers*,
make ourselves seer": for us it has only been a question of discovering
the means to apply this watchword of Rimbaud's. In the first rank of
those of these means whose effectiveness has been fully proved in the
last few years is *psychic automatism* in all its forms.[69]

Once again the superiority of mind in Surrealism ('the mental') is restated.
The key to Surrealism is, and will remain, psychic automatism. Surrealist
seership, therefore, has nothing to do with biological or spiritual factors,
and everything to do with psychology. Secondly, Breton's explicit addition
'in all its forms' implies, I think, that the visual automatic techniques that
had been developed as painterly alternatives to automatic writing, such as
collage, grattage and frottage, were, by this point, a canonised part of psychic
automatism too. Moreover, by referring to Surrealism's '*technical* effort,' he
stresses that Surrealism is still an experimental research project, aimed at
'penetrating the deepest layers of the mental' by any means at its disposal.
I find becoming a seer and, to that end, developing surrealist vision, to be
a continuation of the surrealist agenda that was initially developed during
the time of slumbers. Mediums and the mentally ill were already othered by
their mental state. They were automatically automatic, so to speak; Nadja,
the madwoman, did not need to become a seer as she already was one. The
surrealists set out to make themselves seers and do this actively, experimen-
tally, and by exploring the mind. The surrealist-seer does not passively have
visions; rather, he aims to attain *vision*: a manner of perceiving the world,
real as well as surreal, from the vantage point of the deepest self. Therefore,
to become a seer the surrealists should descend into themselves and engage
the Other.[70] This too was based on Rimbaudian scripture: 'I is an other.'[71]

Seeing Nadja

Yet, how to become a seer? We have already seen that the surrealists should
try to fix their visions and that internal models were considered paramount.
Another form of vision was also developed, in response to the fact that the
surrealist should not only be a seer who perceives internal worlds, but also
a seer who could look upon the external world and perceive the surreal
within the real. In 1928, Breton confirmed that all he loved, thought and felt
predisposed him 'towards a particular philosophy of *immanence* according

to which surreality would be embodied in reality itself and would be neither superior nor exterior to it.'[72] This notion of surreality's immanence in the quotidian was developed between 1926 and 1928, which is exactly the period of (meeting, writing and publishing) *Nadja*. The novel is about the search for, and subsequently the encounter with, the marvellous-within-the-quotidian, the sur-real inherent in the real. Although psychic automatism is rooted in the mind, it is employed in the interaction with the world outside of one's mind too. As I hope to show, *Nadja* illustrates that Breton took an active and rational approach to developing a particular form of vision. After all, the surrealist deranges his senses rationally. Moreover, Breton referred to the second half of the 1920s as 'the period of *reason*,' testifying to the fact that in Surrealism a rational approach was taken to becoming a seer.

The author employs a number of motifs in *Nadja*, prominently among them vision. Eyes, seeing, visions and visual signs abound in *Nadja*, and are not limited to the story of the affair alone. By the time Breton was writing (1926-27), he had become so obsessed with vision that it defined his whole novel, which further supports my argument that the introduction of surrealist painting forced him to investigate seership in general and develop a concept of uniquely surrealist vision in particular.

The first meeting of André and Nadja is framed in a description of reciprocal vision, him seeing her and her watching him, followed by a description of her arresting eyes, even their lids, rims and makeup. Breton included a photomontage by Man Ray of Nadja's eyes in the novel's extended edition of 1964 [plate 5].[73] It testifies to the fact that her eyes were the main focus of his bodily interest in her. I can speculate that this was no surprise to the real Nadja, Léona Delcourt, as darkly outlined eyes are her only facial feature in a *Self-portrait* she drew for Breton [plate 6]. Another of her drawings, *The lover's flower*, consists of two hearts and four staring eyes [plate 7] – perhaps those two sets of eyes that watched each other across the street during their first meeting.[74] From the outset, the author associates Nadja not only with (her) eyes but with vision, writing that she has 'visions' and describing them. Nadja 'sees' his house and wife, a crowd of dead people.[75] Another vision is of a flaming hand floating above the Seine; later in the book that hand turns out to be a commercial sign.[76] A vision based upon a visual sign; references to the motif abound almost excessively. The author confesses to an obsession with another commercial visual sign, for charcoal, which he suddenly started seeing in numerous locations.[77] The presence of these commercial signs in the book is not accidental: they are not only visual objects but also important visual markers in the urban landscape of the city that serves as a background to the story. Moreover, they signify the act of seeing.

Vision is also an essential part of the novel's form. Firstly, in style: the authors writes dispassionately and his tone is even clinically objective; many passages read like a litany of observation, making it clear why *Nadja* is often considered something of a documentary novel.[78] The author observes the city of Paris through which Nadja and André wander.[79] He observes himself, or at least his alter-ego André, by describing his actions, opinions, sentiments and thoughts. Most of all, the novel observes Nadja. Breton gives an account of her actions and statements in a detached and clinical tone, as if writing a medical case study.[80] This appearance of a fact-based observational report is reinforced by the presence of a number of black-and-white photographs in the novel, the second structural element I would highlight. Taken mainly by Jacques-André Boiffard, they document the Parisian places described in the book.[81] Already by their mere presence, as visual objects embedded in a discourse full of prominent visual signs, the photographs reinforce the reader's association with vision.[82] Furthermore, because photography pretends to objectivity, the photographs act as visual evidence and underline the idea that *Nadja* presents a documentary or neutral image of everyday reality and factual occurrences.[83] They represent, let us say, ordinary vision. Some critics have called the photographs 'banal.'[84] However, I think this rather misses the point; it is precisely because of their apparently banal appearance that they subvert reality, something Walter Benjamin already noticed in his discussion of the novel (1929): '[in *Nadja*] photography intervenes in a very strange way. It [...] draws off the banal obviousness of [the] ancient architecture to inject it with the most pristine intensity towards the events described.'[85] The photographs 'intervene' by depicting reality while alienating it at the same time, as other contemporary reviewers had noted too.[86] By representing places and people from the narrative, they add 'intensity' to the narrated events through repetition. Yet they are only *pseudo*-documents, constructions of a reality that perhaps never was, whereby they infuse locations and things with an uncanny atmosphere even more effectively.

I detail this role of the photographs because the narrative operates in exactly the same way. The reader is familiarised with the real, by description and image, only to be estranged from it, for instance by the author's style or by the strangeness of his account. As previously said, the novel is essentially about a quest for, and the subsequent encounter with, the surreal. That Breton considered this quest successful is supported by the fact that in 1928, the year *Nadja* was published, he confirmed in other writing – and in *Surrealism and Painting*, not coincidentally – that surreality is immanent in reality.[87] He is the novel's observant watcher, who writes objectively of

his meeting with a marvellous person who offers him the possibility of discovering the surreal. The constructed clinical objectivity of his tone adds extra weight to the uncommon occurrences; if they are scientifically observed (as he pretends), one assumes they must have really happened. One can hardly deny the surreal in the real any longer, and the more he stresses how odd the real is, the more one can approach the surreal. This is known as 'alienation of the real', which allows for familiarisation with the surreal. Alienation is a method of interaction with, in this case, the world. In my view, it is indicative of the *rapport* that developed between the surrealists and their world in the later 1920s. It came to full fruition in the 1930s, as will be discussed in the next chapter, but the very insistence upon the immanence of surreality in reality paved the way for a dynamic relation with reality outside of one's mind that was operated from within the mind. Vision, as other scholars have already contended, is crucial to this rapport, as the act of seeing is the foremost means by which the real, specifically the surreal-in-the-real, is located and perceived.[88] After the enclosed and darkened rooms of the sleeping sessions and experiments with automatic writing, by 1927, 'the marvellous no longer manifest[ed] itself only within the mind of the surrealist lost in automatism in his study': Breton and the surrealists were taking to the streets to find the marvellous.[89] The incursion of the sur-real or supra-normal into the real world was becoming an 'objective, observable fact' – hence, Breton's observational tone in *Nadja*.[90] According to one psychiatrist, what Breton has written with his pseudo-documentary style is 'a manual for achieving the surrealist vision of inspired alienation.'[91] Alienation, a state of estrangement from the normal, is usually considered a form of mental illness.[92] Alienation of the real operates by means of the gaze, a stare in particular, and is, therefore, in effect a visionary faculty. The longer one stares at something, the stranger it becomes. Suddenly the experienced world is imbued with an enigmatic atmosphere. The real is stripped of 'its usual meanings and 'sense of coherence', but rather than turning simply into something *ab*normal, the normal becomes *supra*-normal, uncanny, frightening and indescribably mysterious: 'unreal and extra-real at the same time.'[93] This can be cultivated by artists for its creative potential.

The tension that Breton created in *Nadja* between the quotidian and the odd is essential to alienation of the normal. 'The marvellous is the eruption of contradiction within the real', Louis Aragon pointed out, because '[r]eality is the apparent absence of contradiction.'[94] Aragon employed a technique of alienation similar to Breton's in his novel *Paris Peasant* (1926), a detailed description of parts of Paris that were soon to be destroyed. An account of

the marvellous in the quotidian, it focuses upon the incursion of the past (nineteenth-century *passages*) into the present, even as the future (their destruction) is about to arrive, lending the *passages* an extra-temporal quality.[95] The uncanny character of historical landmarks is probably why the surrealists haunted the Parisian Tour St. Jacques, for instance, as they did so many other historical sites. After all, that tower was (and is) a gothic relic of times long gone by, oddly placed in an empty square that disconnects it from any surroundings, symbolising things that have become meaningless in the present and associated with all manner of historical and mythical figures, such as legendary alchemist Flamel. It is not only a geographical landmark, but a chronological one too, an afterlife of a grand and pos-sibly invented past.[96] While the – possibly nostalgic – fascination with the past is something one finds in Romanticism too, the emphasis upon the uncanny effect that sites of the past can have on an observer in the present is distinctly surrealist and something Breton pointed out on numerous occasions.[97] The majority of uncanny moments in his writings occur near Saint James' Tower.[98]

It is my argument that in *Nadja* the character of André represents 'normal' and objective vision, a disembodied, rational, clinical and documentary mode of seeing.[99] Nadja, on the other hand, represents extra-ordinary vision. She has 'visions' and 'hallucinations', seeing things he does not and, perhaps, even cannot.[100] Each of the two characters functions as the foil against which the other('s mode of vision) strongly stands out. The watcher's eyes do not see as the visionary's eyes do, and it is exactly that difference that is important.[101] As the observer, André does not enter into a state of alienation from reality. On the contrary, Breton has employed Nadja for that. She, the madwoman, is alienated. He is continuously amazed, and urges her on, but note that he does so for his sake rather than hers; she sees the surreal not for herself but for *him*. She is *his* visionary. Even though he would experiment personally with states of mental illness in 1929, leading to *The Immaculate Conception* (1930) co-authored with Éluard, in 1927 Breton was still ex-perimenting with someone else rather than himself. Nadja's alienation is observed by André and described by Breton in a 'manual-like' manner that allows us, the readers, to experience some alienation of reality too, just as he could through the writing of it. A comparison with the sleeping sessions is unavoidable: there, too, Breton positioned himself as the rational observer who could not cross a certain line but faithfully observed and carefully noted down everything concerning the one who could, Desnos. He suggests this comparison himself in *Nadja*, naming Desnos as an oracular visionary and including Ray's photograph of him entranced.[102]

Les yeux de fougère... *page 128*
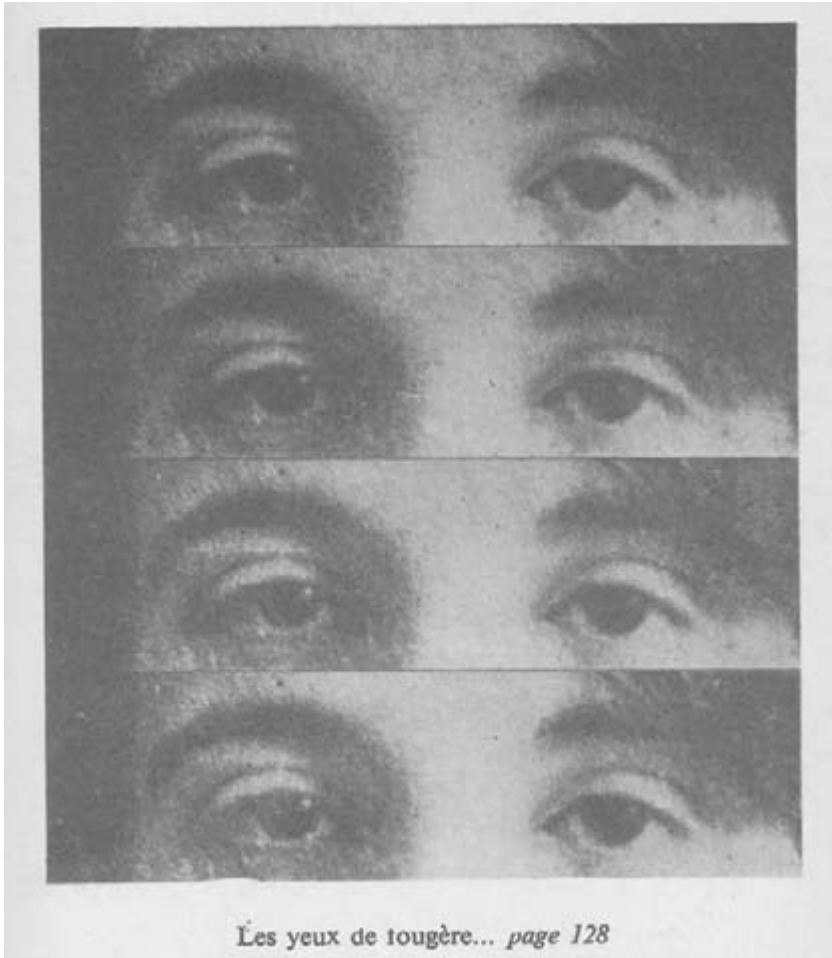
5. Illustration of Nadja's eyes, Breton, Nadja (*1964*).

Two thirds of the way through the novel, André wonders why he continues his affair with Nadja, answering himself: 'When I am with her, I am nearer things which are near her.'[103] Those 'things,' it is implied, are surreality. As a madwoman, Nadja is in a constant state of automatism, whereby she is not only able to *see* surrealistically, but also to *manifest* surreality, thereby making it easier for Breton to perceive. What is marvellous and extra-ordinary for him, is normal for her. Consequently, she cannot see the surreal for herself because she *is* surreal, or nearly so. She could never be a surrealist because that demands sanity of mind: it is only by being aware of the contradictions in reality that one can know the surreal in the real.

6. Nadja (Léona Delcourt), Self-Portrait, *s.d.* [*1926*].

*7. Nadja (*Léona Delcourt*), The lover's flower, s.d. [1926].*

Surrealist vision

Sensual perception of the paradoxical nature of sur/reality, or vision constructed out of contradictions, is the key to surrealist vision. It often took the form of what I would term 'subverted vision'. The eye, or the sense of sight, is subverted, and such subversion of ordinary sight, I argue, paves the way for extra-ordinary vision. Where Breton draws out the contrasts between hallucination and observation in *Nadja*, several surrealist art works feature the motif of subverted and contradictory vision as well, illustrating that Breton was certainly not alone in his concern with surrealist vision.

Surrealist seership operates primarily through contradictions such as blind/seer. When the eyes are closed to the outside world, as happened during the sleeping sessions, they are opened to the world within.[104] Already in Romanticism, closing the eyes signified turning the gaze inwards, shutting out the material world and looking upon an inner landscape of dreams or the imagination.[105] Following their precursors' examples, the surrealists would look 'at the outside world through cloudy eyes' – because such cloudiness of eye results in 'clairvoyance.'[106] They created series of self-portraits with closed eyes, possibly to stress their desire to become seers. These were combined into a single photomontage, appropriately known as *Les yeux fermés*, published in *LRS* 12 (1929) [plate 8].[107] It was, in part, a response to an earlier photomontage, *Woman is the being...* from 1924 [plate 9], in which the (male) surrealists have their eyes open. The central woman is the anarchist Germaine Berton (1902-1942), celebrated in Surrealism for her violent actions that were thought to have been motivated by love and desire.[108] The fact that the surrealists are portrayed here with eyes open signifies that they are dreaming. This is supported by the quotation from Baudelaire below Berton's portrait that functions as the montage's title: 'Woman is the being who casts most darkness or most light in our dreams.'[109]

Subversion of the eye proceeds from reflection upon the act of vision. Emphasising sight or vision to an absurd extent by making the eye the sole focus of an art work, for instance, is one way. Examples are Man Ray's *Eye* (1930) and Ernst's frontispiece to *La femme visible* (1925) (photo by Ray) [plate 10], which is reminiscent of Ray's photomontage of Nadja's eyes. In this art work, however, the eyes are those of Gala Éluard, Ernst's lover at the time. Another option is to remove the eye from the face entirely and place it in an incongruous environment, as in the *Object to be destroyed* by Ray, later called *Indestructible object* (1922, remade 1933). Such emphasising of

the eye ad absurdum confronts one with the actual act of seeing and, as we observe an eye apparently observing us in turn, it may lead to alienation and certainly engenders a stare. Moreover, or perhaps consequently, it provokes reflection upon the faculty of sight and contemplation of alternative vision. Hence, reflection upon the sense and the activity of sight is part of this mode of subverting the eye as well. It is, for instance, a prominent theme in Man Ray's *Emak Bakia*.[110] This 1926 film is structured around surrealist principles such as irrationalism, the dream, automatism and vision.[111] The film's closing scene shows a woman's face with garishly painted though curiously blank eyes. Only when she opens her *real* eyes does the audience see that they were painted on her eyelids.[112] This scene emphasises vision as a motif, expresses the idea of seeing with eyes closed and plays a joke on us, the spectators. Such reflection upon vision is even more prominently present in the film's opening shot, which shows the artist filming himself in a mirror. It addresses the double vision inherent in cinema.[113] The audience not only sees what the director sees, but moreover what the director *wants* it to see, and by showing the camera and himself like that, Ray brings home that the audience's vision is subject to his.[114] In addition, as if viewers were not confronted with their own act of viewing enough, a shot of an eye is superimposed upon the camera, looking directly at them.[115] This shot is similar to the opening of *Nadja*: just as André sees Nadja and sees her watching him, we look at the filmmaker filming, while his eye stares right back at us. To see is also to *be seen* therefore – the act is inherently reflexive.[116]

A third means of subversion of the eye (or sight) is blinding. Since blinding is the ultimate subversion of the eye, blindness is the ultimate sign of the seer; clearly not a uniquely surrealist concept but a historically widespread western cultural trope going back to such illustrious figures as Homer, Tiresias and Oedipus. In Surrealism this motif is not necessarily sadistic; rather, it is the fullest expression of altering vision and, therefore, a creative act: the more radically the mundane eye is subverted, the more visionary the mind's eye becomes. Radical alteration of vision by way of destruction lies at the heart of the most famous cinematic surrealist scene. Only a minute into *Un chien Andalou* (1929), by Louis Buñuel and Salvador Dali, we see a close-up of the face of a young woman, whose eye – it appears – is slit with a razor.[117] This shot's fame is certainly connected to the deep human (Freudian, even) fear of blinding, which the two filmmakers clearly exploited. Furthermore, the aggressive act of cutting the eye is performed by Buñuel himself, who destroys the spectators' eye symbolically, thereby inviting them to look at the rest of his film with *other* eyes.[118] Blinding can

be presented as a fait accompli as well, as in Brauner's *Self-portrait with plucked eye* [plate 11].[119] Often, it is represented symbolically, as in Ernst's *Oedipus Rex* (1922), in which a pierced walnut, held by giant fingers that are also pierced, illustrates the blinding of Oedipus.[120]

In conclusion, I would say that the surrealists considered reflection upon and subversion of the eye an important step towards becoming a seer, which explains the many instances of it in surrealist art. Exclusion of visible reality leads to the revelation of another reality – surreality.[121] Surrealist eyes are closed and opened at the same time, seeing internally *and* externally; hence, the returning emphasis upon contradictions and the constant tension between two different ways of seeing. Ideally, a surrealist has double vision, as illustrated by Masson in the Janus portrait he drew of Breton in 1941 [cover].

Schaulust, psychic voyeurism, or woman as seen

Although destruction of the eye should be considered primarily as a creative act, as mentioned, there is one context where it is also a violent act: love. Surrealist violence is frequently directed towards the female body and is of a sexual nature; the surrealists were avid students of the novels of the (in)famous Marquis de Sade.[122] In *Indestructible object*, as in scenes in *Emak Bakia*, Ray refers to reciprocity of vision: to see is to be seen as well. Here I would like to explore this notion further, as I think it provides insight into why the mad seers were thought to be similar to, but not the same as, the surrealist seers. In my opinion, surrealist vision carries persistent erotic connotations. Almost any surrealist gaze was essentially an erotic, desirous, gaze; they craved sight as they desired to become a seer. As Ernst explained: 'A blind swimmer, I made myself a seer. I saw. And I found myself, to my surprise, in love with what I was seeing, wanting to be identified with it.'[123] Gender plays an important role in surrealist vision, I find, since it is primarily woman who is seen.

To start blatantly, the eye is an old symbol for the female genitalia, something Pierre Mabille pointed out in a 1938 article entitled 'The Eye of the Painter.'[124] Such symbolism paves the way for the eye to become a symbol for, or recipient of, erotic violence. Georges Bataille referred to such symbolism when he entitled his 1928 novel of bizarre sexual perversions *Story of the Eye*.[125] Moving to more veiled symbolism, there is also a sexual connotation to closing or covering (blindfolding) the eye – aside from a creative one – namely, opening oneself to inner erotic desires. This is why the motif of covered eyes recurs so frequently in the works of Dali in particular. *The lugubrious game* (1929), for example – the painting that

8. 'Les yeux fermés (*Enquète sur l'amour*)', La Révolution Surréaliste *12* (*1929*).

9. 'La femme est l'être…', La Révolution Surréaliste 1 (1924).

10. Max Ernst, La femme visible, *1925.*

gained Dali admission to the Bretonian group – is filled with sexual themes and motifs, including desire, (fear of) castration, onanism, fellatio and obsession with female genitals. Although a scatological reference is the most controversial element of this painting, the sexual references come in a good second, and three out of the four figures present in the painting have their eyes covered or closed.[126]

The act of seeing can be erotic too. This eroticism of sight is captured in Freud's term *Schaulust*: the (lustful) pleasure in seeing and in being seen (i.e. voyeurism and exhibitionism).[127] The (male) surrealist is not only a *voyant* but also a *voyeur* and his desire to look upon woman is very similar to his desire to look upon an inner world and upon immanent surreality. Man sees. Woman is seen. In the context of surrealist vision, it is my argument that woman performs two distinctive and particular roles. The first is to be seen. Masson's portrait of Breton [cover] is telling: the surrealist seer closes his eyes to focus on an internal model and, as desire is the surrealist's driving inner force as per Freud, that inner model may well be the female body or Woman generally. The photomontage *Les yeux fermés* underlines my point [plate 8]. The male surrealists are arranged around Magritte's painting *Je ne vois pas la* [femme] *cachée dans le fôret*, also known as *La femme cachée* (1929). As I see it, this photomontage represents how desire acts as the mechanism by

11. Victor Brauner, Self-portrait with plucked eye, *1931.*

which surrealist vision operates. Woman is *not* seen, she is hidden, and she is evidently perceived with the surrealists' *inner* eyes, full of *Schaulust*.[128] The photomontage *Woman is the being…*, for which the surrealists have their eyes open, further supports my line of argument [plate 9]. Woman is posited as a dream-being, one consequently seen with inner eyes. Moreover, Baudelaire's words that woman casts the most light or shadow are from *Artificial Paradises* (1860), a book on narcotics. Woman, as Baudelaire explained (and interpreted by Jonathan Eburne), 'is a natural source of altered consciousness.'[129] The surrealists, always enthusiastic about experiments with consciousness and devoted to 'deranging their senses' – preferably by means of *love* – clearly would make no bones about letting their consciousness be altered by woman. This is certainly true of Breton, who abhorred artificial drugs,[130] and why would one need such substances if a 'natural' source, woman, was always at hand and, moreover, in dreams too? Thus, the lust for the hidden creative self is facilitated by, sometimes even sublimed into, the lust for woman.

Since it is essentially a state of mind, Surrealism can also act on the mind like a drug. So Breton asserts in a passage in the first *Manifesto*, which also includes a reference to Baudelaire:

> Like drugs, it [Surrealism] creates a certain need and can push man to frightful revolts. It also is, if you like, an artificial paradise, and the taste one has for it derives from Baudelaire's criticism for the same reason as the others.[131]

One can become dependent upon Surrealism. Similarly, the male surrealist's addiction to woman can be characterised by the tension between need, revolt and paradise. Breton's taste for Surrealism led him to an addiction to Nadja. The affair provided him with marvellous experiences and a fresh look at quotidian places and things. By seeing Nadja, Breton also saw sur-reality. Even though his gaze upon her was not motivated by simple erotic desire for her body, it was, nevertheless, a gaze of *Schaulust*, but of desire for the surreal and marvellous.[132] He hardly desired her (physically); he longed for those 'things' that were near her and for her experience of the surreal. Breton and other surrealists, I argue, should be considered voyeurs of the inner model: *psychic voyeurs*. Whether Nadja is representative of Breton's unconscious or the collective unconscious, of automatism, the marvellous, the Other or *his* Other becomes irrelevant. The essential lust is for any and all things surreal, and therefore the surrealist man desires to look upon this mad woman and upon her world as well. Conley invokes Simone de Beauvoir's statement that 'woman is poetry itself, for men; it is not said whether she is poetry for herself' to explain the view that by using woman as an inspirational point of departure, the male surrealist enters more easily into the automatic state.[133] This operates on the assumption that woman is not fully realised, that she is closer to the unconscious than man is.[134] Possibly, woman does not even have an unconscious, but simply is it. In this way, lust for automatism, for the unconscious, for the hidden creative self, for his Other and for woman, are all sublimated into one. After all, as Aragon had written, 'love [often a euphemism for desire in Surrealism] is a state of confusion between the real and the marvellous. In this state, the contradictions of being seem *really* essential to being.'[135] And contradictions, as we have seen, are an intrinsic part of surrealist vision. It is in the confusion of real with surreal that surrealist love and vision meet.

Nonetheless, Nadja is not only seen, she also sees. If woman's first role in Surrealism is to be seen, her second is to be the *seer*, I argue. Once more I will illustrate this point with the photomontage *Les yeux fermés*. The

surrealist men have their eyes closed because they do not need to see; they have woman to do that for them. As a woman, to be seen in Surrealism is also to become a seer. The montages of Nadja's eyes and of Gala Éluard's eyes typify women from the surrealist perspective: their most important feature is their eyes [plates 5 and 10]. As the eye also represents the feminine sex, woman's objectification as seen/seer is complete.

In Surrealism, men and women are both called seers and clairvoyants. Yet, the men are surrealists, while women are more often surrealistic, like Nadja. The male surrealist aspires to be *like* the medium, the associate of Surrealism. Woman, on the other hand, is almost automatically a medium, if only by virtue of being a woman. As others have shown, woman is identified in Surrealism with the irrational, the unconscious, the automatic; in short, the Other.[136] Thus, while the surrealist man has to actively make himself into a seer, woman is already one potentially. Similarly, all women are mysterious and marvellous, all are sorceresses. This facilitated Breton's identification of Nadja as a witch years after the fact, just as he would identify several women surrealists as witches.

Surrealism's view was informed by dynamic psychiatry for a significant part, and woman's automatism was thought pathological and to proceed from her very nature; she cannot help confusing the real and the marvellous. The automatism of the male surrealist, on the other hand, is 'psychic' and demands wilful mental action. Here, Nadja serves as an example of Bretonian Surrealism's view that all women were naturally automatic. By all accounts, she was not a medium in the sense employed by Spiritualism or psychical research. She did not communicate with agents outside of herself, and while she did seem to see a crowd of the dead, there is no indication of any inclination to communicate. Nadja had visions and made automatic drawings in a certain state that is not related to the paranormal – although it was not, necessarily, a normal state; clearly she is already mentally disturbed by the beginning of the novel, and as the affair with André progresses, she teeters over the edge of sanity. She was confused and ill, not a medium. But Breton considered the difference between mad and mediumistic to be so slight as to be irrelevant. We see this also in his treatment of spiritualist mediums, psychodynamic mediums and the inmates of insane asylums as one and the same. I will discuss further instances of this below. Therefore, because she is mad, feminine and possessed of visions too, Nadja qualifies as a medium by default. As a further example of this, Breton compared Nadja to Hélène Smith on several occasions, and has her identifying herself as Smith in the novel.[137] It follows that Breton becomes Flournoy, the observant, watchful doctor; indeed, he would make this point explicitly decades later.[138]

Visionary alchemy

Besides the matter of gender, there is another difference between the surrealist and the mediumistic madwoman: that of passive and irrational versus active and rational seership.[139] Here, I would draw a comparison between this active rationality that was expected of the surrealist and the idea of alchemy as it was current in Surrealism in this decade.

The mad medium is a receptacle of the passive sensitive and motor automatisms that are messages from her unconscious. Conversely, the surrealist approaches surrealist vision from a position of conscious and wilful rationality. After all, his long derangement of the senses is *rational*. After their 'intuitive' experimenting in the early days, the surrealists now went about their own derangement in a rational manner, and were employing reason and rational techniques to make themselves seers. In addition to Rimbaud's commission, they may also have been influenced by asylum doctor Prinzhorn, who stressed in *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* that however similar on the surface the contemporary artist's alienation may be to the madman's 'innate primeval process of configuration,' it 'involves conscious and rational decisions.' That, he posited, is something the patients clearly lack.[140] That volition and intention distinguish the artist from the madman is an assumption about insanity and creativity that was dominant in the discourses of both art and medicine throughout the twentieth century, to which Surrealism evidently conformed.[141] Even though the motive of the surrealist may be only 'slightly different' from that of the medium and mad person (*dixit* Max Morise), that difference is crucial. The *true* artist is he who imposes 'the unity of artistic form on material that would otherwise have remained diverse, inert, chaotic, unruly, and heterogeneous.'[142] Therefore, when Breton and Éluard experimented with states of mental illness in 1928-29, they did so as possessors: with volition and intention they 'possessed' those mind-states, rather than being possessed *by* them. Mediums cannot but represent what they perceive, as they are unable to observe contradiction; whereas the whole surrealist universe functions upon the understanding of certain contradictions as essential and unresolvable.

The surrealist confronts inner representation with the concrete forms of the phenomenal world and seeks to seize the object in its generality. As soon as this succeeds, he tries to take the supreme poetic step: excluding the external object as such and considering its nature only in its relationship with the inner world of consciousness.[143] That change from external to internal is one of transmutation, an originally alchemical concept the surrealists had inherited from Rimbaud, together with his practice of 'alchemy of the word.'

It is my opinion that in the first decade of Surrealism, before they started to investigate the concept and history of alchemy in more depth, the poetical practice of 'alchemy of the word' was associated with wilful creation based upon creative automatism caused by a prolonged derangement of the senses. I associate this with surrealist vision in particular because an essential element of such alchemy of the word is that it is dependent upon *vision*.

In the long poem *A Season in Hell* (1873), Rimbaud included a poetry-prose piece called 'Alchemy of the Word,' which is presented as a representation of a poetic vision or perhaps 'insane' hallucination. It is the founding text of surrealist alchemy of the word.

> I invented colours for the vowels! – A black, E white, I red, O blue, U green. – I made rules for the form and movement of every consonant, and I boasted of inventing, with rhythms from within me, a kind of poetry that all the senses, sooner or later, would recognise. And I alone would be its translator. /

> I began it as an investigation. I turned silences and nights into words. What was unutterable, I wrote down. I made the whirling world stand still. / [...]

> The worn-out ideas of old-fashioned poetry played an important part in my alchemy of the word. /

> I got used to elementary hallucination: I could very precisely see a mosque instead of a factory, a drum corps of angels, horse carts on the highways of the sky, a drawing room at the bottom of a lake; monsters and mysteries; a vaudeville's title filled me with awe. And so I explained my magical sophistries by turning words into visions![144]

Alchemy of the word refers to making unusual combinations of words or sentences to create a startling end result. A *hallucinatory* or *visionary* component is important, both to generate poetry and to maintain it: seeing visions leads to poetic words, seeing poetic words, in turn, leads to new visions. There is a dynamic interplay between seeing things and performing alchemy with words. This has nothing to do with creating gold from lead or some such historical alchemical process, and everything to do with the poetical construct of the 'image', which was a key ingredient of symbolist poetry. Together with the imagination, the eye is privileged and this eye does not necessarily look out upon any external material world. It is the internal eye,

the blind eye. Alchemy of the word operated on the basis of this Rimbaudian words-visions-dynamic for the surrealists.[145] 'Automatic writing undertaken with any enthusiasm leads directly to visual hallucinations,' Breton wrote in 1933 and, clearly, Rimbaud 'had done the same' with his *Alchimie du Verbe*.'[146] In this context, 'alchemy' is shorthand for an automatism-based transformation that is so imaginative that it seems more than the sum of its parts. This parallels the explanation provided by Ernst in his definition of 'alchemy of the visual image,' this painter's equivalent to alchemy of the word. He relates it to collage: '[Collage] is something like alchemy of the visual image [*alchimie de l'image visuelle*]. The miracle of the total transfiguration of beings and objects with or without modification of their physical or anatomical aspect.'[147]

In the process of collage, things do not simply change, they are transfigured, which is to become something else entirely. As before, we encounter a concept with a distinctly religious pedigree ('transfiguration') that is used in a notably secularised manner in the surrealist discourse. Additionally, this transfiguration is a direct result of the fact that the separate elements are such a surprising combination, one the artist has been able to make only because of his clairvoyance and his desire to derange his senses:

> [o]ne can define collage as an alchemical composition of two or more heterogeneous elements, resulting from their unexpected reconciliation owing either to a sensitive will – by means of a love of *clairvoyance* – towards systematic confusion and 'disorder of all the senses' (Rimbaud) or to chance, or to a will favourable to chance.[148]

Breton had praised clairvoyants such as Mme Sacco for making him confuse what has been and what might be, thereby making it real since it could be imagined. Clearly, the same sort of confusion is part and parcel of the practice of the surrealist-seer-alchemist, with the proviso that for the latter the confusion is 'systematic' and driven by 'will,' albeit a 'sensitive' one. As we have seen, sight is the sense most favoured in Surrealism. Note, too, that the impetus for such will is a '*love* of clairvoyance,' something I have termed psychic *Schaulust* above.

The fact that Ernst made so many collages, in particular a famous series of three collage-novels, has led to him being called the 'chief alchemist of the surrealist movement.'[149] I am concerned here with alchemy in a metaphorical sense. I will only concede to Ernst being an alchemist in the context of surrealist alchemy of the word or image, where such surrealist alchemy denotes a visionary technique whereby effect is transformed into cause – another confusion of contradictions. An example related to pattern-gazing

serves to explain. In his essay 'The Automatic Message,' Breton recounted the legend that Leonardo da Vinci recommended that his pupils 'take a long look at the cracks in the wall: "It won't be long [...] before you start to see shapes, and scenes, which become clearer and clearer [...] Then you only have to copy what you see and flesh it out as required." [T]his lesson,' Breton lamented, 'would seem to have been lost.'[150] Of course, it had not been. For instance, divination techniques of looking at tea leaves or clouds were far from unknown at the time. Indeed, publisher and surrealist sympathiser Tériade (1897-1983) noted in the 1930s how he would discover his painting upon the canvas 'the same way that the clairvoyants would see the future in tea leaves.'[151] Surrealists and clairvoyant-mediums both gazed at patterns. Within Surrealism this technique had been rediscovered by Ernst in 1925, when, driven by an 'insupportable visual obsession,' he started gazing first at floor boards and then at the rubbings made of such boards (the technique known as *grattage*). Surprised by 'the sudden intensification of my visionary capacities and by the hallucinatory succession of contradictory images,' Ernst started gazing upon anything, subsequently transforming it into drawings: leaves, linen, modern painting, spool-threads.[152] Through 'a series of suggestions and *transmutations* that offered themselves spontaneously,' in the manner of 'hypnagogic visions,' Ernst maintained, the drawings obtained by grattage and other pattern techniques would transform.[153]

To sum up, visions – hallucinatory visions, clairvoyant visions, hypnagogic visions (which we also remember from the sleeping sessions), etc. – lie at the basis of a process of artistic creation that changes or transmutes the essence of things. Seeing something with ordinary eyes and immediately having visions with one's inner eyes means having vision that is 'at once imaginative and sensory.' This is a quality that poets and mediums share, Breton asserts.[154] I consider it to be the encounter of the surrealist inner model with surrealist painting and with the alienated gaze. Yet, the surrealist is not a passive automatic medium, but rather an active creative alchemist. If we follow leading surrealists such as Breton and Ernst, alchemy of the word and the image is a miraculous – though studied and rationally undertaken – vision-based process that transforms ordinary things into something extra-ordinary and, therefore, surreal.[155]

The Automatic Message: The state of grace

I would like to end this chapter by discussing Breton's previously mentioned 'The Automatic Message' and the synthesising vision he posited in it: a 'state

of grace' where perception and representation are one, the most perfect instance of visual alchemy. The surrealist aims for this state but can never attain it – but the mad and the mediumistic can, as they have no trouble turning the 'messages' of their creative subliminal into automatic art. Hence, the title of Breton's essay, which refers directly to Frederick Myers and his idea about messages of the subliminal.[156] For the surrealists, understanding such messages was problematic, which is perhaps why Breton wrote in the essay that 'the history of automatic writing in Surrealism is one of continuous misfortune.'[157] The Automatic Message' (1933) is the climax of Bretonian Surrealism's fascination with mad and mediumistic art. Moreover, besides demonstrating the viability of automatic art if by the hand of the mad and mediumistic, the essays further serves to illustrate the extent to which Breton conflated mad people and mediums.

Over the course of the late 1920s, Breton would emphasise more and more that the mad and the mediumistic were able to produce visual art automatically. In *Nadja*, for instance, he reproduced drawings from Nadja's hand (such as plates 6 & 7) and took care to stress that they were *automatic* drawings.[158] In 'The Automatic Message,' he included no less than 26 reproductions of works by what he considered 'mediumistic' draughtsmen and women. Among them are *Mozart's house on Jupiter* by Victorien Sardou; three examples of unearthly script, two paintings and two aquarelles by Hélène Smith;[159] Mme Fondrillon's drawing already reproduced in 1925; various other mediumistic drawings and examples of automatic writing;[160] one of Nadja's drawings; a painting by Augustin Lesage and one by 'le Goarant de Tromelin';[161] a photograph of a fantastical 'palace' built by Ferdinand Cheval; and a photograph of a crystal ball, in addition to some other non-mediumistic work.[162] Even though the reproduced works vary in technique, style, material medium and age, and are just as diverse as the artists themselves – some of whom are famous mediums while others are unknown, anonymous or not even mediums – there is, nonetheless, one factor that binds all together: their automatic creation. Two things should be noted. Firstly, that the designation of these works as automatic was not necessarily made by Breton himself, but put forward in the sources whence these reproductions derived. Secondly, that those particular sources all more or less belong to the discipline of dynamic psychiatry. The reproductions of Smith's works, for instance, are derived from Flournoy's *From India* and Deonna's *De la planète Mars*; Sardou's from *La Revue Spirite*; the anonymous fragments from Flournoy's *Esprits et Médiums*; and other works from *Annales des sciences psychiques* and the *Revue métaphysique*.[163] These sources confirm that Breton, at least, was still relying upon dynamic

psychiatry and psychical research for information about mediums. In fact, his entire essay, which is a discussion of automatism and mediumistic art, is framed in a discourse upon experimental psychiatry; he refers to Charcot, Freud, Myers, Flournoy and many others.[164] Any remaining doubts about whether surrealist mediums should be characterised as anything other than *medical* (psychodynamic) mediums are dispelled. Moreover, Breton takes the opportunity to articulate his rejection of, even distaste for, Spiritualism and its belief in communication with the dead once and for all: it is 'nauseating,' 'degrading,' 'posited on a tainted basis' and characterised by 'a staggering level of naivety.'[165]

I emphasise that Breton is interested in the 'medium draughtsmen' not because of their 'unreasonable belief,'[166] but because of their automatically created art. A case in point is his fascination with the medium Smith. He mentioned her in *Nadja* and represented her in 'The Automatic Message' with seven artworks, more than any other artist. I see a clear parallel between his growing and changing interest in Smith and the development of Surrealism into a painter's movement and the accompanying stress upon finding an internal model for one's visions. During Surrealism's early (literary) years, Smith was celebrated for her talent in 'inventing languages.'[167] In 1927, Breton compared her to Nadja, who speaks, writes, acts *and* draws automatically. By 1933, he was lyrical about Smith's creative versatility and represented her evolution from automatic speaking to writing, drawing and, finally, to full-blown painting. Yet, even as her artistic expression developed to include the visual arts, her visions and her underlying talent for automatism remained essentially unchanged. It is that automatism that matters. I argue that the (surrealist) perception that a particular artistic expression is created automatically is the determining factor for calling a particular category of untrained artist 'mediumistic.' *Trained* artists, such as the surrealists, only emulate the mediumistic, but are not mediums themselves. When automatists express their hidden creative self in literary or plastic form, on the other hand, they are called 'mediums.'

A case in point is Ferdinand Cheval (1836-1924), known as 'the postman,' another favourite surrealist medium. Over the course of 33 years, he had built a fabulous fantasy 'palace' in his back yard in the Drôme, based on a remembered dream.[168] An article in the Belgian surrealist journal *Variétés* had introduced Cheval to the Parisian surrealists in 1929,[169] who admired him not least for giving such a large, unique and lasting shape to his dreams. Dali, for instance, referred admiringly to Cheval's sculptural '*poetry* [...] that makes your hair stand on end.'[170] Photographs of the palace – and of Breton standing beside it – were reproduced in various surrealist publications,

not least 'The Automatic Message.' The surrealists considered Cheval a mediumistic architect-cum-sculptor.[171] The fact that Cheval was classified in Surrealism as a (creative) *medium* is quite telling and my main point here, because by most definitions he was no medium at all. Even though his palace may have been inspired by a dream, Cheval built it while conscious, lucid and not in any state of trance. Moreover, he had no interest at all in Spiritualism, nor was he (diagnosed as) mentally ill. Yet, Breton insists on calling him 'the undisputed master of *medium*-derived architecture and sculpture.'[172] What this shows is that for Breton (and by extension, his Surrealism), mediumship is not the qualifier for automatism; on the contrary, it is the other way around. The means justify the end. Alienated artists (patients), mediumistic artists, naïve artists (such as Cheval) and spiritualist artists were all grouped together as 'automatic mediums.' Furthermore, they were compared to children and 'primitives' who were also thought to create automatically and exclusively from their 'hidden creative self.' Even though the category of 'art brut' or outsider art would only be officially created in the 1950s – a development Breton was instrumental in bringing about[173] – the surrealists had fashioned it already, although they referred to it as automatic mediumistic art.

'The Automatic Message' affirms the status of artist-mediums as non-normative, i.e. outsider, artists.[174] Ideologically, O/outsider art functions primarily as the negative of conventional aesthetic criteria; it is a constructed category of subversion. Breton emphasises that the medium draughtspersons are untrained,[175] that they come from simple working class backgrounds ('Machner the tanner', 'Lesage the miner') and are, therefore, uncultured, and that their artistic practice goes entirely against the established grain.[176] He discusses how automatic painter Desmoulin worked without light, with his face covered, even 'back to front, on a slant' too; clearly in a manner entirely 'out of order.'[177] Painting blindly was surely the extreme limit, and, for obvious reasons, inspiring to the surrealists. Such criteria were hardly Breton's invention, nor beholden to Surrealism alone, but already current at the time and, together with additional ones, institutionalised decades later as *the* criteria for art brut.[178] Some scholars employ additional criteria for mediumistic art; others deem the possible mediumship of an outsider artist not relevant at all, or 'an alibi.'[179] Conversely, for Breton and the surrealists the very fact that the medium-artist was (considered) a *medium* was always important – indeed, it was the defining factor; 'regular' outsider artists such as Cheval were made into mediums as well.[180]

Furthermore, I think artistic expression was the underlying touchstone of mediumship. The mediums mentioned by Breton without exception

produced some sort of artistic work, be it stories, invented languages, drawings or paintings. If not creative in word or image, a medium was not considered worth mentioning, and perhaps not even considered a medium at all. Essentially, therefore, artistic mediumship functions in Bretonian Surrealism as a constructed anti-category. It is the negative of conventional rationalism; it is irrational and even without conscious thought entirely.[181] Creative expressions of mediums are derived from the 'subliminal,' the same place the surrealists intend to obtain their own automatic poems and artworks from.[182]

Finally, the artistic mediums are also considered seers, who have 'the most fugitive visions.' As mentioned earlier, medium-seer-clairvoyant is one fluid category in Bretonian Surrealism. To stress that point, Breton included a photograph of a crystal ball – his own – in 'The Automatic Message,' twice, flanking the title. Its caption: *'le boule de cristal des voyantes.'*[183] '[T]his ball,' he wrote, 'empty in full sunlight, but which in the dark may reveal all manner of things.'[184] In my opinion, 'full sunlight' refers to the harsh light of reason, while 'the dark' represents the irrational and heterodox. If there were any doubt whether the automatic message was delivered via ordinary means of perception, the crystal ball is there to disabuse one of such an idea while simultaneously stressing that the specific *means* of perception is sight.

In the end, all concerns boil down to the issue of internal, imaginative, vision:

> There is no fundamental difference between the ambition of a poem
> by Paul Éluard or Benjamin Péret and the ambitions of a canvas by
> Max Ernst, Miró or Tanguy. Liberated from the need to reproduce
> forms essentially taken from the outer world, painting benefits in
> its turn from the only external element that no art can do without,
> namely inner representation, *the image present to the mind*.[185]

Still, looking upon internal models is all very well, but by the second half of the 1920s surreality was moving from inside the mind to the outside too; that is to say, to the perception of outside reality, which is, of course, a rapport that originates in the mind. Surreality turned out to be immanent. Therefore, an additional form of vision became necessary; namely, one that would allow one to perceive the surreal in the real. Alienation of the real was one of the techniques for this. Breton further posited the existence of a certain 'state of grace' where perception and representation are one. Alternatively, it is a state in which seeing sensorially and imaginatively become one. In any case, it is a transcending of the differences between

two opposites, the objective and the subjective, but one that should never be reached – by the surrealist, at any rate. The mad mediums had, in fact, achieved such a state, but they were not surrealists, for whom in fact the awareness of contradiction was essential to their actual experience of sur-reality. In the end, I wonder if Breton really considered the surrealist project to make oneself a seer successful. In 'The Automatic Message' he questions the visionary powers of the poet-seers that have been so inspiring to him, Rimbaud and Lautréamont. He argues for an experience of 'illumination' rather than of vision. Moreover, such '"illumination" comes *afterwards*.'[186] As I will argue in the next chapter, an identification of experiences a pos-teriori as miraculous became of considerable importance to Surrealism in the 1930s. Of course, one should not think that all the effort spent on determining, chasing and attaining vision were in any way unnecessary. Breton conceded that hallucinatory visions still remained the key to sur-realist automatism. However, he immediately posed a new challenge: those hallucinations or 'unverifiable visual images' will triumph 'by means of the *aural*.' To summarise, one 'should be *listening* to the painters.'[187]

Similar paradoxes lie at the basis of surrealist vision. The surrealist seer sees because he is blind. He dreams with eyes open and, when he does, he dreams of woman, she who is seen, she who sees, and she who is the object of his desire for perceiving the surreal.

3. The 'Golden Age' of the omnipotent mind

Introduction

By the end of the 1920s, life was turning sour for Breton. Financially, amorously, but, most of all, socially. He was at odds with many of his (by now former) friends. The *Second Manifesto* (1929) is pungent, with an angry undertone, and many surrealists from the early days – Naville, Soupault, Desnos – were publicly excommunicated in it.[1] Some of those banished gathered around Georges Bataille and struck back at Breton with the pamphlet *'Un Cadavre.'* The group Grand Jeu broke away for good.[2] During the early years of the 1930s, things did not look up. Political trouble was also brewing.[3] Despite the fact that Breton had given the second surrealist periodical the rather obvious name *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution,* the French Communist Party (PCF) had made it clear that they were not interested in any *surrealist* revolution – only communist party-line action was condoned, and the Party would not support the artistic freedom that Breton deemed essential. A decade earlier, Dada and Surrealism had been at the political forefront. Now, the surrealist revolution was being relegated to the side-lines of the political left, rather than the vanguard, just at a time when fascism was on the rise on the right.[4] Aragon broke with the movement and with Breton to pursue his communist career.[5] The addition of new blood to the Breton group – notably, two Spaniards, Louis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí – did nothing to lessen the tensions and internal political strife. Also Breton was not satisfied with Surrealism itself, a discontent that was first expressed in the *Second Manifesto* and continued in the early years of the 1930s. Automatism and the dream, central pursuits of Surrealism, were by no means as risqué as they had been in the early 1920s. The question Breton explored at length in 'The Automatic Message' (1933) is whether automatism could still be considered a successful approach, as I have discussed in the previous chapter. His dissatisfaction was also due to the increasing popularity and public profile of Surrealism. Surrealism was becoming gradually more known outside of its own circles, and less disputed too – a development rather contrary to its supposed radical avant-garde nature. Slowly, but no less surely, the *embourgeoisment* of Surrealism was under way.[6] This development was already in the air before Surrealism's second

decade even began and, in his *Second Manifesto* of 1929, Breton asked
for 'the profound [...] occultation of Surrealism,' which followed hard on
the heels of the warning that 'the approval of the public must be avoided
like the plague.'[7] While his demand clearly plays on the association with
occultism, it should be understood primarily as an expression of the
desire to restrict access.

Thus, in the first few years of the 1930s the political cause was not doing
too well and a surrealist revolution was not in evidence. The movement
needed to attain more 'occultation,' more exclusivity. Its members were
ready for new inspiration after the angry schisms. Breton himself could
do with a new love in his life, while the methodological approaches of
dream and automatism could use an overhaul. Even if the essential aims
of Surrealism remained quite unchanged, a change in the means of ac-
complishing those aims was needed: a new course, a novel approach to
the surrealist revolution.[8] To put it in contemporary parlance: Surrealism
2.0 was due. Accordingly, a number of fresh approaches, people, ideas and
significant course adjustments were introduced in the 1930s. I will not go
into the political changes here, apart from mentioning that the already
tense political alliance with the PCF came to an end in 1935 and that as
a political force Bretonian Surrealism, now oriented towards Trotskyism,
became increasingly marginalised despite all efforts to the contrary. Nor
will I discuss the personal additions and changes, or the complex rela-
tionship with the Bataille group, besides a brief mention here and there.
What I will explore is how Breton created an all-encompassing surrealist
universe, something simultaneously marvellous, enchanted, secular and
scientifically oriented, in a unity of paradoxes that only Surrealism would
be able to pull off.

To start with, I shall discuss his demand for the 'occultation' of Surreal-
ism. It is embedded in the *Second Manifesto* in a wide-ranging discussion
that includes many occult references. I will argue that these particular
references show that Breton's familiarity with occult topics was quite
detailed in some instances, but rather superficial or non-existent in other.
It will become clear that, at least at that moment in time, the call for an
'occultation' in the occult sense may have come from the heart, but it
was hardly founded upon knowledge of occultism or esotericism or an
overarching plan for how to achieve such an 'occultation.' Nevertheless, in
the 1930s, Breton did lay the groundwork for a more profound 'occultation'
in later decades. This was done by creating what I will call a correspond-
ing surrealist universe. In various publications and on other occasions it
was emphasised that the surrealists were making marvellous predictions

and that incidents occurred that were more than coincidental. For this, Breton created a new concept: 'objective chance.' Prophecy, uncanny motifs and beings and 'preordained' encounters made their appearance in surrealist literary and visual art. Of course, Surrealism retained both its fierce secular stance and its reliance upon the psyche as the key to everything; in the marvellous surrealist universe there are no miracles and supernatural interventions, there are only manifestations of the mind. No force or being is omnipotent, the *mind* is. In Surrealism's first decade, the concern had primarily been the relationship between conscious and unconscious thought, as investigated from one's study room. By the time of *Nadja*, the surrealists were taking to the streets to find evidence of the surreal. In the second decade, this solidified into a full-fledged investigation of the relationship between thought and the phenomenal world.[9] One should not think this a neutral relation; rather, the insistence upon the omnipotence of the mind in the world shows that the surrealist engages in a rapport with it. Surrealist thought dominates and manifests itself; all marvellous incidents, the correspondences appearing to be inherent in the surrealist universe, are driven by the surreal mind. As we are dealing with a movement itself motivated by an obsession with love (in all forms), it is, in the end, *desire* that prompts the surrealist mind's perception of correspondences.

To bring about surreality a surrealist all-encompassing worldview was created, similarly secular and enchanted. Because of its seemingly irrational and magical particularity, this worldview also served to safeguard Surrealism from the common public. Breton based it upon the worldview of 'primitives' as he understood it, the pre-rationalist and magical experience of the world. He also associated it with the western cultural past, principally as shaped and retained in myths, legends and fairy tales. High on his political agenda was the belief that the world was in need of a new collective myth. As will be demonstrated, as the decade progressed, Surrealism committed firmly to the reality of dreams, objective incidents and the external manifestation of internal desire. Surrealism aligned with myths and mythology. The creation of new (surrealist) myths, or *mythopoeia*, was facilitated by the marvellous surrealist universe. In later chapters, I will explore how Breton would take his exploration of myth and the magical worldview further and expand into the realm of occultism in the 1940s and 50s. The essential groundwork for an occultation of Surrealism in the occult sense was laid during the 1930s, however; the period canonically known as Surrealism's Golden Age.

To conceal, to distinguish, to occult

In the *Second Manifesto* (1929), Breton questions where Surrealism is and where it should it go, while bitterly fulminating against some of his former partners who had left him for Bataille. Near the end he arrives at the central point:

> The approval of the public is to be avoided like the plague. It is absolutely essential to keep the public from *entering* if one wishes to avoid confusion. I must add that the public must be kept panting in expectation at the gate by a system of challenges and provocations. I ASK FOR THE PROFOUND, THE VERITABLE OCCULTATION OF SURREALISM.
> I proclaim, in this matter, the right of absolute severity. No concessions to the world, and no grace.[10]

As others have also argued,[11] there are two sides to this demand. To start with, it is obvious that Breton is concerned about Surrealism's apparent openness and its relation to the public. The first three sentences boil down to this: the public must be kept out. Within this context, Breton demands that Surrealism be occulted. 'Occultation' is here used in its customary French meaning: a concealment, darkening or occluding that would make Surrealism less or inaccessible. 'To conceal' lies at the root of the very word 'occultism.'[12] Still, the overt meaning, the demand for concealment, does not detract from the association with occultism. This association is supported by the pages immediately preceding and following the statement, in which occultism appears to be a predominant theme, which I will discuss below. The context strongly supports the suggestion that Breton's demand is also a call for Surrealism to interact with occultism in one way or another. This double aspect of (to) occult – to conceal and to associate with occultism – is already present in the very term 'occultation,' which Breton very probably derived from the *Three Books Concerning Occult Philosophy* (1533) by Heinrich Agrippa, the third book specifically.[13] Agrippa used 'occultation' in the sense of concealing or hiding, an interpretation retained by Breton.[14] What we are dealing with here is, first and foremost, a typically surrealist wordplay of double entendres, a game requiring a certain amount of erudite knowledge and certainly proficiency in French to fathom. Meaning (to conceal) and context (occultism) form a web that encompasses the Renaissance magician, his occultly titled books and chapter, Breton's unaccredited citation, the origin of 'occult,' 'occultation' and 'occultism,' and the immediate context of his demand.

Now, to the association with occultism. Scholars have considered the demand for 'occultation' in various lights. Typically, the interpretations range from an expression of a 'confrontation with the esoteric message;'[15] or a sign that Breton wants to have 'an "in" [sic] with the occult' and an indication of 'how necessary it is that surrealism comes to a serious recognition of the occult sciences;'[16] to a move on Breton's part to claim Surrealism as 'heir to the secrets of [the] hermetic doctrine.'[17] One thing usually remains implicit, however: Breton's double agenda in phrasing his demand so that associations with occultism seem a matter of course. His main aim is to employ that association as a strategy of distinction, regardless of occult content; a more in-depth engagement with occultism is only secondary. In the first instance, the demand, seen in its context, suggests that he indeed has 'an "in" with the occult.' Breton plays upon the heterodox appeal of occultism, practising the game of namedropping proficiently; besides Agrippa, he mentions alchemist Nicolas Flamel, the 'manuscript of Abraham the Jew,' and 'the alchemists,' 'the cabalists' and 'the Magi.'[18] Yet, in the few pages where occult matters are discussed, the names of Rimbaud and Lautréamont are just as prominent, if not more so; Breton is positioning his movement as an 'heir' to 'hermeticism' to show that he and Surrealism are heirs to the revered predecessors of Romanticism and Symbolism. For example, the alchemy of Flamel is discussed as another form of Rimbaudian Alchemy of the Word.[19] Moreover, Breton had been pointed towards Agrippa and his *Books Concerning Occult Philosophy* by his hero Guillaume Apollinaire, and may well have picked them up to tread in Apollinaire's footsteps.[20] His unattributed and rather complicated references and citations testify to his desire to clothe his demand for 'occultation' in erudite and obscure terms.

Besides the posturing of meddling in heterodox business (as any *avant-gardiste* should), I do think that the demand also expresses, albeit more implicitly, a desire to 'confront' an occult message; this is the secondary agenda. This confrontation occurs on Surrealism's poetic terms, however. In 1929, the question was how to bend certain elements of occultism to Surrealism's end, be it creating boundaries to keep the public out, a strategy of distinction, or an exploration of methods or concepts useful for Surrealism.

Agrippa, Flamel and Abraham the Jew

The passage leading up to the demand for occultation starts with a brief discussion of Rimbaudian Alchemy of the Word, which 'demands to be taken literally;'[21] that is, *words* should be transformed. Then Flamel is considered

and his discovery of a manuscript written by a certain Abraham the Jew. Flamel, his work and a group of illustrations supposedly based upon originals by Abraham the Jew had been brought to the attention of Breton and other surrealists by Grillot de Givry, who discussed them in his book *Musée des Sorciers*, published and reviewed just before the *Second Manifesto* came out, and certainly on Breton's reading list.[22] It is probable that Breton used Grillot de Givry as a starting point, then developing his ideas further using a nineteenth-century French historical study of alchemy and Flamel by Albert Poisson.[23] Independently, the Bataille group also explored Flamel, the manuscript of Abraham the Jew and the alchemical illustrations, something Breton comments upon in a footnote.[24]

Breton continues,

> I would appreciate your noting the remarkable analogy, insofar as their goals are concerned, between the surrealist efforts and those of the alchemists: the philosopher's stone is nothing more or less than that which was to enable man's imagination to take a stunning revenge on all things, which brings us once again, after centuries of the mind's domestication and insane resignation, to the attempt to liberate once and for all the imagination by the "long, immense, reasoned derangement of the senses", and all the rest.[25]

Breton compares the efforts of 'the alchemists' in creating the stone with the shaping of the mind into a tool by means of Rimbaud's celebrated recipe to derange the senses. This equation of the stone with the imagination is a very romantic thing to do and a clear sign that he associated alchemy with a mental process of refinement.[26] As José Pierre has pointed out, one should read here (between the lines) a strategy of distinction where Breton associates *his* branch of Surrealism with the supposedly noble and clean *mental* pursuits of the alchemists, to distinguish himself from Bataille and his obsession with physical matter, preferably dirty and scatological.[27] Only a few pages on, Breton mentions the 'impeccable state of cleanliness' of 'the Magi' and relates it to 'certain practices of mental alchemy,' which he juxtaposes with Bataille and 'his absurd campaign.'[28] This 'mental alchemy' should not be confused with spiritual alchemy, by the way; it is not so much a process of sublimation to become a better person, let alone a process of spiritual purification to become a better Christian, but the typical (Bretonian) surrealist process of breaking down the doors of rationalism through exercises in irrationalism and accessing the authentic mind for poetic ends.[29]

Breton's tendency to treat everything out of the ordinary as poetry also comes into play in his discussion of occult matters; for example, in the various brief (and unaccredited) citations from Agrippa's *Books of Occult Philosophy*, the third and (spurious) fourth book specifically, which follow immediately upon the demand for 'occultation.'[30] For instance, the comment that 'the book of evil' should be written on white, even virgin, parchment seems to me a statement that appealed primarily to surrealist black humour.[31] Just as when Agrippa's name was first included in *Erutarettil* of 1923 [plate 1], the reader is not given any information about the man, his works or his worldview in the *Second Manifesto* either.

The text goes on to cite descriptions of two alchemical illustrations and develops Breton's earlier comments about Flamel and Abraham the Jew. The illustrations are part of a group described by Flamel, allegedly deriving originally from a mysterious manuscript of the equally mysterious Abraham. The two illustrations Breton discusses were reproduced together with a third in *Documents* 5 (1929).[32] Breton includes the more evocative details about Sun and Moon bathing in a bath of blood and old men with clocks attached to their heads, but leaves out the mystical and religious part of the original as well as the actual alchemical interpretations, suppressing the phrases that would identify the old man as Death, for instance, and failing to mention that the blood in the bath was connected in the original text and images to the (Biblical) Massacre of the Innocents.[33] Thus, bypassing any alchemical, let alone *religious*, content, he moves on:

> And let it be clearly understood that we are not talking about a simple regrouping of words or a capricious redistribution of visual images, but of the re-creation of a state which can only be fairly compared to that of madness [...].

The core of Breton's objective is revealed here: deranging the mind to make it into the perfect poet's tool, a 'state comparable to madness.' Having thus associated the illustrations, originally alchemical but totally stripped of that context, as mere 'visual images,' comparable or perhaps even germane to a particular state of madness, he continues with some comments on Rimbaud's Alchemy and the importance of the word as *Word*. He notes that to 'the cabalists' the Word is the 'initial cause of all causes,' but again bypasses the (rather profound) religious meaning of the Word as cause of all causes and discusses it only in a Rimbaudian poetical sense.[34]

Breton then moves on to an anecdote about Flamel, who was apparently seen in different centuries, leading him to the following:

Great things can come of the modern shunting of certain wills in the future: asserting themselves in the wake of ours, they will make themselves more implacable than ours. In any case, we shall in my opinion have done enough by having helped demonstrate the scandalous inanity of what, even when we arrived on the scene, *was being thought*, and by having maintained – if only maintained – that it was necessary for what had been thought to give way at last to the *thinkable*.[35]

By the end of this passage, we have come to the essence: the interaction between what is *thought* and what is *thinkable*. Earlier, I discussed Breton's praise for parlour clairvoyants for making him confuse what is and what might be, thus making both possibilities true on the basis of the premise that once something is thought, it is real. Clearly, he refers to a similar principle here, and all his discussion of occult characters and sources is only a prelude. Flamel's apparent longevity is not interpreted as a sign of his successful alchemical achievements, but rather provided as an interesting anecdote on the confusion of the possible and probable. Now, even if his poetical reading of Agrippa, his equating of the alchemical pursuit with a honing of the mind by derangement and his stripping of illustrations of their alchemical content, does not already point out that what is at stake here is poetry, Surrealism and priming the mind for psychic automatism (and not occultism), this last discourse on thought and the thinkable does. The context of the demand for 'occultation' and the demand itself show a passing knowledge of a limited amount of occult sources, from which Breton picks and chooses a number of evocative details and citations to serve only poetical and surrealist ends.[36]

Is Breton's demand for 'occultation' only a feigned allegiance to heterodox occultism? Not quite. As said above, I do think that underlying his motives was also a genuine desire to engage the occult. Yet, it is fair to say that, at this point in time, Breton's understanding of occultism was haphazard and in no way comprehensive. It is apparent that he had studied the story of Flamel and the mysterious manuscript of Abraham the Jew; for example, the enigmatic term 'Maranatha' occurs several times in it and Breton uses it (once) as a mysterious malediction.[37] I have been unable to discover whether Breton already had Poisson's *Histoire de l'alchimie: Nicolas Flamel* in his possession before the end of the 1920s, or if he picked it up after his interest was piqued by Grillot de Givry's *Le Musée des Sorciers* early in 1929.[38] His familiarity with the Flamel case seems to be more or less the extent of his background and interests in alchemical history and lore, let alone occultism generally. There is one exception, a brief obsession with astrology that I shall

discuss below. Taken together, it follows that an 'occultation' of Surrealism would never be an occultation in the sense of really joining forces with occultism – for now, at least.

Bringing about the 'occultation'

Breton did, however, ponder how Surrealism should engage the occult, in a rather long footnote to the demand for 'occultation':

> But I expect people to ask me how one can bring about this occulta-tion. [...] I think we would not be wasting our time by probing seriously into those sciences which for various reasons are today completely discredited. I am speaking of astrology, among the oldest of sciences, metaphysics (especially as it concerns the study of cryptesthesia) among the modern. [...] [W]e must also reckon with the gift of dissociation and clairvoyance [...] I ask, once again, that we submit ourselves to the mediums who do exist, albeit no doubt in very small numbers, and that we subordinate our interest – which ought not to be overestimated – in what we are doing to the interest which the first of their messages offers. [...]
> More than ever – since what we are discussing here are the possibili-ties of occultation of Surrealism – I turn toward those who are not afraid to conceive of love as the site of ideal occultation of all thought.[39]

I am not surprised that the demand for 'occultation' and the surrounding text filled with references to Flamel, alchemy and 'Magi', has, in combina-tion with this particular note, led many to an interpretation of Surrealism as allied to occultism or esotericism. Yet, this footnote reveals the 'occultation' to be rather one-sided. Breton links 'occultation,' in the first instance, to 'discredited' sciences: again, something heterodox and rejected by bourgeois rationalism and thus worthy of surrealist interests, even more so because they are *sciences* – remember that Surrealism was also intended to be seri-ous research into the irrational. The occult science specifically mentioned is astrology, but curiously enough not alchemy or magic, although that would be expected. Breton took a particular interest in his horoscope, but astrology had a rather minor career in Surrealism. Alchemy, on the other hand, was already relevant for Surrealism by the time of the *Second Manifesto*, albeit in a rather distorted form. As time went on, it would only become more important, and the same is true for magic, which would appear on the

surrealist scene during the late 1930s. The fact that they are not mentioned here shows how the 'occultation' was fuelled more by Breton's then current and perhaps spur-of-the-moment interests than a well-prepared plan.

Still, in 1929 astrology did make an appearance. Again in a footnote, Breton notes an '"Uranian" influence' upon Surrealism, which might in part be another instance of surrealist black humour because, as he himself laments, no critical studies of the astrological influence of Uranus were as yet available.[40] This means, moreover, he continues, that the astrological chart of Baudelaire, born under the conjunction of Uranus and Neptune, 'thereby remains as it were uninterpretable [sic].' Another Uranian conjunction, this time with Saturn, presided over the birth of Aragon and Éluard (his oldest friends) as well as, Breton writes, his own. This conjunction signifies, according to *Influence Astrale* by Paul Choisnard,

> A deep attachment to the sciences, an inquisitive interest in the
> mysterious, and profound need to learn. [...]
> Who knows whether [this] conjunction [...] may not give birth to
> a new school in the realm of science? This relative position of the
> planets, properly spaced in a horoscope, could correspond to the
> make-up of a man endowed with the qualities of reflection, sagacity,
> and independence, a man capable of becoming a first-class investiga-
> tor.[41]

It is clear why Breton would have felt drawn to this description, as one assumes he related it to his movement ('the school'), its semi-scientific aspirations ('the realm of science') and himself as a person (the 'sage man'). That Uranus also presided over the birth of such an esteemed predecessor as Baudelaire certainly added to his conviction that Surrealism could not be denied an 'Uranian influence.' Around 1930, Breton decisively connected the Uranus-Saturn conjunction to his Surrealism: the logo of *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*, reproduced on each cover, consists of a shield with the signs of the two planets intertwined. Furthermore, Breton changed his birth date by one day, from 19 to 18 February (1896), to move his horoscope from Pisces to Aquarius. There are apparently a number of personal reasons for this and most of them remain shrouded in mystery, unfortunately; one thing that is clear is that he felt that a birthday on the 18th established even closer links between himself and beloved precursors such as Rimbaud, Nerval and (later) Fourier. Rimbaud's horoscope was reproduced in *Minotaure* 3-4 (1933), while an unpublished horoscope of Baudelaire apparently circulated among the group.[42] Breton's new birth date numerologically

yielded the number 17, a totemic number for him as, at a certain point, he began to consider his initials (AB) to equal 1317. [43]

Let us return to the occultation footnote, cited above. Breton goes on to refer to mediums and clairvoyance, but, true to form, does so in direct psychodynamic context. He equates clairvoyance with the psychiatric concept of dissociation: one must 'reckon with the gift of dissociation and clairvoyance;' and further introduces *cryptesthesia*, a term invented by psychiatrist Richet. Breton switches between the outsider perspective of the educated man, using scientific terms also including 'metaphysics,' and the inside perspective of the surrealist who puts so much stock on mediumistic automatism. The main occult content of this footnote consists of a combination of astrology and comments on Uranus, and psychodynamic references to mediums, which means it is hardly an introduction to either an occult practice or occultism. I think it makes clear that while Breton was probably sincere in his desire to occult Surrealism, also in an esoteric sense, the moment for that to happen had just not arrived. Distinction was his more pressing concern: he wants to show that he may have 'an "in" with the occult,' and even though he would only fathom the extent to which the romantic and symbolist poets were indebted to the occultism of their time in 1943, he was familiar enough with it to emulate it somewhat, with his references to alchemy, Flamel and 'Books of Magic' interspersed among references to Rimbaud and Baudelaire. Accordingly, while I would perhaps not go so far as Chadwick who understands the demand for 'occultation' as a move on Breton's part to claim Surrealism as 'heir to the secrets of [the] hermetic doctrine,'[44] I do find that he was claiming inheritance to a *romantic* doctrine, including its occult overtones. In line with that, the demand for occultation can be seen as an indication that some sort of exchange with occultism was deemed necessary, albeit not yet a genuine confrontation.

Finally, and most importantly, at the end of the occultation footnote *love* is proclaimed the 'site of ideal occultation of all thought.'[45] Poetry, love and revolution are the essential concerns of Surrealism. This is also the case with the 'occultation' of Surrealism: revolution is its main motive (keeping remote from the public, associating with heterodoxy), poetry is its main process (alchemy of the *word*) and love is 'the site of ideal occultation.' The most potent instrument of the surrealist was the deranged mind and the most potent power was love.

During the 1930s, Bretonian Surrealism took an important step in the process towards occultation: it established a corresponding universe based on thought. Steven Harris has determined the change between the 1920s and 1930s as a 'fundamental shift' from 'a confidence in the self-sufficiency

and superiority of an autonomous, unconscious though process (such as is expressed in automatic writing and other surrealist techniques), to an acknowledgement of the interdependence of thought and the phenomenal world.[46] This shift, which I will discuss below, was anticipated by Breton in the *Second Manifesto* in his point about how the relation between thought and the thinkable is essential.

Prophecies, premonitions, predictions – surrealist correspondences

In 1931, Victor Brauner painted *Self-portrait with plucked eye* [plate 11]. By 1934, Brauner had been made welcome in the surrealist group. In 1938, Brauner was caught in the middle of a brawl and lost his eye – the same one he had painted himself without years before. The marvellous though tragic nature of the 1931 painting, which had suddenly become a premonitory piece, was not lost on the surrealist group or on Brauner himself. As shown earlier, the paradox being blind-having vision was an important theme in Surrealism. Brauner had been painting eyes and including vision-related symbolism in his art for over a decade, which only became more significant after the 1938 event. Pierre Mabille immortalised Brauner, his lost eye, the incident and, above all, the marvellous revelation of the prophetic content of *Self-portrait with plucked eye* (and all other vision-related iconography of Brauner) in a psychoanalytically oriented article in *Minotaure* 12-13 (1938): '*L'Oeil du peintre*.' In it, Mabille argues that all events in Brauner's life, even if the artist himself had been unaware of it, had led to that fateful incident. The loss of his eye was nothing less than an event of *objective chance*: something that reveals the marvellous that is, and that is in, Surrealism.[47]

Brauner was not the only one to be caught up in an apparently predicted event. A number of them occurred; most, though not all, involving Breton. Surrealists and scholars have deemed them prophetic, premonitory, presaging, predictive, clairvoyant, precognisant and visionary; for convenience, I will use 'prediction'. Besides the Brauner incident, one other predicted event came to define 1930s Surrealism: Breton's meeting with the woman who was to be his second wife. Also known as the Sunflower prediction, it was to be the central premise of Breton's novel *Mad Love* (1937). Breton met the woman in question, Jacqueline Lamba (1910-1993), in café Cyrano on the Place Blanche in Paris, 29 May 1934. He was awe-struck by her 'scandalous' beauty. At the time, Lamba worked as an 'undine,' or underwater dancer.

They arranged to meet again later that night and strolled through Paris until early morning, ending up in the district of *les Halles* at an auspicious place, the Tour St. Jacques. Three months later, they were married. A few days after first meeting Lamba, Breton – or so he tells the reader in *Mad Love* – suddenly felt the need to look up '*Tournesol*' (Sunflower), a poem he had written in 1923 and had always been dissatisfied with.[48] Rereading it, he realised that the poem was nothing short of visionary, apparently describing all that had just come to pass during the first meeting with Lamba more than a decade later: 'I say there isn't anything in this poem of 1923 that did not announce the most important things to happen to me in 1934.'[49] Breton provides a new interpretation in *Mad Love*, matching the poem line for line to all the particulars of his encounter with Lamba. For instance, the first line of 'Sunflower' mentions *les Halles*, the neighbourhood where the two of them walked. Near the end, there is a reference to a woman swimming, which was Lamba's profession. The poem presents 'most striking prediction[s],' Breton finds, positing 'Sunflower' as 'prophetical.'[50]

Breton's 'recognition' of the Sunflower prediction turned out to be only the beginning. A number of other predictive events occurred in Breton's work and life and he was the first to point them out.[51] The earliest one involves a short play from 1920 that is said to include a prediction of a fire.[52] Much more pertinent were predictions of the escalation of hostilities across Europe in 1939 and the beginning of the Second World War. In his 'Letter to the Seers' (1925), Breton had stated towards the end: 'There are people who claim that the war [the First World War] taught them something; even so they aren't as far along as I am, since I know what the year 1939 has in store for me.'[53] In a 1929 essay written with Aragon, a similar question was asked: '[w]hat does 1940 have in store for us?'[54] What was in store was that Breton would be called to report for medical duty near the end of 1939, when France declared war on Germany, and that the whole Parisian surrealist group would disperse to various ends of the earth in 1940, never to reunite in the same form again. The gloomy and fear-inspiring set-up of the surrealist exhibition of 1938, unlit and filled with oppressive coal dust, turned out to have been another prophecy of the dark days to come.[55]

Throughout the 1920s, less momentous predicted incidents occurred. Breton's encounter with Nadja, for instance, is said to have been predicted during one of the sleeping sessions.[56] A coal sign seems to have been a catalyst for strange predictive events. One Sunday, Breton writes in *Nadja* that he saw a sign that said '*bois-charbons*' ('wood-coal'), and he included a photograph by Boiffard of the same sign in *Nadja* to emphasise its impor-

tance. *Bois-charbons* is also the last word of *The Magnetic Fields* and appears in other works by Breton from the 1920s too.[57] Clearly, it had been on Breton's mind for a while, and that particular Sunday the sign suddenly enabled Breton to 'exercise a bizarre talent for prospecting': the ability to predict where to find that same term in other locations, leaving him frightened by his both his predictions and obsession with the phrase.[58]

Other surrealists are also said to have made predictions. During a 'game of truth,' one of the many games the surrealist group played in the 1920s, Jacques Baron jokingly claimed that René Crevel would be the first among them to commit suicide. To everybody's horror, this prediction came true in 1935. 'For ever after,' Baron would say later, he felt himself 'haunted' by Crevel.[59] Another instance is the imaginary epitaph Soupault wrote for Éluard in 1920, closing with: 'Fluffy clouds are far in the distance / And you left without saying goodbye;'[60] words that were interpreted to have predicted a journey Éluard undertook very suddenly in 1924. Desnos apparently made a number of predictions during the sleeping sessions. As a rule, these were not taken seriously then as predictions, although they were as literary expressions. Breton declared: 'Surrealism has come of age and Desnos is its prophet.'[61] The one prediction that did seem to come true was the separation between himself and Breton Desnos had predicted for 1929, which did occur that very same year to their mutual resentment and regret. The reunion Desnos had foreseen for 1949 never came to pass; he perished in a Nazi prison camp in 1944.[62]

What should we make of all these predictions? Bretonian Surrealism was always outspokenly hostile towards such concepts as providence or super-natural agency. Yet, by describing these incidents as 'prophetic,' Breton and others were clearly claiming that something extra-normal, if not necessarily super-natural, had taken place. Some historians and critics have struggled with an apparent contradiction between atheism, on the one hand, and the validation of prophecy, on the other. Often, they have downplayed the incidents or their prophetic nature, rather employing (Freudian) concepts such as doubling, repetition or re-enactment – an approach that pays little heed to the fact that Breton et alia chose a terminology that was neither neutral, nor psychoanalytic.[63] Another approach has been to overemphasise the supposed prophecy so as to associate these incidents and, via them, Surrealism with occult forces or the paranormal.[64]

I find these prophetic incidents to be important for a number of reasons. Firstly, they exemplify the form of *secular* mysticism that is so particular to Surrealism. An idea, thing or, in this case, event that is usually associated with metaphysical and/or religious worldviews is incorporated into the sur-

realist universe and rigorously secularised in the process. The marvellous, as the overarching category, is extra-normal, perhaps super-real, but never *supernatural*. Thus, surrealist prophecy is marvellous, but it is also natural, part of Surrealism. Part of the secularity of surrealist predictions is that all events were proclaimed prophetic only *after* the fact. No surrealist prediction was ever expressly and seriously made as a prophecy beforehand. While it may seem easy to proclaim statements or events to be prophetic in hindsight, in fact hindsight is essential to the modus operandi of surrealist predictions:

> Now, it may be that surrealism, by opening certain doors that rationalism boasted of having boarded up for good, had enabled us to make here and there an excursion into the future, on condition that we should not be aware at the time that it was the future we were entering, that we should become aware of this and be able to make it evident only a posteriori.[65]

The fact that surrealist predictions are only revealed as such a posteriori separates them from fortune-telling, (supernatural) prophesying or metaphysical foreseeing of the future. Surrealist future-cognition was firmly anchored in the secular, yet not in rationality. It is the irrational side of the real – the marvellous – that manifests when predictions seem to come true. And it is recognition that such incursion of the surreal into the real has come to pass that the identification of a predication is based upon.

The second reason I think these predictions are important is that they exemplify Breton's view that embracing Surrealism means living in a world full of correspondences. Many of the incidents are rather minor or far-fetched and they would have been forgotten or dismissed, had Breton not made them important. He set out to show that the interaction of reality and surreality is constant and the predictions, like surrealist clairvoyance in general, emphasise the interconnection, as he envisioned it, between things in the world and, primarily, between things in the mind and the world. The world of Surrealism is a 'cryptogram' waiting to be deciphered, with the surrealist as the great solver of riddles who identifies, a posteriori and in a flash of irrational insight, the hidden connections showing that wo/man, mind and world are intimately connected.[66] Even though they may not appear logical, the connections are still causal and answerable to a certain surreal logic. Breton:

> '[Surrealism facilitates] certain incandescent flashes linking two elements of reality belonging to categories that are so far removed from

each other that reason would fail to connect them and that require a momentary suspension of the critical attitude in order for them to be brought together. [...] The mind [...] proves to itself, fragmentarily of course, but at least *by itself*, that "everything above is like everything below" and everything inside is like everything outside. The world thereupon seems to be like a cryptogram which remains indecipherable only so long as one is not thoroughly familiar with the gymnastics that permit one to pass at will from one piece of apparatus to another [that is, metaphor].[67]

The corresponding universe of Surrealism is one in which all things are potentially connected in meaningful ways. With 'everything above is like everything below,' Breton paraphrased the famous hermetic saying 'as above, so below.' The notion of correspondences is an integral – often preeminent – part of esoteric and occult worldviews, and by emphasising that the surrealist universe is a corresponding one, Breton closely aligned his movement with occult thought. To be more specific, with occult Symbolism, as it was the romantic and symbolist notions of prophetic dreams and vision, correspondences, associations and analogies, themselves inspired by occult currents, that served Breton as a model.[68] For poets such as Rimbaud and Baudelaire, the world was 'a forest of symbols' – and so Breton made the surrealist world too.

In a 1941 essay, Breton attributed 'as above, so below' to *The Emerald Tablet*, allegedly authored by Hermes Trismegistus. He gives the following version: 'all that is below is as all that is above to accomplish the miracle of a single thing.'[69] His use of this saying and Hermes' name is sometimes provided as proof of Surrealism's occult involvement.[70] Yet, one should note that in the surrealist context 'above' and 'below' are not in any sense metaphysical supra-lunar or subterranean locations, or divine and mundane realms. The phrase was shorn of all religious dimensions; Breton's earliest paraphrase of it, in 1928, was: 'there is *neither* high nor low.'[71] In 1940, he noted: 'often there is *nothing* above and everything below. Seek.'[72] It is unclear where Breton derived his various versions of the aphorism from. As he notes himself, it is a 'famous occult saying;'[73] he might have come across it in a variety of sources, or been pointed to *The Emerald Tablet* by Apollinaire, Givry's *Le Musée*, or even Max Ernst.[74] In any case, in Surrealism all is rather *in between*, oscillating between outside and inside. In the essay cited above, Breton follows up the aphorism with 'everything inside is like everything outside' – another paraphrase, now of Goethe, that points out that, as far as Breton was concerned, the outside world corresponds primarily with the

mind inside.[75] The mind 'proves to itself' but also '*by* itself' these theorems and the mental 'gymnastics' required for it. Furthermore, the metaphor is a rhetorical and literary device par excellence.[76]

Correspondences: Objective chance

For Breton, and in the Surrealism he espoused, sur/reality is one unified continuum, in which what goes on inside the mind is as real as what goes on outside it. There is no radical division between dream and reality, between unconscious and conscious, between mind and world, between automatism and rationalism, or between madness and sanity. Or rather, there *should not be* such a radical division, because Breton's continuous insistence upon the unity of opposites and his construction of methods of correspondence to overcome such division is a clear pointer that in Surrealism, too, such things were experienced (at least initially) as oppositional. For the surrealists, building upon the unified and corresponding thought of the romantics, dream and reality, unconscious and conscious, etc., were but locations on a spectrum on which they could move both ways. The real and surreal are posited as one; sur/reality is in essence unified. Such unity allows for prophecy, since event, prediction and a posteriori realisation merely occur at different moments on the same continuum.[77]

The unity of sur/reality further means that reality and appearances are the same. This ties in with Breton's admiration of the automatic art of mediums, children and the mad, and his positive reaction towards the fortunes as told by Mme Sacco. It derives from his refusal to submit to the 'absolute tyranny' of the real, which he had already discussed in the 'Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality' (1924). Breton argues that it is not relevant whether *either* A or B is the case – when he is capable of formulating A as well as B, both must be true.[78] 'Elements of reality,' belonging to 'categories so far removed from each other' that reason fails to connect them, are linked by and in thought.[79] The 'tyranny' of the real is overthrown by the surrealist logic of marvellous correspondences.

The *hasard objectif*, or 'objective chance,' which was introduced by Breton in *Communicating Vessels* (1932) – although the idea must have been on his mind earlier – is one such link.[80] He investigated it throughout the 1930s, returning to it in 'The Political Position of Surrealism' (1935) and *Mad Love* (1937), as well as *Arcanum 17* (1945). The early 1930s were the crucible in which the concept was forged, as Breton deduced from personal experiences that 'all manner of subtle exchanges occurred between exterior

determinism or chance and the inner workings of the mind.'[81] Objective chance is the most blatant example of Surrealism's particular secular extra-naturalism. It designates incidents others would call fate, providence or of supernatural origin. In the surreal(alist) universe, where all is linked, the connecting agent is not a supernatural superstructure, but rather the Freudian premise of the 'omnipotence of thought.' Freud introduced this concept in *Totem and Taboo* (originally 1913) and it describes the belief that one's thought influences the world; or, in psychoanalytical parlance, projection of one's inner mental life onto the external world. Freud connected it to 'animistic' belief systems, the worldview of 'primitive' people and of children, and to magical thought.[82] As such, it is beholden to a cultural past, to peoples considered marginal to the West, and to those considered marginal within Western society. It is clear why the surrealists would feel drawn to this concept invented by one of their heroes and ascribed to the marginalised they so championed. Freudian omnipotence of thought is the template upon which surrealist objective chance is based: objective chance occurs at the moment an interior mode appears to be realised in the external world – when 'everything inside' does, indeed, seem to become like 'everything outside.'[83] In Surrealism, that interior mode is usually desire (also known euphemistically as 'love'). In his discussion of objective chance in *Communicating Vessels,* Breton cites political theorist Friedrich Engels in the process and, indeed, *objective* chance carries overtones of rationalism, secularism and materialism. Yet, the primary concern is interiority, which is how Breton manages to combine belief in the omnipotence of thought with Surrealism's secular stance. Objective chance is a marvellous occurrence: a find seems too coincidental, an encounter too providential, a walk too haunted to be just ordinary chance, leading one to assume that unknown forces might be at work.[84] The sculptor Giacometti was struggling to finish a sculpture, the face in particular. While he was wandering through the flea market with Breton, the two of them suddenly chanced upon a particular mask and Giacometti, although usually not interested in such things, felt 'obliged' to purchase it. It turned out to be the inspirational catalyst that led to the completion of the sculpture's face and thus the entire work, known as *Invisible Object*.[85] Was finding the mask just coincidence or providence? It would seem as if 'learned machinations on the part of powers which remain, until things change, highly obscure' were in play behind the scenes.[86] In fact, however, wo/man's mind was in play: objective chance makes 'manifest the exterior necessity which traces its path *in the human unconscious*[...]'[87] In the end, even though Breton embeds his idea in a

semi-scientific theoretical discourse including Engels, Aristotle, philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach and even mathematician Henri Poincaré, besides Freud, it is the last who is most relevant here.[88]

Breton presented objective chance as a rational and scientific phenomenon. In 1933, he and Éluard sent out a questionnaire on this very topic to a long list of people. It consisted of two questions: 'What do you consider the most important encounter of your life? To what extent did this encounter strike you as being fortuitous, or preordained?' To be clear about the secular nature of it all, they included a definition of objective chance that emphasised the inner-outer dynamic. Besides a whole array of surrealists, intellectuals, artists and socialites, prominent psychical researchers such as Camille Flammarion and Charles Richet were also approached. All the replies were published in *Minotaure* 3-4 (1933).[89] Breton and Éluard went about something extra-ordinary in a semi-scientific way, as had been the surrealist case during the 1920s as well: putting it to the experimental test or, in this case, semi-objective inquiry. Just as the sleeping sessions had been employed to investigate lucid dreaming, automatism was presented as a method of researching the deepest recesses of the mind, and experiments with madness were carried out for purposes of automatism and deranging of the mind; objective chance was an object of surrealist research. The many replies read like a litany of evidence in favour of prophecy and objective chance, illustrating the mind's omnipotence.

Objective chance results from an 'interior necessity.'[90] Objective chance and surrealist correspondence are based upon the omnipotence of the *mind*, rather than just thought. Mind is a term Breton also prefers, and rather than (conscious) thought alone, it also comprises the thinkable, automatic and unconscious thought, the imagination and the imaginative, the rational and irrational, desires, dreams, visions, hallucinations, etc.

A final word on dreams. Objective chance is introduced in *Communicating Vessels* as an example of and corollary to the book's main issue: the relationship between interior and exterior worlds.[91] This relationship vexes Breton mightily. He continually returns to and investigates how one relates to the phenomenal and experienced world and how surreality operates. Between the title's two vessels the preeminent binding agent is dreams, which form 'a conduction wire between the far too distant worlds of waking and sleep, exterior and interior reality, reason and madness, the assurance of knowledge and of love, of life for life and the revolution, and so on.'[92] The sessions of lucid dreaming were over a decade in the past, and the pages of surrealist journals were filled with polemical political pieces instead of dream-descriptions; nevertheless, the dream remained a prime

concern. Throughout the 1930s, Breton emphasised that he did not (want to) separate dream from life; rather, his endeavour was to insert the dream into life.[93] One should not be able to distinguish between dreaming and being awake.[94] In the previous chapter, I argued how Breton reproduced many mediumistic drawings as examples of the 'state of grace' where perception and representation are united. We should see his 1938 anthology of dreams in a similar light. *Trajectoire du rêve* contains descriptions of dreams and brief reflections upon the dream by many surrealists and such historical luminaries as Paracelsus and Albrecht Dürer as well as, for instance, poet Alexander Pushkin. [95] It is another example of the surrealist and typically Bretonian way of (re)creating a canon of revered precursors from history and appropriating them as proto-surrealists. *Trajectoire du rêve* provides not only 'evidence' of the literary potential of dreams, but also of the dreamed life.

Magical thinking and Surrealism as myth

The surrealist corresponding universe was partly based upon the magical worldview, supposedly constructed by the 'primitive mind', in which the exterior world is experienced as a magical place where many things are connected and various forces, including of supernatural origin, may act in and upon it. In other words, belief in magic is characteristic of this 'primitive' mind. As mentioned, Freud wrote about such a worldview in *Totem and Taboo* in his discussion of the childish and 'primitive' mind and its tendency to make (irrational) connections. Just as important are British anthropologist and religious historian James Frazer (1854-1941) and French anthropologist-philosopher Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939). Both wrote at length about the magical worldview and manner of thought of the 'primitive' and paid extensive attention to the religious beliefs and mythological structures that were thought to be an inherent part of it. Breton, Ernst, Masson, Brauner and Wilfredo Lam, among others, had read adapted (French) versions of Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890).[96] Lévy-Bruhl's most relevant works are *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (1910) and *La mentalité primitive* (1922), which were certainly read by Breton, Tristan Tzara, Leiris and Miró. As others have argued, Lévy-Bruhl's thought has probably left the most traces in Surrealism.[97]

   The issue of the primitive mind and its magical worldview may well have been brought to the surrealists' attention by a series of lectures given in 1933 at the Paris Sorbonne University on the topic of '*pensée magique*.' Organised by psychoanalyst René Allendy, a surrealist sympathiser, the

lectures focused on magical thought of the 'primitive,' 'the neurotic person,' 'the child,' and 'in art,' 'in daily life' and 'in the dream.' Although it is unclear whether the surrealists attended the lectures or read the published versions (though that is probable), it is obvious that surrealist and academic concerns were, once again, closely aligned.[98] Just as had been the case with automatism, scholarly studies formed the surrealists' main means of acquiring knowledge about a topic, although in the case of the magical worldview they relied on anthropologists, ethnologists and sociologists as well. Across the board, surrealists, anthropologists and psychoanalysts shared the idea that the magical worldview was still part of contemporary culture out in the colonies, but had become peripheral and outdated in the West after the triumph of the rational worldview.[99] Studies such as Frazer's and Lévy-Bruhl's reinforced and gave further shape to the dichotomy that had been developing since the Enlightenment, with the Western, civilised, rational worldview, on the one hand, and the 'primitive', irrational – i.e. magical – worldview, on the other. Both scholars and surrealists were deeply indebted to the romantic notion that as civilisations develop, they irreversibly lose wisdom, primal knowledge, a purity of spirit and other insights together with their primitive mind-set.[100] The idea of the magical worldview and its attendant concepts such as correspondences and the loss of primal wisdom were particularly influential in modern occultism as well.[101] Although there is no evidence that the Bretonian surrealists were interested in contemporary occult sources on this topic during the 1930s (although later they would be), it is obvious that the surrealist adaption of various ideas concerning magic, myth and the primitive mind of Frazer et al. would facilitate the later rapprochement between Surrealism and occultism.

In France, magic was thought of considerably more positively than in England (or by Freud, for that matter); according to Lévy-Bruhl, primitive peoples thought in a fundamentally different way, whereas Frazer considered their thought to be more simple than, and inferior to, that of Western civilisation; for the one magic is 'mystic' rather than logical, for the other it is 'a primitive aberration based on faulty logic.'[102] The surrealists' positive view of magic (albeit divested of religion) is deeply indebted to the prevailing French attitude.[103] In the primitive worldview supernatural powers reveal themselves through luck, magic, dreams and visions. Many actions and things turn out to be revelatory or fortuitous, and things are connected not by causality or logic but because a thing could be itself and simultaneously something else as well.[104] Anthropologists and sociologists pointed out the significant role that dreams and dreaming play(ed) in primitive societies,

forming an integral part of primitive man's life as an important meeting place of physical reality and the supernatural.[105] In the universe of Bretonian Surrealism the dream acts similarly: the 'capillary tissue' between the two 'communicating vessels' and in constant relation to the real.

For the surrealists, omnipotent mind's desire breaks down the barriers between wo/men and the world, an idea inherited directly from Freud.[106] Whereas the latter associated desire with neuroses, however, it was a positive choice and essential means of revolutionising life for the surrealists. In Breton's *Mad Love* it is the all-powerful agent behind both the marvellous encounter with Jacqueline and the prophetic nature of the poem 'Sunflower.' In line with Lévy-Bruhl and in contrast to Frazer and Freud, Surrealism considered the primitive worldview *alternative* to the dominant Western mind set, and moreover, not inferior but superior.

Myth is integral to Frazer's and Lévy-Bruhl's theories.[107] Myth is a complex and important concept in the context of Modernism. Considering constructs such as objective chance, which made Surrealism into a marvellous place of correspondences, and the vested interest of the surrealists in the 'primitive mind' and its magical worldview, it seems only logical that they would also be increasingly invested in myth, deeply connected as it is to such worldviews and providing a source of stories in which magical correspondences and marvellous incidents predominate. Importantly, the surrealists associated myth with bygone times, a cultural past, and with marginal aspects of contemporary culture; in other words, with repressed, primal, superseded and marginalised culture.[108] All that is marginal is potentially surreal. Myths were treated mostly as a vast reservoir of stories, with various motifs and elements.

There is, however, a further reason why myth came to occupy a central place in Breton's thought: politics. Halfway through the 1930s, he posited that a 'new collective myth' was necessary to change the direction Western civilisation was going; Surrealism would be the vanguard movement creating and providing this myth. In 1935, he gave two lectures in Prague that touch upon this idea of surrealist collective myth.[109] Breton affirms his alliance to communist thought, while arguing for his pre-eminent alliance to art and art's important revolutionary position – an issue over which Surrealism had just broken for good with the French Communist Party.[110] He expressed his concern about fascist developments and further addressed those who had criticised Surrealism, both politically and as an art movement. The 'systematic action' of Surrealism had created 'among young intellectuals [...] a current [Surrealism] that clearly opposed inertia in politics and the need for escape from the real that was almost the one

distinguishing characteristic of the whole post-war psychosis.'[111] Breton asserts that society is in dire need of change. It has become closed and inward looking and feels threatened; it has still not roused from the shock of the (First World) War and has turned to escapism. In this era (the 1930s), 'man belongs to himself less than ever' and 'the anguish of living has reached its peak.'[112] Art should be the revolutionary remedy: 'In these conditions, thus, art is no longer a question of the creation of a personal myth, but rather, with Surrealism, *of the creation of a collective myth*.'[113]

Artists may have worked on creating personal myths, but the state of (Western) civilisation now needs, above all, a *collective* myth; the artist should move beyond giving meaning to their own life to providing meaning and direction for society at large. Surrealism is politically called to answer this demand. It is well equipped to respond as it is centred around collective action and because its members are artists who are already (proficient in) creating personal myths. If I understand Breton correctly, the new myth would eventually be created by and for mankind, although Surrealism would light the way for now; he insists that Surrealism is 'a *method* of creating collective myth,' just as it had previously been a method for investigating the subliminal.[114] Myth would 'emancipate' or 'liberate' mankind, thus enabling them to achieve their fullest potential and entertain an active and dynamic relation to the real. Mankind would neither continue to try to escape reality, nor be tyrannised by it.[115] Breton seems confident that myths are *universal*, an idea also found in Romanticism, as in the thought of Frazer, Lévy-Bruhl, and Freud and other psychiatrists, such as Pierre Janet.[116] A mythologisation of Surrealism was only the next stage in the project of the surrealist revolution, which was, after all, intended to revolutionise society as a whole.[117] Man's (and, of course, woman's) inherent capacity for *mythopoeia* – lyrical myth-creating – would be the instrument to set one free.[118]

The surrealists recognised the many similarities between Western mythology and the manner in which the surrealist universe operated. Breton viewed myth through a psychological lens, considering myth (including legend) to be 'the external projection of human desires,' in line with Freud.[119] Myth was continuously and simultaneously lived and created. The fact that dreams and ab-normal incidents are ubiquitous in myths and legends made the mythopoeia of Surrealism quite self-evident. As the decade progressed, the affinity between myth and Surrealism actively intensified. This happened in two ways: first, by incorporating mythical content, i.e. by using existing and usually canonical mythical stories, characters, themes and motifs in surrealist literature and visual art. Secondly, the surrealists also

engaged in *mythopoeia*: myth-making of their own. 1930s Surrealism is defined by, besides objective chances and predictions, fairytale characters, dream-objects, surrealist objects, marvellous encounters, (un)fulfilled quests and, most of all, fabulous, bewitching, idealised and objectified women.

During the 1920s, one finds relatively few remarks concerning myth in Surrealism; because of its association with the academic tradition in literature and painting the surrealists were initially negatively disposed towards classical myths in particular.[120] With the onset of the 1930s this changed, not least because Lévy-Bruhl et al. made it clear that myth should be associated with magic and alternative ways of knowing. The cultural legacy of classical myths could not be passed by:

> Insofar as surrealism aims at creating a collective myth, it must endeavour to bring together the scattered elements of that myth, *beginning* with those that proceed from the oldest and strongest tradition (it is indeed in this sense that we speak of a "cultural legacy").[121]

Myths that appear in surrealist art and literature are, in part, classical in origin and include figures such as Dionysus, Theseus, the Minotaur, Narcissus and Daphne and Oedipus. Chadwick has traced Oedipus, Echo and Narcissus and Theseus and the Minotaur in the art of Masson, Ernst and Dali, for instance.[122] Masson was the most prolific in exploring all elements of the mythological story in his drawings and paintings: figures such as the Minotaur, themes such as sacrifice and metamorphosis and mythological locations such as the labyrinth appear prominently in his work from the 1930s. Important series in this respect are the *Massacre* series of the early years of 1930, the *Sacrifices* series (published in 1936 with a text by Bataille), *Metamorphoses*, 1939, and *Mythology of Nature*, published in 1938.[123] It is clearly no coincidence that the journal that functioned as the most important mouthpiece of Bretonian Surrealism during the second half of the 1930s was called *Minotaure*. Each new issue was provided with an individual surrealist frontispiece. Myth – here in the form of the Minotaur, the Freudian, monstrous, and sexually very aggressive double of the male – also answered to the surrealist fascination with violence, desire, sexual aggression, the primitive, and with sacrilege.

We should understand 'myth' and 'mythology' broadly in Surrealism, including medieval and early modern legends, such as Arthurian stories, Grail Quests and other subjects of *chansons de geste*, and folklore and fairytales too. The genre of the Gothic novel was similarly embraced.[124] Philippe

Lavergne, for example, has discussed the 'myth' of the lost paradise, connecting it to that of the (bygone) Golden Age.[125] In fact, I would characterise both the lost paradise and the golden age as topoi that are part of many myths, both ancient and modern, which are in turn incorporated into Surrealism, like that of the mysterious castle as well.[126] Lavergne also mentions 'Celtic myths' and the legends of the Quest for the Grail.[127] The first to point out the association of Bretonian Surrealism with quests was Julien Gracq, who specified, besides the Grail Quest, also the Quest for the Golden Fleece and for the Philosopher's Stone.[128] For all the alchemical overtones, it is important to realise that a quest for the Philosopher's Stone, like that for Fleece or Grail, was primarily considered a literary quest undertaken by the surrealist poet. It had nothing in common with laboratory alchemy, let alone a religious process of spiritual transformation. In line with the practice of Romanticism, the surrealist quest was about discovering one's own imagination. Its driving force is desire. Each revolved, therefore, around a mythical desired object. However, the main desire is not to possess the object; on the contrary, on the basis of Breton's assimilation of 'the search for the philosopher's stone to a freeing of the imagination,' the desire is to *quest*.[129] 'I want to find and *lose* the Philosopher's Stone,' Breton wrote in 1937.[130] All quests reflect the search for the surreal *point sublime*, that point where surreality has become the only reality. Importantly, this point is unattainable. Even if attained, one cannot remain there, as that would lead one to '[cease] to be a person.'[131]

As desire is the main motivator, not only of quests but of everything, it is no surprise that women, in the guise of fairies, sorceresses, clairvoyants or mannequins, often play an important part in surrealist myths. One 'mythological' character that was very important to Breton personally, for example, was the medieval fairytale figure Mélusine (or Melusina), a hybrid creature half woman, half fish or serpent, which was revived in romantic literature. She is one of the main characters in Breton's *Arcanum 17*, as I shall discuss later. The surrealists also created their own mythological figures, most importantly Gradiva. She appeared as the heroine in a 1903 story that was reinterpreted by Freud. Like the Minotaur and Melusina, she is a hybrid creature, partly stone relief, partly real and partly a figure of dream.[132] Chadwick has analysed many surrealist works centred on Gradiva.[133]

Paranoia, analogy, the uncanny

Jean-Michel Rabaté has found the first decade of Surrealism to have 'been dominated by automatism and hysteria,' and the Golden Age by 'the concept

of paranoia.'[134] Paranoia is the learned establishment's interpretation of the magical worldview: as a psychiatric affliction, it creates a 'world full of magical meaning,' in which everything turns out to be meaningful and connected, including to one's self; inner anxieties seem to influence the outside world constantly.[135] It would seem hardly coincidental, then, that this was also the decade Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) became connected with Surrealism. He published two articles in *Minotaure* and was on friendly terms with some surrealists, although not Breton.[136] Breton remained somewhat on the fence about paranoia (and Lacan), but Dali and Crevel, for instance, actively investigated it as a way of systematically distorting reality.[137] During this time, Dali developed his famed paranoiac-critical method, which Breton admired but did not adopt. Yet, as Laurant Jenny has argued, Dali's emphasis on paranoia as a fruitful technique of systematic confusions between realities may well have inspired Breton's investigation of irrational means of knowledge of the world in *Communicating Vessels*.[138] Still, while paranoia may explain some of the methodology of the surrealist corresponding universe, and while the theory is very relevant to Dali's work, it rarely featured in Breton's writings and I will not pursue it further here.

Another way of designating surrealist correspondence is to describe the workings of the surrealist universe as *analogical*. Throughout the twentieth century, intellectuals have likened magical thinking to analogical thinking[139] and this comparison is particularly prevalent in anthropology.[140] Analogy and analogical thinking are also very important in alchemy. Alchemy was a recurring topic in the Bretonian surrealist discourse and, in addition, Breton integrated correspondences, magical worldviews and relations between the inside and the outside into Surrealism during the 1930s. It is no wonder, therefore, that scholars sometimes implicitly assume that Surrealism was all about analogy. It was not – or at least, not *yet*. In the early 1950s, occult scholar Robert Amadou would impart his definition of magic as analogy to Breton, who would often make use of it afterwards. However, in pre-war Surrealism the correct term is metaphor rather than analogy. When discussing how the world is like a cryptogram, where above is like below and inside is like outside, Breton also outlines what permits one to pass from one to the other: metaphor.[141]

> It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the metaphor, which enjoys every freedom in Surrealism, leaves far behind the sort of (prefabricated) analogy that Charles Fourier and his disciple Alphonse Toussenel attempted to promote in France. Although both [analogy and metaphor] concur in honouring the system of "correspondences", the same distance separates them as separates the high-flying from

the earthbound. It should be understood that it is not a question of increasing one's speed and agility in a vain spirit of improving one's technique, but rather of becoming the master of the one and only conductive electricity so that the relationship that one wishes to establish may truly be of some consequence.[142]

What is essentially at stake is the 'relationship between the human mind and the sensory world,'[143] what I term Surrealism's rapport with the world. This fits well with Breton's emphasis that real and surreal form one continuum of surreality; within surreality something is not *like* something else (analogy), it *is the same* as the other but different (metaphor) – a rhetorical difference a literary man such as Breton would have been perfectly familiar with. Inferior minds mistake one thing for another when they are not alike at all (a mistake Frazer ascribes to primitive minds). In Surrealism, however, things are essentially the same although perhaps on different locations of the surrealist continuum and recognised as such by the *superior* mind, which has moved beyond the mere causal and logical thinking and operates in an entirely alternative manner. The metaphor is taken literally.

One further theoretical concept should be mentioned: the uncanny. In a 1919 essay, Freud introduced his concept of *das unheimliche*, basing it upon an idea first developed by Ernst Jentsch in 1906.[144] Both related the uncanny to a story by romantic author E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776-1822).[145] The uncanny is primarily an aesthetic category, associated by Freud with anxiety issues of representation and sensory experience. Anneleen Masschelein has argued that, as such, it has been rather more influential in the arts and literature than in psychoanalysis; Surrealism is one example of an artistic movement incorporating the uncanny (in practice, rather than in theory).[146] An experience of the uncanny occurs when something (or someone) appears familiar and strange at the same time. A common example of the uncanny is the automaton or wax doll (which is, in fact, a key figure in Hoffmann's story): seemingly human, perhaps even appearing to breathe or move, yet an unfathomable and lifeless machine. It is uncanny because inanimate and animate, human and machine, are confused, but also because of the doubling of the body, something particularly striking in the case of mannequins.[147] In this example, the anxieties underlying the uncanny are fear of death, fear of the machine, fear of the body or anxieties concerning identity. The term 'the uncanny' is hardly used in Surrealism, but the concept is still very much part of it; confusion between opposites such as being awake and dreaming, being real and imaginary, being animate and inanimate is a daily surrealist staple. Occurrences of objective chance, marvellous encounters

and strange events are often predicated upon experiences or things that are classic instances of the uncanny. The uncanny being – automaton, mannequin and doll – is an essential part of surrealist art, particularly in the 1930s. Hans Bellmer, for instance, deciding to act on a lifelong obsession with a female cousin, created his famous doll. Subsequently, he photographed it and those images were reproduced in *Minotaure* 6 in 1934.[148] They followed upon a curious article by Péret devoted to automata, lavishly illustrated, which had appeared in *Minotaure* 3-4.[149] The female mannequin/doll was a particular obsession for many (male) surrealists, as an object of subliminal longing, of erotic objectification and of idealised woman, but at the same time a source of anxiety, conflating fear of the artificial and the mechanical with fear of Woman and femininity.[150]

I would highlight an important difference between the Freudian concept of the uncanny and the surrealist predilection for the strange and marvellous. Compare Freud: 'An uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been *repressed* are once more *revived* by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been *surmounted* seem once more to be *confirmed*.'[151] The dynamics repressed-revived and surmounted-confirmed show that one is dealing with remnants or survivals, unconscious desires, repressed memories, or primitive beliefs; things that are usually not considered in a positive light – because they are 'infantile' and 'primitive' – and which should be recognised so as to be overcome. In Surrealism, on the other hand, the childish and primitive are positive qualities. For all its Freudianism, Surrealism rejects analysis. The experience of the uncanny is unearthed from the repressed and recognised. The surrealist repressed is not curbed, but rather allowed to manifest and thus to become something in its own right. Unconscious desires are made conscious so they can be celebrated. This is no mere shuffling of terminology. This illustrates a fundamental difference between Surrealism and psychoanalysis and dynamic psychiatry. Even though numerous psycho-dynamic and psychoanalytic concepts and techniques were appropriated by Surrealism, a fundamental difference remained: analysis versus creativity. For instance, in *Communicating Vessels*, Breton included descriptions of some of his dreams to demonstrate how dream and waking reality connect, relating them to lived experiences in a very recent past.[152] The point is that Surrealism is not Freudian; exposing the dream subverts bourgeois order and establishes the surrealist universe by making the interior exterior and by bringing into the light that which is usually kept hidden. At the same time, dream description as a literary product subverts literary traditions, circumventing literary pretensions as it does so.[153] The

opposite position is that of Freud, who, when asked to contribute to Breton's anthology of dreams, *Trajectoire du rêve*, replied that he considered the 'superficial' aspect of dreams (that is, their retelling and positioning as a literary product) uninteresting.[154] Surrealism is subversive and geared towards revolutionising established mores; Freudian psychoanalysis is conservative and maintains the bourgeois structures of society. Therefore, while surrealist dreams, objective chance and the omnipotence of thought may find their origin in Freud's theories, they cannot and should not be taken for their Freudian counterparts. Similarly, the primitive mind, magic and myth are no longer anthropological categories, but tools to counter the tyranny of the real and, as such, are an essential part of the surrealist revolution.

Lucid dreams, automatic writing and automatic art, objective chance and mythical stories; all have that 'revelatory', wondrous, *marvellous* quality that is experienced when an interior model, usually something or someone desired consciously or unconsciously, appears to become manifest in the exterior world.[155] Mind, including all thoughts and desires, makes the surrealist universe into one filled with hidden connections, occult correspondences and marvellous occurrences that are dictated by dream-logic, perfectly logical when experienced but strange and awkwardly illogical afterwards. Surrealist essays, novels, poems, objects and paintings, café sessions, games, inquiries and experiences documented and investigated this continuing incursion of the surreal into the real. Novels like *Nadja*, *Mad Love* and *Arcanum 17*, and Aragon's *Peasant of Paris*, for instance, or the stories of Leonora Carrington and Giselle Prassinos, are characterised by recurring motifs such as highly charged encounters, dream-logic, sentiments of predestination, magical places, mysterious objects, the surprising find of a secret of secrets. Paintings such as Victor Brauner's *Self-portrait with plucked eye* are repositioned as marvellous, prophetical and extremely surreal when the real does turn out to comply with the imaginary. The surrealists' continual and dynamic rapport with the world is confirmed. Surrealism was made into a magical world revolving around the intrusion of the marvellous in the quotidian, supported and reinforced by the investment in myth.

Without a doubt, the corresponding nature of this marvellous surrealist universe makes it akin to occultism. In fact, the notion of 'correspondences' is the first of four fundamental elements of the 'form of thought' that is esotericism, according to Antoine Faivre.[156] The notion of correspondences is particularly problematic, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century understandings of what corresponds and how were, in the wake of the

Enlightenment, greatly influenced by scientific materialism, a mechanical worldview and positivism – yet still, correspondence, or rather 'correlative thinking' as Bogdan and Djurdjevic refer to it, is just as relevant in occultism.[157] I find that the surrealist corresponding universe may be understood as a modern and secular interpretation of correspondence. This is also why nineteenth-century occultism is much more pertinent than Early Modern esotericism.

In surrealist 'correlative thinking', there is no God, neither personal, nor universal. Breton's embedding of his ideas about objective chance, prophecy and marvellous coincidence in a discourse including references to Freud, other psychiatrists, philosophers such as Hegel and scientists, creates a contemporary scientific sheen. Surrealism is a more or less scientific investigation, after all; therefore, there are principles to its universe. It is implicitly suggested that some sort of logical and causal relation underlies the workings of the surrealist universe, albeit surreal and, therefore, alien to many. Even though the surrealist universe is experienced as enchanted, it is, in essence, secular and scientistic. This is underlined by the fact that the correspondences are understood to originate in the *mind* and are premised upon a psychoanalytical concept such as the manifestation of desire. Yet, one should refrain from over-psychologising Surrealism and surrealist correspondence; although mind and reality may overflow into one another, the experience of surreality-in-reality is what matters and not, as I have argued, a psychoanalytical explanation for it.

Surrealist correspondence operates on the premise of a dichotomy between real and imaginary, reason and madness, outer and inner, etc., but even more importantly, on the possibility of *resolution* of those opposites. In 1924, in the first *Manifesto*, Breton had expressed his belief that surreality would come to pass: 'I believe in the future resolution of [the] two states, dream and reality […] into a kind of absolute reality, a *surreality*.'[158] He repeated it in the *Second Manifesto*:

> Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the *mind* at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, *high and low*, cease to be perceived as contradictions.[159]

The occultly attuned reader picks out a possible reference to the 'as above, so below'-aphorism here, and taking the other occult references in the *Second Manifesto* into consideration, discussed at the beginning of this chapter,

that saying might well be referred to here. But the surrealist unification, perhaps because it is not limited by metaphysical rules, reaches beyond that, to unify even life and death and time. The location of such unification is the mind. In 1936, Breton would define the point of unification as the 'sublime point' in a letter.[160] It is perhaps a point where the structure of things like space and time no longer matters and desire and reality truly become one. Some have associated it with a transcendent deity, or the cabalistic idea of the primal point of origin, the primal act of creation, as understood to be proposed in the Zohar;[161] or with Éliphas Lévi and his discussion of the Word and its role in creation.[162] Breton himself always denied any mysticism, situating it rigorously in the secular and linking it to Hegel.[163] This has led others to interpret it as an ideal dialectical transcendence, situating surreality in a transcendent realm. But while the Bretonian sublime point is an absolute point, it is a psychic (mental) one. The unity of the sur/real, fuelled by the refusal to submit to (the tyranny of the) real, provided the basis for the marvellous universe of Surrealism. It facilitates the making of, and a posteriori identification of, predictions and the existence of objective chances. It enables the omnipotence of the mind in its rapport with the world.

Finally, Jonathan Eburne has characterised the change that Surrealism underwent during the 1930s as one from a 'red' to a 'noir' period: from the minimalist and radical periodical *La Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* to the lavish and glossy *Minotaure*, and from political (communist) activism to a renewed interest in dream, magic and the arts as political tools.[164] It is a period of interest in the roman noir and film noir, humour noir and irony, in violence, paranoia, dark recesses of the mind, in unexplainable correspondences, fairytales and legends. In fact, Surrealism's Golden Age embodies the tension between expansion and occultation.[165] With his complex political exposés, references to prophecy and objective chances, creation of a corresponding universe only logical to the surrealists themselves, references to anthropological studies, and insistence that one should live a dreamed life, Breton was posing the 'system of challenges and provocations' for the public that he had mentioned in his demand for occultation. Still, Surrealism's increasing renown in France and abroad during the 1930s, its development into an international art movement and Breton's many travels abroad to lecture about Surrealism, belie such supposed concealment and exclusiveness. Politically, on the other hand, Surrealism was becoming just too 'occulted', losing relevance. Even while Breton stressed politics, on the French stage Surrealism had become rather marginal. By the second half of the 1930s neither the left, nor the right had any more time or patience for

aesthetic concerns and revolutions by means of art – and least of all, at least on the left, for such things as prophecy, dream, myth and magic. Breton's campaign for a new collective myth ostracised his movement. Myth was occulting Surrealism politically, even as it was (as it were) 'de-occulting' it publicly, as mythical characters and motifs were topics an audience could recognise – although not as instruments of political change.

4.   Magic in exile

Occultism in Surrealism on the eve of the Second World War

By the end of the 1930s, Surrealism was taking a distinct turn towards the occult. As this coincided for a large part with the addition of new members to the group, it stands to reason that there must be a relationship between these developments, but I can offer only circumstantial evidence and speculation. As argued earlier, the emphasis upon correspondences, myth and the magical worldview during the 1930s created the conditions for an alignment of Surrealism with occult thought. This may have attracted new artists to Surrealism who had been interested in occultism and/or esotericism anyway; alternatively, it may have provided the perfect climate for some to fully pursue a latent interest in occult matters. Possibly it was a combination of both. Another interesting development is that the personal occult trajectories of the second generation surrealists often differed considerably from that of the first generation. Ernst, for one, had been engaging alchemical concepts and symbols in his work since the early 1920s. Books such as Michelet's *La Sorcière* and Grillot de Givry's *Le Musée des sorciers* circulated widely in the group during the 1930s. Still, those who joined in that decade often also showed an interest in *contemporary* occultism. For first-generation surrealists – Breton first and foremost – the only contemporary template was non-Western tribal ('primitive') culture.

The majority of second-generation artists who were integrating occult subjects and study into their work moved away in the 1940s to pursue individual careers outside Surrealism – that is to say, outside of the Bretonian core group. As a result, at the very moment that Breton was fully embracing occultism, that is between 1943 and 1950 (perhaps extended to 1957), artists such as Matta, Brauner, Carrington, Varo and Seligmann, to whom occultism was quite important, were distancing themselves from him. Many of these artists moved on to a form of magical realism, whereas Bretonian Surrealism remained resolutely analytically realist, even cerebral, in its obsession with the unconscious and irrational. Thoroughly grounded in the literature and thought of the (predominantly romantic) past, steeped in the French tradition of intellectual and scholarly engagement with the 'hermetic tradition,' magic remained a theoretical exercise for Breton, always located in a historical past and cultural margin.

The occult turning point for Victor Brauner was the previously discussed loss of his eye in 1938 [plate 11]. While Brauner had been interested in spir-

itualist phenomena, mediumship and some elements of alchemy since the early 1930s, his attitude had been permeated by irony; the accident, however, in combination with the very swift canonisation of it as prophetic objective chance, changed his attitude drastically to one of complete sympathy. Brauner considered that now indeed he had gained the capacity to become a visionary of other realms, and his obsession with the incident's symbolic role in his life intensified in the early 1940s.[1] His self-perception as a seer can be seen as a culmination of the surrealist fascination with inner and/or alternative sight, which started with the celebration of the dream and inner landscapes viewed with closed eyes, and continued and expanded with the emphasis upon seers and clairvoyants. Brauner explored the notion of the somnambulist-medium as the female unconscious of the (male) painter, and in 1942 assumed all magic powers originally associated with the feminine into himself, thenceforth considering himself a magician. He continued to expand his occult studies, often supported by Mabille (by post, as Mabille was living in Haiti by that time), studying alchemy and magic, as well as (Romanian) folklore.[2]

Swiss artist and writer Kurt Seligmann had joined the group around 1937. Already quite knowledgeable of occultism and magic in particular, he conducted further research into mythology, folklore and comparative religion in preparation for *The Mirror of Magic* (1948).[3] Although as an artist Seligman is considered rather peripheral to Surrealism, he did play an important role as advisor about occult matters to several surrealists, as will be touched upon later.

By the end of the 1930s, two other new members of the Paris group, Roberto Matta and Gordon Onslow Ford, were studying particle physics and n-dimensionality, including occult science in the form of the occult fourth dimension, as expounded in *Tertium Organum* by the Russian philosopher-occultist Piotr Ouspensky (1878-1947). Ouspensky's theories had had a considerable impact upon various artists two decades earlier and, by the late 1930s, his ideas were going through a revival in certain circles, usually in combination with those of guru George Gurdjieff (1877?-1949), of whom Ouspensky had been a disciple.[4] Wolfgang Paalen (1905-1959) also made a serious study of the fourth dimension, occult as well as mathematical.[5] Paalen left for Mexico in 1939, pursuing an artistic career increasingly turned towards science and quantum mechanics in particular.[6] Matta and Ford also moved away from Surrealism. Although Breton and other surrealists continued to appreciate Matta's paintings, from 1943 onwards he pursued an interest in contemporary physics as a way of distinguishing himself from Breton's generation.[7]

Matta and Ford were occasionally joined in their studies by Remedios Varo (1908-1963). Many women joined Surrealism during the 1930s, including Claude Cahun, Meret Oppenheim, Dora Maar, Leonor Fini, and Leonora Carrington.[8] There are many reasons given for the influx of women artists in the 1930s; it is clear in any case that the broadening of many of Surrealism's horizons during the 1930s offered possibilities to women artists too. It has been argued that Surrealism's validation of the dream, the marvellous, myths and fairytales, intuition, magic, etc., opened the door for women artists.[9] While I do not want to discount this possibility, it should be noted that for all that such concepts, associated with the feminine since the Enlightenment, were indeed valued positively in Surrealism, woman herself generally remained an objectified being.[10] Relevant here is that Fini, Varo and Carrington specifically were interested in the occult. One of the very few women artists Breton wrote about was Carrington, a story by whom he included in his *Anthology of Black Humour*. Even as he writes about her in glowing terms, she is idealised and identified as Michelet's witch: possessed of the 'womanly gifts' of 'illuminism of lucid madness' and 'the sublime power of solitary conception', and furthermore young and beautiful too – a quality he could not care less about with respect to male artists.[11] The similarities with Nadja, also a young and beautiful woman whose madness Breton idealised, are obvious. The young poet Gisèle Prassinos is included in the *Anthology* as well: a 'Queen Mab,' a 'fairy's midwife' and a 'young chimera,' according to Breton;[12] descriptions that prefigure the climax of his obsession with woman as fairy and sorceress in *Arcanum 17*.

It has been suggested that the male partners of Varo and Carrington (Péret and Ernst) introduced them to occult thought; while certainly possible, both Varo and Carrington quickly took their occult studies into their own hands to develop them along uniquely personal lines.[13] Fini, for her part, had arrived from Italy in 1937 without any (male) partner but with Michelet's *La Sorcière* and Givry's *Le Musée* in hand, and seems to have developed a fascination with the occult and particularly witchcraft on her own. Not exactly impressed with Breton's autocratic style, she quickly moved beyond surrealist circles.[14] In the process of freeing themselves from their role as muse and developing their own artistic personality and style, these artists appropriated the surrealist concept of woman as a mythical and sorcerous being for themselves. Combining Michelet's identification of woman-as-witch with nature, the magical and irrational, they turned the witch from the fairy-like ideal into a powerful woman in control of her own magical and transformative powers.[15] After the Second World War, Varo resumed her occult studies in Mexico. She frequented a circle of followers

of Gurdjieff, occasionally joined by Carrington and Ford. Although Varo was influenced by Ouspenskian-Gurdjieffian theories on the evolution of consciousness and the occult fourth dimension, she and Carrington were not much impressed with the Mexican circle of Gurdjieffians. Carrington included hilariously unflattering descriptions of the group-leader and his followers in *The Hearing Trumpet*, for instance.[16] Carrington's work in particular became increasingly more occult in the 1950s and later, as has been demonstrated by a number of scholars.[17] She became deeply interested in Goddess mythology after reading Robert Graves' *The White Goddess* (1948). She used *The Mirror of Magic* by Seligmann, supplemented with his letters, and Grillot de Givry's *Le Musée de sorciers* as a basis for further study.[18] Possibly inspired by Ernst to pursue alchemy, she turned it into an idiosyncratic 'alchemy in the kitchen,' or alchemical culinary inventiveness. Finally, her resettling in Mexico prompted a thorough study of Mexican folklore and Aztec and Mayan symbolism and myths. She combined all of this into a rather unique blend of magical mythology with a strong occult basis.[19]

Both Carrington and Varo moved towards a form of magical realism that was in a small but essential way different from Surrealism. As Hille puts it, while the surrealists looked with one eye upon the external world, and with the other, the closed eye, upon the inner, Carrington and Varo had both eyes open.[20] For them, the magical and marvellous was an unhidden part of the real; they did not experience such a contradiction between the real and sur-real – and the Bretonian urge to unite them – as other surrealists, in particular of the first generation, did. This might provide us with an insight into the question of why the occultly inclined second-generation surrealists left Bretonian Surrealism behind: possibly the magical had become seamlessly part of the real to the extent of turning them (magical) realists.[21] Breton, on the other hand, continued to devise means to perceive the seams of the sur-real and overcome them – but not entirely, as that sublime point had to remain unattainable.

The question is, of course, what effect, if any, these occult exploits of other surrealists had on Breton and others in the group. Firstly, the artists discussed above by no means represented the whole group. Clearly, Grillot de Givry's and Michelet's books were widely read, but these are lavishly illustrated, accessible and generalising, works not really comparable to spiritual-philosophical treatises such as *Tertium Organum*.[22] The interest in theories of Ouspensky and Gurdjieff remained limited to Ford, Matta and Varo, which illustrates my second point; namely, that occult study remained primarily a private rather than a collective matter. The overarching interest,

under Breton's direction (and by the end of the decade roughly in concordance with that of the Bataillian group), was directed towards the magical primitive worldview, mythology and comparative religion. Still, Breton was always very sensitive to what was going on in his group and we can be certain that he picked up on individual interests. It is sometimes mistakenly stated that Breton included a story by Gurdjieff in his *Anthology of Black Humour*: 'Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson.'[23] While he did consider it, he chose in the end not to include it for 'obvious reasons;' I assume those to be the spiritual/religious content of Gurdjieff's teachings.[24] The fact that Breton only considered one story and, moreover, for an anthology of the absurd and bizarre, illustrates his view of Gurdjieff. The relocation to Mexico of Varo et al., alongside their theoretical distancing from the movement, spelt the end of any possible influence. After the War, Gurdjieff and his theories made one other appearance in Bretonian Surrealism's discourse, in a critical piece full of scorn for such 'spurious forms of spiritual revelation.'[25]

Perhaps the question should be rephrased so as to ask to what extent Breton was even interested in the particular occult exploits of these artists. I will provide an example. In 'The Most Recent Tendencies in Surrealist Painting' (1939), he discussed Matta, Ford, Paalen, Seligmann, Dominguez and Brauner. He mentions that Matta and Ford were exploring the fourth dimension in painting and appears to more or less co-opt it for Surrealism.[26] There is no reference at all to anything occult, spiritual or mythical; instead, Breton considers the fourth dimension in the context of contemporary physics and quantum mechanics, further linking it to Cubism and the cubist distortion of space. He praises Brauner for undertaking a 'transition to the fourth dimension' on the 'psychic plane' by confronting 'secondary' (trance) states.[27] As the rest of the essay discusses automatism and its revival by means of the new techniques of these artists, it seems to me that Breton was viewing these artists and their work through the lens of established Surrealism, validating new work and theories by embedding them within automatism, clairvoyance and similar surrealist psychical mechanisms.

In general, the occult studies of others affected Breton little at that time, just before 1940. During the late 1930s, he worked first on the *Trajectory of the Dreams* (1938) and then the *Anthology of Black Humour* (1940). Although a few occult names are among those included in these anthologies, such as Paracelsus, occultism is not the focus. Still, only a couple of years later, Breton would take up the study of occultism in earnest, and I find it quite probable that the explorations of the subject by others in the late 1930s did make enough of an impression upon him to be at least one of the reasons motivating his move further into occult territory. The first steps on that

road were taken in the early days of the Second World War, when Breton found himself in Marseille.

The Marseille Game

In 1940, various artists and intellectuals, including Breton and his family, were staying at the Villa 'Air-Bel' in Marseille while trying to obtain safe passage out of Europe. [28] To pass the time, they played games, wrote poems and made art works together, including a deck of cards. Referred to as the 'surrealist Tarot' or even 'Breton Tarot,' it is also known simply as the '*Jeu* (game) *de Marseille*', as I will refer to it.[29] The four suits are love, dream, revolution and knowledge, symbolised by a red flame, a black star, a red (bloody) wheel, and a black lock, respectively. Aces and court cards were designed by the Marseille group, the counting cards being substituted from a regular pack. The courts consist of genius, mermaid, and magician, who are identified as heroes from the surrealist pantheon. For instance, the German poet Novalis is the magician of love, in a design by Masson [plate 12]. The mermaid of dreams is (Lewis Carroll's) Alice. Surrealism's favourite medium, Hélène Smith, features as the mermaid of knowledge, by Victor Brauner, while Breton designed the magician of the same suit, Paracelsus. Jacques Hérold (1910-1987) designed the Marquis de Sade as the genius of revolution.[30]

   The original Tarot de Marseille is a famous format of tarot deck often considered of 'ancient' origin in occult sources. The tarot differs from ordinary cards in that, besides the four suits of swords, cups, batons and coins, it incorporates a fifth suit of 21 trump cards, known as the 'Major Arcana', and an unaligned card, 'the Fool'. Antoine Court de Gébelin (1719-1784) first described the cards as repositories of age-old esoteric wisdom, specifically of ancient Egyptian origin, in *Le Monde Primitif* (1781). Etteila (Jean-Baptiste Alliette, 1738-1791) further explored that idea and provided an occult interpretation. The tarot were finally popularised as occult repositories of primal wisdom by Éliphas Lévi in *Dogme et Rituel* (1855).[31] Their popularity was further bolstered by *Tarot of the Bohemians* (1889) by French occultist Papus (Gérard Encausse, 1865-1916).[32] In the twentieth century, Marseille was a centre of card production and home to the by now famous Marseille Tarot. Stranded there, Breton became interested in cards, including but not limited to tarot. Researching the origin of card games at the city library, he was apparently inspired enough to suggest creating a surrealist game.[33]

The surrealist Marseille Game is recurrently called a tarot game. One can assume that many surrealists had some basic familiarity with the tarot, primarily because it was discussed in Grillot de Givry.[34] The cover of *Minotaure* 3-4 (1933), designed by André Derain, also featured four Major Arcana cards, while a brief piece by him discussing the four aces and suits of the tarot was included in the same issue.[35] Scholars associate the Marseille Game with the interest in occult cartomancy on the part of Brauner, Carrington, Varo and Breton; in Breton's case, however, it was based primarily on *Arcanum 17*, which he would start writing only later. To some, the game's very name, 'Marseille,' seems to allude to an occult character, as does the fact that one of the court cards is a magician; it is even argued that the four surrealist suits point to an occult origin.[36] But, as Constantini has shown, the surrealist game is no occult tarot. It was based upon the Marseille tradition of games of chance with ordinary playing cards, not on divinatory or occult games.[37] For one, it lacks a Major Arcana, essential for the tarot. Also, in a brief description of the deck, Breton related it explicitly to regular cards, stating that it should be suitable for 'all the traditional games.' Indeed, if it were occult Breton would certainly have let it be known in his description.[38] Henri Béhar has shown further that Breton acted upon his interest in the occult tarot – which was kindled in Marseille, it would seem – only after his arrival in New York in 1941, when he turned to Seligmann with a request to procure some notes for him on the topic of tarot cards.[39] This sudden interest in the tarot was reflected in *Arcanum 17* and the 1947 exhibition, as I will discuss later; after that, his interest in the tarot waned, except for a brief return to the topic in *L'Art magique* (1957). The Marseille Game, meanwhile, should be seen in light of the long tradition of surrealist games, many of them modifications of existing games. Playing a game with regular cards and the surrealist cards would add an extra layer to the game, because of the associations generated by the court cards of surrealist heroes, which fits with the sentiment that games were played at that time (of war) to preserve 'at any cost, sufficient freedom of mind.'[40] Perhaps this Marseille deck was a subversive attempt to respond to, or even influence, the events of the time. 'Historiographers of the playing card are agreed that the modifications it has undergone over the centuries have always been linked with great military setbacks,' Breton wrote around that time.[41] Modifying not only the most important (court) cards but also the suit signs perhaps reflected France's 'great military setback' in 1939-40, although it might have been meant to *effect* such a 'setback' for the German occupying forces.[42] This remains speculative, but it seems a logical extension of the surrealist notion of the corresponding universe of the 1930s, and a means to address the feelings of powerlessness that haunted many surrealists in Marseille.

12. André Masson, Novalis, *1941 ('Magician of flames/(love)' from the* Jeu de Marseille; *second design*).

Magus of love: Novalis

One of the most important cards in the Marseille Game, in my opinion, is that of Novalis, the magician of love. It testifies to the importance to which Breton had elevated Novalis rather suddenly, and which would prove to be far-reaching. The fascination with Novalis and the reappraisal of German Romanticism generally in the second half of the 1930s would pave the way for the surrealist identification of poetry (and art) with magic, and of magic with love, during the Second World War.

Novalis (Georg von Hardenberg, 1772-1801) was an early romantic poet whose oeuvre consists primarily of aphorisms (or fragments) as well as poetry, two novels and essays. He was familiar with numerous texts concerning alchemy, hermeticism and theosophy. Esoteric views permeate his entire body

of work and are especially prominent in the aphorisms; those have also left the deepest marks on later (French) Romanticism and Symbolism.[43] Novalis was on Breton's radar by the time of the first *Manifesto*, no doubt by way of Baudelaire's references to him,[44] but further references to Novalis are quite rare until the late 1930s. Breton may have been pointed more decisively towards German Romanticism in general by a 1937 essay by Albert Béguin and his book *L'Ame romantique* (1937), both on the unconscious, dreams and German Romanticism.[45] In fact, the entry on Novalis in the *Surrealist Dictionary* (1938) directly quotes several sentences from Béguin's essay.[46] Béguin was known in surrealist circles and published in *Minotaure*; for instance in 1938 on the androgyne and Balzac, the first discussion of the androgyne and the perfect soul-mate within the discourse of Surrealism.[47] His discussion of the considerable impact of Novalis' ideas upon Baudelaire and Rimbaud surely prompted Breton to make a beeline for the poet's collected fragments, *Das Algemeine Brouillon*.[48] The fact that Novalis and his peers were *German* clearly provided an extra incentive to Breton, who gladly went against the prevailing French political tide of the time and included several Germans in both *Anthology of Black Humour* and *Trajectoire du rêve.* The last work in particular is a reflection of the growing surrealist interest in (German and French) Romanticism.[49]

It was inevitable that the surrealists would eventually find their way to Novalis, who is considered 'the epitome of a seer poet'.[50] A radical concept of universal correspondences is essential to Novalis' worldview, ensuring that Breton et al. must have felt at home with it. They found further literary support for their corresponding surrealist universe in the works of Baudelaire and de Nerval, who, in turn, were deeply indebted to Novalis. Furthermore, these and several other French romantics and symbolists were partly inspired by Swedenborg.[51] Even though there is hardly any direct Swedenborgianism in Bretonian Surrealism, its *latent* presence is felt all the more, and was mediated through these poets.[52] One should note that Breton's interest in Swedenborg was sparked only at this relatively late stage, when the surrealist corresponding universe had already been constructed. His interest would find a brief expression in 1947, as will be discussed later, but even that is one-sided and only within the larger context of romantic poetry. Therefore, where others see an influence of Swedenborg,[53] I discern primarily an influence of the romantic and symbolist poets and their Swedenborgian ideas – an influence that consisted mainly of references to the man and his ideas and citations. As a result, surrealist Swedenborgianism consists almost exclusively of references to and quotations from and about Swedenborg.[54] Swedenborg is always mediated at least twice in Bretonian Surrealism, and I dare say that Breton hardly read Swedenborg directly.

Novalis considered poetry to be a magical art. Of course, the Bretonian surrealists had experienced poetry as a transformative art from the outset, as Alchemy of the Word, and, in line with rather standard romantic practice, they considered the poet or artist to be a seer, as argued earlier. The notion that the poet was really a sort of magus[55] had always remained somewhat in the background. With the discovery of Novalis – whose works in fact lie at the very basis of the romantic idea that the poet-seer is a magician[56] – and keeping in mind that magic was already very high on the surrealist agenda in the 1930s, this notion became quite prominent and would lead to a full-blown self-identification of the surrealist as a magician only a few years later. Breton certainly fulfilled his function of gatekeeper in this regard, introducing many surrealists to Novalis' thought and particularly to his idea of poetry (or art) as magic. Brauner, for one, increasingly began to identify with Novalis, and was prompted to reframe his art as magical too.[57]

Similarities between the views of Novalis and of the surrealists are striking. As far as Novalis was concerned, will and thought are the same – will is 'the magical, powerful faculty of thought' – and will/thought is the artist-magician's instrument specifically.[58] It is but a small step to the surrealist aphorism that 'once something is thought, it is real.' Novalis considered love to be 'the basis for the possibility of magic;' '[l]ove works magically.'[59] Moreover, love 'is the final goal of world history – the One of the Universe';[60] one can hardly cut any closer to the love-obsessed heart of Surrealism. Fittingly enough, Novalis was accorded the position of magus of love in the Marseille Game, accompanied by Baudelaire as genius, and the Portuguese Nun (reputed author of five passionate seventeenth-century love letters) as mermaid. Love is the game's principal suit, desire after all being the omnipotent force making the surrealist corresponding universe function. Surrealism's heternormative outlook on love is pre-eminent in Masson's card design: Novalis looks upwards to a breast, below which we see the sign of the half moon, also referring to femininity. The poet holds a five-pointed star in his hand, symbolising the unity of male and female as well as the role of man within the cycle of the universe, while the flame- and leaf-signs are also gendered symbols.[61] If poetry is a magical art, love for Woman and the feminine part of the world, of nature and of one's self, is its functioning mechanism. Simplified, poetry = magic, while magic = love (or desire). It is my argument that this simple equation, which is a crude condensation of romantic thought and goes back directly to Novalis, formed the basis for all engagements of Bretonian Surrealism with occultism during the War, and for the two decades until Breton's death after.

In exile abroad: The artist as magician

Many surrealists spent time in the United States in the early 1940s and an interest in occult subjects permeated the New York group. This paralleled the Mexico group (Varo, Péret, Paalen and, later, Carrington) and also the interests of Brauner who had remained in France. An important role may have been played by Seligmann, whose already extensive and constantly growing knowledge of the history of magic may have been crucial to the blossoming occult interests of many surrealists. Besides advising Breton on the tarot and other occult topics, he seems to have discussed magic with Ernst, and certainly corresponded about such things with Carrington and possibly others. He also kept up correspondence with Pierre Mabille, another knowledgeable authority on magic, in Haiti.[62] Seligmann serialised material from his history of magic in *View*, an American avant-garde art journal (1940-1947) closely related to the French surrealists. The essays cover a range of occult topics and may have introduced other artists, not necessarily only surrealists, to such subjects. In 'Heritage of the Accursed', for instance, Seligmann discusses, among other things, the gnostics' rehabilitation of the serpent as an emblem of knowledge, the symbol of the Ouroboros and its importance to alchemists (Flamel is named, among others) as well as other alchemical lore, including the notion that the philosopher's stone is born from the union of the opposites Sun and Moon, or day and night.[63] Three alchemical illustrations and an illustration of the Gnostic emblem of the Ouroboros, including the mystical term '*abraxas*,' accompany the essay. In another essay, Seligmann looks at Jung's alchemical theories, drawing parallels between spiritual alchemy and the labour of the artist.[64] This is one of few references to Jung and Jungian alchemy in a surrealist context. As a rule, the Bretonian surrealists rejected Jung as a reactionary and fascist sympathiser; the fact that they never abandoned their (Freudian) position that sexuality forms the basis of all action also obstructed adherence to later Jungian theory. Carrington is an exception; after she had moved to Mexico Jungian alchemical symbolism became very important for her.[65] Connections have also been made between the extensive alchemical work of Ernst and Jung's ideas, but the basis for Ernst's psychological alchemy was mainly *Probleme der Mystik und Ihre Symbolik* by Herbert Silberer (1914); his exploration of Silberer's and later Freudian ideas far outweighed any engagement with Jungian theory.[66] Still, while Seligmann clearly functioned as a source of occult information, nothing suggests that he gave direction to anyone's interests and we should not overestimate his role. As shown above, many surrealists already held particular fascinations before coming

to the US. A general interest in tarot, magic and alchemy permeated the group.[67] Several surrealists were also in contact with Mabille, another source of information about occult subjects, and there were some exchanges too with the Mexico group.

View published an interview with Breton in which he referred to the European vogue for Nostradamus on the eve of the War, and the 'laughable interpretations' the latter's work gave rise to – without mentioning that he himself had also been reading Nostradamus recently and under the same external pressure of war, albeit briefly.[68] Undertaking some Nostradamus-inspired numerological prophecy of his own, Breton predicted the end of the war for 11 April 1946.[69] Although the tone of the piece suggests this prediction was made in a spirit of black humour, there might be a serious undertone present nevertheless; had Breton not (correctly, in his own opinion) predicted the escalation of hostilities in 1939? For obvious reasons, this 'prediction' was not recognised a posteriori as prophetical.[70]

The surrealists' own journal was *VVV* (1942-1944).[71] Its subtitle read 'poetry, plastic arts, anthropology, sociology, psychology,' making it clear that *VVV* continued where *Minotaure* had left off, with the 1930s fascination for tribal cultures, the 'primitive' mind, and that mind's heterodox and magical worldview. Of course, the surrealist diaspora introduced some changes into surrealist primitivism. For instance, the tribal art of Native Americans, Hopi Indians in particular, came to replace that of French Polynesia and the African colonies. Breton's friendly relationship with anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), whom he had met on the crossing from Marseille to Martinique, certainly sustained his fascination with ethnological matters.[72] More important is the fact that the notion of magic and its role in the life of the artist, and the world generally, underwent a significant change. The idea of the poet-magician was now at the forefront of the surrealist mind because of Novalis, further strengthened by the understanding that the poet/artist should work towards effecting change in the world – a central surrealist concern, encapsulated by the mottos 'change life' and 'transform the world,' which were both now more urgent than ever. By now, the surrealists had become full magicians, effecting change (theoretically, at least) through their art by way of their magical worldview. The development of the notion of the artist-magician in Surrealism has been explored extensively by Clio Mitchell; here I will keep to the essentials.[73]

The identification as artist-magician was expressed most strongly by Ernst and Brauner.[74] In an excerpt from his autobiography published in *View* (1942), Ernst explicitly assigned himself the role of artist-magician. He refers to various magical events during his childhood and places himself

in a tradition of magicians from Cologne, ranging all the way back to 'that splendid magician Cornelius Agrippa,' and including 'Albert the Great'.[75] He continues, '(1914) Max Ernst dies the 1st of August 1914. He resuscitated the 11th of November 1918 as a young man aspiring to become a magician and to find the myth of his time.'[76] It is telling that in this piece, published during the Second World War, Ernst related his magical aspirations so clearly to the First World War. Wars are times when a utopian artist perhaps feels most ineffective (or is proven to be so); simultaneously, crises are the time the change an artist-magician could supposedly effect is most needed. The second important thing to note is myth; Ernst clearly held to the surrealist party line that myth and magic are indivisibly connected.

In a text contributed to *VVV*, Brauner argued for locating his art within the domains of magic, hermeticism, alchemy, the fantastic, the enchanting, the mysterious, the prophetical, the mythical and the primitive too (among other things!), thereby emphasising their interrelatedness and essentially recapturing the nineteenth-century discourse that related all these more or less marginalised domains collectively to the side of the irrational and deviant. He positioned himself, too, as an artist-magician, and reasoned that the artist-magician would use the unconscious impact of their art to change the general public's worldview to a magical one.[77]

Not only the surrealists identified art with magic and magic with a particular, irrational, intuitive, subconscious means of change. An editorial from one of *View*'s editors, Parker Tyler (1904-1974), can be taken as representative of the position of the American artists. Contemporary artists are seers, Tyler contends, and are in favour of 'the magic view of life.' 'The artist should be understood as a contemporary magician' and, furthermore, magic is positioned as something that unites and simultaneously supersedes the disciplines of science and art. The relevant question for artists is not whether one is 'a poet or scientist,' but rather how one should 'wield power' and 'influence.'[78] While it seems that the American *View*-crowd and the French surrealist avant-garde are in agreement, there is one important element where they differ: myth. Specifically, the issue 'that the role of the artist consists in creating new myths' – which is the quintessential core of Breton's opinion of the artist's role. Myths, Tyler conversely argues, are *not* progressive. Firstly, because they are 'of unquestionable historic significance,' but secondly, and importantly, because of the unsavoury political overtones: 'the forces of reaction [Hitler, among others], not we, [...] cling to the mythical explanation of the world!'[79] Myths are equated with escapism and considered the opposite of 'imagination and insight.'

Surrealist myth – primitives, magicians, fools

Yet, for the Bretonian surrealists, magic hardly functioned without myth. In the midst of exile and war Breton wrote 'Prolegomena to the Third Manifesto, or Not' (1942). 'Man must flee the ridiculous web that has been spun around him,' Breton states, 'so-called present reality with the prospect of a future reality that is hardly better.'[80] To escape this web, he offers myth. It provides modes of knowledge with which to manipulate reality; a definition that clearly harks back to myth's function as formulated in the 1930s.[81] Perhaps to expand the construct of surrealist myth, Breton introduced mythical beings, the 'Great Transparent Ones.'[82] He provides citations of Novalis, William James and the microbiologist Emile Ducleaux that are all philosophical speculations on the possibility of certain beings to whom mankind would be parasites, or like pets, or like bacteria.[83] In other words, the Great Transparent Ones are unfathomable and beyond mankind's ken; therefore, whether they even exist or not remains unresolved.[84]

   How myth and magic worked together was explained by Benjamin Péret in the abridged introduction to his anthology of Latin-American folklore, *Anthologie des mythes, légendes et contes populaires d'Amérique.* Magic is the essence of poetry, while religion and science are renounced for having destroyed the magical worldview. The marvellous is everywhere, Péret insists, and poetry, myth and liberation are one and the same. He expresses a fundamental surrealist view, identical to Breton's: poetry and revolution are inseparably connected, the state of the world and the human condition demand a new myth, and recourse to the irrational and its 'primitive' magical worldview is the preferred, perhaps the only, means to that end.[85] Myth, magic and primitivism are emancipatory and liberating, exactly because of their antithetical status vis-à-vis rationalism, which had, after all, caused the current crisis. While this identification of magic with liberty and revolution had been latent in Surrealism before, it became explicit now and would remain so. Péret's uncompromising stance was lauded in a brief note signed by Breton, Ernst, Brauner, Mabille and many other surrealists from around the globe, and Breton, at least, would never deviate from it.[86] Péret was certainly aware of the appropriation of myth by Hitler and others in Europe, and it is clear that he chose to maintain his allegiance to it despite that.[87] The *View*-crowd, however, considered Bretonian Surrealism's 'desire for a new myth [...] *reactionary;*' a view of myth and of Surrealism's support for it that foreshadows the critical reaction to Surrealism of leftist intellectuals in the European post-war climate.[88]

If myth is a structured form of the primitive worldview,[89] magic is a form of knowing, and thereby of affecting, the world. It supersedes other forms of knowledge: art and science in the opinion of the *View*-crowd, but for the surrealists, science and religion. In Ernst's words, magic 'is the means of approaching the unknown by other ways than those of science and religion.'[90] 'Approaching the unknown' clearly harkens back to early Surrealism and the days of long sessions of automatic writing, lucid dreaming, and *fugues automatiques*. As I have argued, during the late 1920s and throughout the 30s, Surrealism developed its own particular rapport with the world; by 1943, this alternative way of knowing and influencing (sur)reality had come to be called 'magic' definitively. That this perception of magic was based upon a continuation of earlier surrealist thought is further illustrated by Péret's text. Péret likens the magician first to the poet, a standard move, but subsequently to the madman. Despite frequently remaining unmentioned, I find this quite important: it testifies to the uniquely surrealist view of magic and the artist-magician.[91] Péret was a great believer in automatism and retained automatic poetry as a subversive practice throughout his career. It is safe to say that Breton agreed completely with Péret's equation of magician with poet with mad person, and we should bear in mind that the first definition of Surrealism – pure psychic automatism – was never superseded. The two great works Breton wrote in exile, *Arcanum 17* and *Ode to Fourier*, both incorporate elements of automatic writing. *A17* in particular was written in a trance state, a 'state of grace' no less, in which outside and inside coincided.[92] Breton had celebrated this state, an 'original faculty,' already in 1933, making the point emphatically that 'automatism is the only path that leads there.'[93] In 1944, Breton cited that passage in its entirety and stated that 'it is this faculty that today we should strive to re-create.' Even more, 'the painter will fail in his human mission if he continues to widen the gulf between representation and perception instead of working toward their reconciliation, their synthesis.'[94] Pure psychic automatism in poetry and painting, where inner and outer coincide, was, therefore, still his main objective. Finally, Breton's devotion to the *Compagnie d'Art Brut* by the end of the decade, and celebration of naive artists and asylum art until the end of his life, testifies to his continued reliance upon his earlier standpoint that the creative expressions of marginal and naturally automatic groups such as 'fools and clairvoyants' should be considered authentically original poetry, true to the surrealist spirit. Therefore, for Breton too the surrealist equalled the magician, the magician the primitive, and the primitive the mad person, their shared quality being magic.

What this means, I argue, is that in contrast to the practices of other avant-gardes, Bretonian Surrealism retained the surrendering of self as a valid avenue of exploration, besides the magician's avenue of conscious direction through will. Thought-will was indeed the magician's instrument, as Novalis had decreed, but true to the surrealist spirit thought was not only intellectual and rational, but also unconscious and mad. Ideally, the surrealists should be both subject and object in and for themselves, as argued in Chapter One; they are magician and (automatic) madman in one. The motivating agent behind the magical worldview is love and, in the end, then, *desire* is the motor of magic, (possibly) effecting change. As a Freudian primal urge, love/desire is the main agent of automatism too. All-powerful love/desire is also the catalyst of poetry, as per Novalis. Its redemptive power was the key ingredient of Breton's wartime poetical novel *Arcanum 17*, his most occult work.

Arcanum 17: Magical woman

Among the oeuvre of Breton, *Arcanum 17* is one of his least studied works, even though (or perhaps, because) it holds a pivotal position in Breton's development towards a deeper investment in occultism.[95] It has been called Breton's most occult work and it has been interpreted as the final sign of Breton's 'conversion' to esotericism,[96] although I rather consider it Breton's most mythological work.[97]

The book is manifold in nature. Narrative elements and autobiography are combined with reflections on poetry and politics. Myths, fairytales, personal ruminations, mythical thought, occult references and polemical disclaimers are constantly intermingled. Yet, for all its complexity, *A17* is essentially a poetic novel about the redeeming power of love. Breton had been quite adrift in 1942-43: deeply depressed by the war, stranded in a foreign country the language of which he did not (and refused to) speak, estranged from wife and child, financially in dire straits and deprived of the comfort of a large company of friends and followers. He was 'saved' by love in the form of Chilean-born writer Elisa Bindorff-Claro (1906-2000). They met in New York in 1943; by 1944, they were travelling in the Canadian province of Québec together, where Breton wrote *Arcanum 17*. In 1945, by now married, they visited reserves of the Native American Hopi, Pueblo and Zuni tribes in Nevada, where Breton wrote *Ode to Fourier*.[98] Breton's idea that Bindorff rescued him in his dark despairing days is mirrored in *A17*, and its female protagonists all function as stand-ins for his new love. That

love takes centre stage in this novel is nothing new; all Breton's encounters throughout his life – as represented in his books, that is – were driven by desire. The marvellous encounter with and desire for Woman, who for a time becomes his woman, forms the red thread in *Nadja*, *Communicating Vessels*, *Mad Love*, and *Arcanum 17*; and even though Delcourt, Muzard, Hugo, Lamba and, lastly, Bindorff were real women, they were always depicted as idealised beings performing idealised roles. In every case, the ideal woman had something enchanting and magical about her: she was fairy-like, a sorceress, a witch. Such identification with magical creatures reaches its apex in *A17*. Bindorff assumes all the roles of surrealist Woman: the muse, the *femme fatale*, the child-woman, but also the '*femme-voyant*' or seer, '*femme-fée*' or fairy, and '*femme-sorcière,*' the witch or sorceress.[99] Where more generic spiritual themes, such as clairvoyance and predestination, can be found in *Nadja* and *Mad Love*, the occult side of woman and her magical powers are much more prominent in *A17*, even emphatically so. Deeply convinced that the ideas of man had led to the war, Breton proclaimed those of womankind to be the only alternative:

> The time has come to value the ideas of woman at the expense of those of man, whose bankruptcy is coming to pass fairly tumultuously today. It is artists, in particular, who must take the responsibility, [...] to maximise the importance of everything that stands out in the feminine worldview in contrast to the masculine [...][100]

While this might seem quite a change from the rather misogynist attitude of the first two decades, this validation of Woman and her worldview is still premised upon an understanding of her as Other. For the very same reason that 'primitives' and 'fools' experience a different world because of their magical worldview, woman with her irrational mind perceives the world in a deviant way too; one that the male artist should aspire to. The majority of things, people and creatures discussed in *A17* are Other and belong, therefore, to the irrational, feminine side of things, which counterbalances the (masculine) rationalist realism that caused the crisis. There is a considerable occult dimension to this: as deviant, the feminine is not only identified with the irrational but also with the mystical and occult. The two powers most exclusively associated with the feminine in Surrealism are mediumistic clairvoyance and witchcraft. This reflects the nineteenth-century identification of the feminine with occult powers, particularly passive ones, but also the centuries-old identification of woman as witch.[101] The (male) surrealist, with Michelet's *La Sorcière* in one hand, and the publications

about psychodynamic research with (women) mediums and patients in the other hand, considered any and all women instinctive clairvoyants and sorceresses, who could not help but perform acts of sorcery from their nature. The male surrealist seer had appropriated woman's clairvoyant powers in the early 1930s and, by the 1940s, the male artist-magician had assumed all feminine magical powers as well. The same should happen with the ideas of womankind, Breton argued; as the feminine worldview offered such a valuable and viable alternative, the surrealist should appropriate it 'to the point of jealously making it one's own.'[102]

Most important is that woman is powerful. The novel's overarching theme is Woman's mysterious powers of creation, salvation and resurrection, supporting her role as harbinger of hope and even redeemer of the world.[103] The three major characters in *A17* are the fairy Melusina, the Egyptian goddess Isis and the figure of the Star, the tarot's seventeenth 'arcanum' or seventeenth card of the Major Arcana. Melusina, to start with, is a hybrid fey creature who every Saturday turns into a serpent or fish below the waist, according to the legend as told by French court writer Jean d'Arras in 1392.[104] She exemplifies the woman as Other: while she may look like a woman, she is, in fact, Nature embodied, an undine or elemental spirit of water.[105] She is the enticing woman whom man cannot do without but of whose secretive mysterious powers he will ever remain in awe of.[106] Breton may have picked up Melusina from nineteenth-century German and French literature; for instance, from Zola's novel *Nana* (1880).[107] In contrast to Zola's demonic and destructive Melusina-figure, however, Breton's Melusina is a good fairy: innocent, beautiful and forever young, a child-woman.[108] Breton further inverts the traditional ending of the tale by allowing Melusina – usually exiled to the fay realm – to be healed, redeemed and active in the human world.[109] We should also note her identification as water-spirit or undine. Lamba had been identified with an undine too (in *Mad Love*), whereas Breton had made of Nadja a 'spirit of the air' (or sylph).[110] There are very strong resonances with German Romanticism here, in which the character of the undine, a female spirit, was a distinct aspect. In turn, this reflected an interest in Paracelsian ideas, specifically as propounded in *Comte de Gabalis* (1670) by Nicolas Montfaucon de Villars (1635-1673). Villars drew upon various esoteric sources for his novel, primarily the pseudo-Paracelsian *Liber de nymphis, sylphis, pygmaeis et salamandris et de caeteris spiritibus* (1591), and propounded the notion that the elemental beings – nymphs or undines, sylphs, gnomes, and salamanders – needed to 'marry' a human being to become immortal. Several novels by later authors were more or less directly inspired by *Comte de Gabalis*.[111] Tragic love stories of beautiful elemental

beings, including undines such as Melusina, who depended upon a human man to 'love and marry' them to attain eternal life, set the tone in romantic literature.[112] Breton picked up on the tone and upon erotic love as the theme of these stories, but again inverted an essential element. In this case, the dependency, as it is now *he* who is dependent upon Melusina/Bindorff to transform him, thereby saving him from annihilation.

The emphasis upon fairytales and fairy-figures not only exemplifies the deeper investment of Breton in German Romanticism, but also the internalisation of its themes, including those with (latent as well as explicit) occult overtones. In Marseille, Breton had composed a long poem the title of which, *Fata Morgana*, points to another figure who is also a fairy, water-spirit, *and* woman; namely, Morgan le Fay.[113] Bearing in mind that the one female court card of the surrealist Marseille Game was the siren or mermaid, it becomes clear that water-connected females who lure men with their wiles were much on Breton's mind. Yet, they are not the traditional agents of doom, but rather of rescue and, as such, represent Breton's view that recourse to the irrational was the only means forward for Surrealism and possibly the world at large.

A17's second female character symbolises the role of woman as agent in the creative process of man, she who resurrects man (as a poet, in Breton's case – it is not physical but intellectual salvation he is concerned with).[114] She is described as 'the queen' 'covered by a veil woven from stars and fastened with a moon at the junction of her thighs;' and it becomes clear that this is Isis when Breton briefly retells the legend of Isis reuniting her slain husband Osiris with his body parts.[115] The dichotomy between light and dark plays a gendered role in *A17*, with woman being identified with the light and man with the dark, another inversion of tradition. Breton, who would be Osiris reunited with his creativity as Bindorff is identified as Isis, quotes Éliphas Lévi: 'Osiris is a black god.'[116] He would have welcomed this identification with someone 'noir': not only because of his dark personal circumstances, but also because of his admiration for things 'noir,' such as the 'roman noir' (Gothic novels) and 'humour noir.' This interest in and admiration for 'dark' things had started in the 1930s and may well have been part of the on-going effort to 'occult' Surrealism.[117]

The Star, finally, is the harbinger of hope. Continuing the light vs. dark/ woman vs. man dichotomy, she is the light-bearing woman, the beautiful idealised creature who lights man's dark path – as we have seen, woman 'casts the strongest light in [man's] dreams.' The Star, too, is identified as the beautiful child-woman women should be: she is 'Eve and now all of womankind,' the ultimate *femme-enfant*, 'the young sorceress of a Michelet

with the eyes of heath."[118] Breton initially provides a description of a card of the Star based on the Marseille model. Against a backdrop of eight stars, a nude girl holds two urns, one silver and one golden, from which issue two streams; on one side of her, a rose and butterfly, on the other a tree.[119] Breton gives a personal symbolical interpretation of such iconographical motifs as the two streams of water, the rose, butterfly and the tree.[120] He interprets the bright middle star as the hope-bringing stars Sirius (the Dog Star), Lucifer the Light Bearer and Venus the Morning Star all in one.[121] According to common interpretation, the Star already symbolises hope and regeneration, but Breton intensifies that to mean physical and spiritual rebirth as well. The Star is 'Eternal Youth, Isis, the Myth of Resurrection, etc.'[122] In keeping with this prominent theme of the tarot, the first edition of the novel was accompanied by four tarot cards designed by Matta: *the Lovers*, *the Chariot*, *the Stars* and *the Moon* (1945).[123] I interpret the choice for these particular cards as follows. The moon is a traditionally feminine symbol, pointing to womankind's redeeming qualities in general, while the child-woman Star symbolises all women (hence the card's unusual plural) who are stars and Bindorff in particular. *The Chariot* is a masculine card related to strife and may refer to Breton, his personal struggles, the current European conflict caused by the predominance of masculine ideas, even to men generally, and possibly all of those things combined. *The Lovers*, finally, doubtlessly symbolises the happy and redeeming union of woman and man, Bindorff and Breton, as lovers.

The occult elements referred to in *A17* include the tarot card the Star, Éliphas Lévi, Satan and Lucifer, the undine, and Isis and Osiris, while Paracelsus is mentioned once, as are Swedenborg and the Kabbalah.[124] Many of these characters would fit under the more general heading of mythology as well. I argue that we should relate these topics first and foremost to Romanticism, both French and German, like the conceptualisation of Woman as a fairy with enchanting powers. Occult Romanticism is clearly an important template. One finds references to Isis in Novalis and Nerval, for instance; undines such as Melusina in Hoffman, Zola and many others; Paracelsianism, Swedenborgianism and generic mentions of the Kabbalah in many a nineteenth-century author; and Lévi, tarots and fallen angels in several French romantics, not least Victor Hugo.[125] It is the latter, or more precisely, Auguste Viatte's book about him, *Victor Hugo et les illuminés de son temps*, that forms the basis for Breton's engagement with occultism in *A17*.

Breton encountered this book, which had a very limited distribution until its European reprint of 1973, because he was travelling in Canada in 1944, where it was published. Breton's interest in Viatte's book was probably

primarily prompted by his interest in Hugo.[126] The simple fact that he refers in several places to 'Monsieur Auguste Viatte' makes it obvious that the book was his first source.[127] As Hubert has pointed out, Viatte's *Victor Hugo* certainly pointed Breton towards Éliphas Lévi, as Viatte argues in favour of a considerable influence of the latter upon Hugo.[128] This was not Breton's first encounter with Lévi, but the earlier references in his *Second Manifesto* are rather vague, and one may question how familiar he really was with the ideas of Lévi at that time. In *A17*, Breton cites mainly from *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* (1856) and *Histoire de la magie* (1860). He must have reread Hugo's works alongside both Viatte's and Lévi's and, without a doubt, Viatte's discussion of Satan as Lucifer and of Satan-Lucifer as something of a revolutionary (in the context of Hugo's work), combined with Levi's engaging description of Lucifer as the archetypical romantic rebellious loner – indeed, a beautiful 'wildly wandering' comet with 'fiery hair' – lie at the basis of Breton's references to Lucifer and Satan in *A17* and later.[129] While Breton did refer to Satan on a few – though not many – earlier occasions, obviously in his role as rebel against the Christian God,[130] he hardly referred to Lucifer at all before 1943. But in *A17*, Lucifer is posited as an 'outlaw intellect' and the father of 'Poetry and Liberty': 'it's rebellion itself, rebellion alone is the creator of light. And this light can only be known by way of three paths: poetry, liberty, and love.'[131]

Poetry. Liberty. Love. These are not only the core values of Surrealism. By now it has also become clear that these are the defining characteristics of surrealist occultism too – and obviously they originate in Romanticism. Magic is emancipatory and revolutionary (= liberty) as we have seen in Péret's text. True poetry is magical already and, of course, love is too, as Novalis had proclaimed. He had further stated that '[a]ll novels in which true love plays a part, are *fairy tales – magical events*.'[132] It is no surprise, then, that Breton would make this story of his salvation by his true love into a fairy tale. Woman is the agent of love as well as of liberty, and inspires man(kind) to poetry. In *A17*, woman is the light-bringer and conflated with Lucifer and rebellion. This squares with the connections Breton establishes between the card figure of the Star, and the stars depicted behind her, the Morningstar Venus – goddess of love and pinnacle of womanhood – and Sirius, a star related in ancient Egypt to Isis and Osiris. The third star is Lucifer the light-bringer and it is clear that, in this case, Lucifer is possibly female or at least feminised, what with the 'ideas of woman' being postulated as the rebellious alternative to the current crisis.

Lévi's most important contribution to *A17* is that very Arcanum, the tarot. In *Dogme et rituel* Lévi discusses the tarot at length and provides it with a mystical interpretation and history.[133] Breton's studies of card games in

Marseille had put the tarot on his radar and he acted upon his interest in New York, when, at his request, Seligmann provided him with a *feuilleton* of documents concerning the tarot, and about Isis and Osiris and number symbolism besides.[134] His growing interest in the tarot combined with his encounter with Lévi's *Dogme et rituel* inspired him to make the one card most relevant to his personal situation, the hope-bringing card of the Star, the book's central image.[135] I underline that this card appears totally isolated; none of the other cards of the Major Arcana, let alone the tarot deck as a whole, play any role in *A17*. Breton further interprets the card and its symbolism in idiosyncratic ways, divorcing it from the standard interpretations one might find in occult sources and identifying the child-woman Star with his true love and the female characters in the novel.[136] This shows clearly, I find, that even though he broadened his interest in occult matters, he picked and chose eclectically and for his own purposes, making a single element, a tarot card in this instance, entirely subservient to his personal poetical ruminations on the mystery of love. This is a far cry from any interaction with the tarot on its own terms as an occult tool of divination, consisting of an entire pack. It supports my general argument that the interest of Breton never became more than an interest.

Hubert suggests that Breton was familiar by this time with the tarot studies by Court de Gébelin, Papus, Oswald Wirth and Marc Haven, but that he did not refer to names or titles because he was 'embarrassed' by their 'diffuse spiritualism' and the 'accent' they put on the notion of initiation. That Breton was more or less familiar with these authors I find probable, and we can possibly attribute that to Seligmann.[137] I wonder, however, if he truly was 'embarrassed;' we will see in the next chapter that Breton actively engaged initiation in the 1947 exhibition, in which he also accorded the tarot an important role.

Melusina is representative of Breton's neo-Romanticism and growing interest in medieval French literature, but there is an occult side to her too. Interestingly, Breton draws a parallel between the seventeenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet and the fairy-like guiding figure in his life Melusina/the Star via the homophonic resemblance of the pronunciation of pe (פ) with *fée* (fairy).[138] This homophonic connection was perhaps inspired by Lévi, and possibly by the references in Viatte and similar authors to the 'phonetic cabala,' or language of alchemy and esoteric language in Romanticism in general. The 'allegorical truth,' states Breton, is that פ 'resembles the tongue in the mouth' and 'means the word itself in the highest sense;'[139] I think it may have symbolised literature for him. Like the Star this letter is taken completely out of its specific context, be it occult, cabalistic, romantic or

even just Hebrew, and relevant apparently for Breton's personal associations alone.

Melusina is not only an undine but also a hybrid, part woman, part serpent (or fish). Surrealism was fascinated by hybrids, including, on the one hand, the male's double of the (man-bull) Minotaur and, on the other, female hybrids such as Gradiva, or Max Ernst's multiple-breasted animal-headed brides.[140] The female hybrid creatures are all fay; that is to say, sorceresses connected to the fairy world. They embody Woman, she who is – as per Michelet – a witch by nature.[141] The most obvious hybrid, combining the feminine and masculine, is the androgyne. The frequent association of the androgyne with alchemy is strengthened by the alchemical illustrations the surrealists had access to, such as the seventeenth-century *Hermetic Androgyne* in Grillot de Givry's *Witchcraft*.[142] Furthermore, if one takes the relatively frequent comments about Alchemy of the Word, the philosopher's stone and Nicolas Flamel into account, it is easy to see why so many scholars and writers have argued for the important role of alchemy in Surrealism. However, I would argue that the androgyne should be connected to occultism only as a secondary consideration; first and foremost, we should connect it to its prevalence as a motif in, again, French and German romantic and symbolist literature, and then primarily as the symbol of the soulmate, one's true love. Albert Béguin's article on the androgyne in *Minotaure* 11 (1938), in which he discussed the androgynous character of Séraphita in Balzac, had put the figure on the surrealist map once and for all. The associations between the precursors, love and the androgyne were present in Surrealism from the outset. In 1942, Breton created a small collage-catalogue on myth, in which the androgyne was explicitly identified with Balzac's Séraphita and the romantic concept of the *âme-soeur* (soulmate).[143] Considering it in the light of the overarching obsession with (heterosexual) love on the part of the male surrealist, for whom desire is the prime mover in his *rapport* with the world, I would go so far as to say that the androgyne symbolises the male surrealist in his perfect state: reunited with his Other, in the two-fold form of his true love, and his feminine, magical and automatic Other whose powers he has 'jealously made his own'. As Breton explains:

> I state today with complete certainty that this state of grace [the pure state of automatism discussed earlier] results from the reconciliation *in one single being* of everything that can be expected *from without and from within*, that it exists at that one instant in the act of love when exaltation at the peak of senses' pleasure is no longer distinguishable from the lightning realization of all the mind's aspirations.[144]

In conclusion and the *Ode to Fourier*

So, did Breton 'convert to esotericism', as one critic alleged? In my view, the answer is squarely no. For all his references to Lévi and to the seventeenth Arcanum, one should not confuse Breton's interest in occult and esoteric figures and thought with a thorough investment in it. Even if it were possible to 'convert' to occultism or esotericism, that would have been out of the question for him. Surrealism's anchoring in the secular here and now and antipathy to religion in general prevented it; but, just to be clear, Breton mentioned his 'reservations.'[145] Rather, he is interested is in its system of correspondences:

> Esotericism, with all due reservation about its basic principle, at least has the immense advantage of maintaining in a dynamic state the system of comparison, boundless in scope, available to man, which allows him to make connections linking objects that appear to be the farthest apart and partially unveils to him the mechanism of universal symbolism.[146]

This is one of the few occasions where Breton explicitly links 'esotericism', as a current, with the idea of correspondences. Doubtless, his study of scholarly literature on romantic occultism introduced him to the term, as it was not his wont before then to refer to the current by that name – or even as a current at all, although here he treats 'esotericism' as one generic movement with a basic principle. Finally, he touches here upon one of the two reasons why esotericism was relevant to him. First, it provided him with an immense body of lore about possible hidden connections in the world, an almost inexhaustible source of new rapports with the world.[147] The other reason is its very heterodoxy, its political side: magic, revolution, liberation and general tendency to be (considered as) deviant.

In *A17*, Breton had already paid homage to the radical utopian socialist Charles Fourier, and the next year he wrote *Ode to Fourier*.[148] Viatte's work did more than point Breton to Hugo's occult interests and to Lévi; it made him keenly aware of the dynamic nineteenth-century relations between poets, occultists, and revolutionary thinkers. In particular, Fourier, but also the French-Peruvian socialist and proto-feminist Flora Tristan (Flore Tristan y Moscoso, 1803-1844) and the poet and musician Antoine Fabre d'Olivet.[149] The remarkable thing is that Breton had already made some comments about these people – a very few, admittedly – before Viatte, but they moved from the periphery to the centre stage of his views during the early

1940s. What this means, I argue, is that Viatte did not push Breton in entirely new directions with regards to esotericism and occultism; rather, Breton used Viatte to gain more knowledge about figures he was already more or less interested in, and this increased knowledge about their occult exploits seems to have confirmed to him that they were all heterodox and, therefore, revolutionary thinkers. Breton's interest in Fourier and his theories are a logical consequence of the fact that poetry, love and revolution remained Breton's primary concerns. To start with, he read Fourier's works as if they were poetry. Fourier's notion of 'passional attraction' (as a motivational power in every social and organic system) impressed Breton, who paid him the highest surrealist honour by calling him an 'an emancipator of desire,' together with Marquis de Sade and Sigmund Freud.[150] Fourier's idea of a socially revolutionary utopia based on universal harmony certainly attracted Breton, who further praised him for 'his attitude of absolute doubt toward traditional modes of knowledge and action.'[151] Finally, Breton perceived Fourier as something of an occultist as well; indeed, based on Viatte, Breton was by now convinced that 'an esoteric view of the world' formed the 'junction' where 'the ideas of poets and those of visionary social thinkers (i.e. Fourier) meet.'[152] Breton was confirmed in his understanding of esoteric thought as heterodox, political and, most importantly in his view, associated with poetry and with love. He admired the language of Tristan and Fourier, he admired their radical socialist ideas even more, but what he admired most was the role they accorded 'love' (or the passions). He was astounded by Fourier's 'imagination' and made a point of mentioning Fourier's influence upon Hugo and Baudelaire. In the same context, he refers to Swedenborg and Saint-Martin too, thereby illustrating his view of Romanticism, occultism and (what he considered) esotericism as intermingled.[153]

Therefore, *Arcanum 17*, particularly when taken in combination with the *Ode to Fourier*, showcases Breton's understanding of what he now terms esotericism: heterodox thought of the past. They also show how he approached this 'esotericism': as a treasure trove of heterodoxies and interesting themes and elements that serve to revolutionise life in a poetical manner. It is relevant precisely because it is quaint, marginal, bizarre, primitive, magical and marvellous – and above all because of its positive associations with Romanticism. The definitive identification of the surrealist as a magician, the explorations of radical thinkers and their heterodox (religious) thought and, finally, the conviction that womankind's ideas would save the day are all signs that deviancy – indeed, any deviance from the bourgeois norm – was increasingly becoming institutionalised in Surrealism as the only viable alternative to the current (political) state of the world. In the end, myth,

fairytales and heterodox thought in *Arcanum 17* band together into one message of hope and regeneration. Esotericism is, therefore, constructed as a more or less homogenous Other, and that otherness makes it relevant to Bretonian Surrealism. The fact that it is not only other in thought, but also in time would have added to its appeal. Even though Breton was concerned with a revolution to create a better world of tomorrow, he looked resolutely to the past – a view that would confuse critics only a couple of years later, as we will see.

5.   Arcanum 1947: Poetry, liberty, love

Introduction

Almost two years after the liberation of Paris, in May 1946, Breton came home to 42, Rue Fontaine. Immediately, he instigated renewed surrealist group sessions at the Café des Deux Magots. The addition of new blood was imperative as there were few first and second generation surrealists in Paris; Ernst, Tanguy, Dominguez and Matta, for instance, had remained in the US, Carrington and others had settled in Mexico, while Brauner travelled extensively and did not stay in Paris for long. During the war, Éluard, who had remained in France and joined the resistance, had become a committed Stalinist. Desnos had been killed by the Nazis. Masson had returned to Paris but remained estranged from Breton, which made the latter the only one of the old guard in Paris until Péret's return from South America.[1] From the moment of his return, the French press was panting expectantly on Breton's doorstep: what exciting new events to expect from Surrealism? Meanwhile, the new intellectuals on the political left, the existentialists, together with the communists, were loudly declaring Surrealism passé. Moreover, because of the absence of nearly all the surrealists during the war, Surrealism had become suspect. Critics and intellectuals were stymied, even outraged, by Breton's wartime publications, *Arcanum 17* and *Ode to Fourier*. Many were very disappointed and considered that the recent conflict 'should [have led] to a rigorously political point of view' within the framework of either communism or existentialism,[2] and not to discussions of tarot cards, fairies and obscure utopians. What did Breton have to say for himself and his movement?

Breton was undaunted. He organised a grand exhibition in 1947 and confronted his critics head on:

> Hardly a day goes by without surrealism being enjoined to make way for something new, when it is not graciously invited to "turn over a new leaf." Without a doubt, the public manifestation of 1947 can only dash the hopes of those who have a vested interest in that disappearance or in that sweeping transformation. The surrealist undertaking, which, as we pointed out without encountering any significant refutation, had been in existence long before it became codified, could not without inviting ridicule be declared a thing of the past nor be permitted to proceed only in ways that would have nothing in common with the previous ones. In this respect, an almost immemorial past warrants

our confidence in the future: consequently, it is with a light heart that
we turn a deaf ear to those objurgations [sic].[3]

Besides 'turning a deaf ear' to this criticism, Breton and his surrealists
continued in the direction he had taken decisively with *Arcanum 17* and
Ode to Fourier: that of myths, occult themes and utopian thinkers. Breton
made the point that one should look to the *past* for improvement of the
future. Furthermore, he pointed out that for true emotional guidance one
should rely upon an *esoteric view of the world*, a 'hidden tradition' no less,
not least because of its influence upon important poets:

> [E]ach new era [...] should find in the past specific guarantors and
> guides, different from those of the earlier era. Only history will tell
> if the figures that existentialism has recently brought to the fore
> are able to assume such a role or if their star is merely shining on a
> short transition period. [...] Of far greater significance is the revived
> interest in works belonging to the fantastic genre as well as to what is
> commonly called "utopia." Nor must it be a coincidence that scholarly
> research has recently come to discover, at the junctions where the
> ideas of poets and those of visionary social thinkers meet (the great
> figures of Convention, Hugo, Nerval, Fourier), *the enduring vitality of
> an esoteric view of the world* (Martinès, Saint-Martin, Fabre d'Olivet,
> l'abbé Constant [= Éliphas Lévi]). By neglecting until now to take this
> into account, academic criticism has purely and simply sunk into futil-
> ity. In the light of that research, it seems probable, and the future will
> no doubt soon tell, that this worldview more or less directly influenced
> the major poets of the second half of the nineteenth century (Lautréa-
> mont, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Jarry), while it crystallised once again in
> Saint-Yves d'Alveydre's writings. Thus, the great movements of sensibil-
> ity by which we are still affected, the emotional charter by which we
> are governed, seem to originate, whether we like it or not, in a tradition
> entirely different from the one that is taught: that tradition has been
> kept buried under the most disgraceful, the most vindictive silence.[4]

For Breton, the answer to everything, and the state of the world and the hu-
man condition specifically, could be found in a combination of Romanticism,
utopianism, mythology and esotericism. This view was present in *Arcanum 17*
and he would continue to hold on to it in the 1950s, even though its strongest
expression can be found in the 1947 International Exhibition of Surrealism.
Here, I will focus upon the construction of that view. As will become clear, the

political reality of the day contributed strongly to his opinion of an 'enduringly vital' worldview located partly in a past, partly in the cultural margins, and entirely in the domain of irrationality. A nostalgic yearning for times gone by began to play an increasingly important role and, as I will show, eventually Breton aimed at turning his Surrealism into neo-Romanticism, including the occultism so strongly present in Romanticism and Symbolism. Nonetheless, poetry, love, and revolution (now rephrased as 'liberty'), continued to remain the overarching surrealist concerns to which everything, be it myth, primitivism, magic or nineteenth-century utopianism and occultism, was subservient.

Still, at a time when government was dominated by nationalism and realism, and intellectual milieus by communism and the worldview of the Frankfurt Schule, while society in general expressed a strong preference for looking forward and distaste for mythologies and occultism, the surrealist turn to the irrational was not well received. The 1947 exhibition can be seen as the public climax of Breton's interest in occultism. By discussing it room by room, I hope to make clear how Breton, who designed the show and, to a large extent, controlled its eventual outlook and contents, viewed occultism within the overarching context of myth as well as its relation to utopianism and Romanticism. As a visual manifestation of Breton's complex views, the show can be considered a success. It was, however, a failure politically and with regards to Surrealism's standing as an avant-garde movement. Many lambasted the 1947 exhibition and its messages that a 'new myth' would restore the world and hope could be found in nineteenth-century heterodox thought. It was felt that Surrealism was now undeniably ringing its own death knell. In a way, therefore, this chapter also tells the story of the increasing marginalisation of Bretonian Surrealism. Moreover, after that, Breton's opinions would remain more or less the same, nostalgia for a golden past of Surrealism became dominant and a repetition of moves and even entrenching of positions took place in the 1950s. Breton's position regarding occultism remained essentially unaltered, although on three fronts I find an intensifying of ideas: magic, now in the form of art magic, irrational correspondences, and the decoding and encoding of those by means of analogies and the language of alchemy. These three developments will be touched upon briefly in the final part of this chapter.

The exhibition: First stage

The 'Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme' was held at the posh Parisian Galerie Maeght. The show's art directors were Breton, who made the first

planning, and Duchamp, whose designs were eventually carried out (and interpreted by) Ukrainian-American architect Frederick Kiesler (1890-1965).[5] The impressive catalogue contained a number of essays, including Breton's pivotal introduction 'Before the Curtain' and 24 original graphical works.[6] The central theme of the show was myth and mythopoeia. Already in 1935, Breton had stated emphatically that the world was in need of a 'new myth,' a sentiment he had repeated during 1942.[7] One can hardly overestimate how central myth had become to Breton's vision at this point. After the surrealist internalisation of all Others and other powers that occurred during the war, by 1947 myth was understood to be essential to Surrealism as a whole; moreover, myth would be crucial in effecting the revolution Surrealism was still aiming for. The 1947 show was, therefore, designed as a manifestation of myth for the benefit of the public, in whose worldview myth was assumed to be only latently or embryonically present.[8] In the detailed invitation to participate that Breton wrote early in 1947, he stated that surrealist new myth would form the 'spirit' of the exhibition. Its 'cadre' would be an initiatory trajectory that would familiarise the visitor with this 'new myth.' Breton's invitation to participate outlines both the structure and contents of the exhibition. I consider it an important source highlighting the particulars of Breton's thought – not least because it was not fully realised in the final show. The design, therefore, offers a better insight into how Breton envisioned the 'new myth' and the primitive mind-set, which he considered occultism to be important allies of, to be integrated and represented in the actual show.[9]

Visitors to the show would first enter through the gallery's basement. A retrospective show entitled 'Surrealists despite themselves' was to have been hosted in this grotto, featuring surrealist precursors such as Hieronymus Bosch, Giuseppe Arcimboldo, William Blake, Henri Rousseau, Francisco Goya, Odilon Redon and Lewis Carroll, among many others. The canon of great precursors of Surrealism was reiterated, anchoring Surrealism firmly in a past of Breton's choosing. By now, this canon incorporated a noticeably large number of painters. The next room was to feature 'Momentary surrealists' and include works by Giorgio de Chirico, André Masson and Salvador Dali, among others. It testifies to Breton's efforts to create a second canon; namely, of those who had been disavowed at one point or who had left Surrealism of their own accord, but whose names and works he still wanted to retain for Surrealism. The basement as a whole was, therefore, intended to represent the solid base of Surrealism, its greatness and cultural gravitas across time, reaching from the past into the present and showing it to be a distinguished and living alternative tradition. The past is appropriated as

surrealist: 'The surrealist undertaking [...] had been in existence long before it became codified [by Surrealism].'[10] This retrospective was never realised.

The actual show opened with what was, on paper, the second part. Visitors ascended to the second level by climbing a staircase, consisting of 21 books; or rather, their painted spines and, as the actual stairs contained fewer than 21 steps, some were painted two to a step. Each book-step was assigned a card from the tarot's Major Arcana, in the cards' usual counting order.[11] The first step was assigned the Magician and painted with the spine of Charles Maturin's novel *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). The second step combined the 'Popess' (also the High Priestess) with *La vie et l'oeuvre du facteur Cheval*, an imaginary biography of the admired 'mediumistic sculptor' Cheval.[12] The fourth step combined the Emperor with a French abridged edition of James Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*; Justice and Meister Eckhart's *Sermons* (French selected edition) formed the eighth; and the ninth, the Hermit, was combined with a French edition of *The Chemical Wedding of Simon* [sic] *Rosenkreuz* (1616) by Johann Valentin Andreae. The fourteenth step consisted of Temperance and Swedenborg's *Mémorables* (a French version of *Diarum spirituale*, 1766) and the seventeenth of the Star and *Theory of the Four Movements and the General Destinies* by Fourier (1808).[13] Since 1945, Fourier only loomed larger in Breton's mind. The fact that he is combined with the card that holds the most personal meaning for Breton, the Star, symbolising (intellectual) salvation through love, illustrates Breton's view of Fourier as an important revolutionary thinker whose utopia would be one of the desirous mind, premised upon liberation of the passions. Other stairs were painted with the spines of works by such great authors as Baudelaire (combined with the Pope, no less), de Sade, Kafka, Apollinaire (Death), Jarry and Goethe as well as typical Breton-discoveries such as Jean-Piere Brisset, Xavier Forneret and, of course, Isidore Ducasse, Comte de Lautréamont. Breton also included a little known book on dreams, *Les rêves et les moyen de les diriger; Observations pratiques* (1867), which, in the spirit of black humour, was combined with the card of the Sun. The Bible book *Revelations* and the card Judgement formed the twentieth stair.[14] The stairs were swept from above by the revolving light of a small lighthouse, giving an extra dramatic effect to it all and symbolising the 'illumination' provided by Surrealism generally and these books in particular, all either by authors or about people we can also consider 'surrealists despite themselves'.[15] Thus, the appropriation and, indeed, canonisation of a selected past as surrealist continued with this staircase.

In my opinion, the stairs clearly illustrate that occultism and esotericism had become an integral part of Surrealism's mythopoeia, alongside Roman-

ticism and Symbolism, Frazerian anthropology, psychical research, creative mediums and the unclassifiable genre of speculative and absurd works.[16] Still, the collection of esoteric sources is not large and I wonder which books Breton himself considered under that rubric, if at all. Eckhart's *Sermons*, to start with, is not necessarily esoteric in this context, which becomes clear if we take a look at Breton's long poem *Full Margin* (1940). Written just before his departure for Marseille, it testifies to Breton's research into heterodox thought, particularly 'the margins of spirituality.'[17] It pays homage to Breton's intellectual guides, including Hegel and Novalis, and a few radical political dissenters, but further celebrates several Christian thinkers: twelfth-century mystic Joachim de Fiore (1135-1202), theological dissenter Jansenius (Cornelius Jansen, 1585-1638), his fervent follower François de Pâris (1690-1727) and the eighteenth century Bonjour brothers, who started a Jansenist sect.[18] 'Meister' Eckhart (1260?-1327?) is mentioned in this poem too, and I would argue that Breton considered him a mystical thinker within a tradition of Christian heterodoxy and not necessarily, let alone exclusively, as esoteric. An offhand comment made in 1942 showed that Breton had been reading the apocalyptic Bible books of John and Daniel at that time too.[19]

The lines referring to Eckhart reveal who introduced him to Breton: 'Meister Eckhart my master at the inn of reason / Where Hegel told Novalis With him we have everything we need and off they went / With them and the wind I have everything I need.'[20] In the dark days of the early part of the war, Breton had turned to Hegel and Novalis and then to their sources. Faced with a harsh political reality, he found succour in historical radicalism and dissent, with a distinctly mystical and remarkably Christian bent. It is clear that the outbreak of war led him to take up heterodox thinkers whose works combine a unique view of terrestrial matters with transpersonal transcendent experiences, captured in particular language that may seem absurd or poetical or a combination of the two. His turn to Christian heterodoxy can be related to the *Second Manifesto* and its call for occultation and validation of historical heterodox forms of thought, including the occult. Breton considered esotericism religious or even a religion, and it probably occupied a similar position in his mind as Christian mysticism – possibly even the same.[21] Indeed, there is a reference to esotericism in *Full Margin*, although lost in translation; the first line reads: '*Je ne suis pas pour les adeptes*' ('I am not one for followers').[22] In occult jargon, such 'adepts' could well refer to accomplished esotericists or occultists, which is why some scholars have interpreted this line as a rejection of esotericism.[23] In any case, in that line, as throughout the poem, Breton associates himself with the outliers and the loners – rather ironic, considering his history with the surrealist group.

The connections between Romanticism, radical heterodoxy, revolutionary thought and occultism are legion. Breton located Fourier at the crossroads of these domains.[24] However, the role Fourier serves here is primarily that of heterodox visionary, who, moreover, attributed revolutionary potential to the passions in interestingly worded writings – again a case of poetry, love and revolution, with his occult association being an additional bonus.

Just as Novalis and Hegel were instrumental in introducing Breton to Eckhart, others pointed him towards Swedenborg and to Rosicrucianism's founding document, the *Chemical Wedding.* The tarot staircase is the first occasion that work is explicitly mentioned by Breton. Duchamp had already been familiar with *The Chemical Wedding* for a long time, as had Max Ernst, and we might discern the influence of both or either of these artists here.[25] At the same time, several romantic poets had been familiar with it too and I find it very probable that Breton's renewed obsession with Romanticism prompted him to include both *The Chemical Wedding* and Swedenborg's *Mémorables*. One wonders how familiar he really was with these books and their contents, based not least on his reference to *The Chemical Wedding*'s author as 'Simon' Rosenkreutz, as the attributed author is Christian Rosenkreutz. Breton's one direct citation of Swedenborg in a 1947 essay – 'I saw a gathering of spirits. They wore hats on their heads'[26] – may not only be considered funny and, from Breton's point of view, absurd in the manner of Brisset and Fourier, it is also directly copied from Balzac's *Séraphita*.[27] Other mentions of Swedenborg are without exception embedded within a discussion of a Romantic hero, such as Baudelaire.[28] Breton's erudition is well known, as is his tendency to cite others citing others, usually without clear reference; this he applied to occultism too, and I am therefore convinced that he read only a few occult and esoteric sources directly.

If the stairs together with the (planned) basement make one thing clear, it is that Romanticism was higher on the surrealist priority list than ever before and that the esoteric and occult references occur only in romantic context. If the movement had been Romanticism's 'prehensile tail' until then, Breton certainly turned it into Romanticism 2.0 now. Indeed, his obsession with the very themes, things and people that had so fascinated the romantics made his Surrealism something of a neo-Romanticism, dominated by nostalgic motives. Moreover, earlier Surrealism had modelled itself upon a rather vaguely defined Romanticism; now, post-Viatte, neo-Romantic Surrealism was looking directly into the mirror of occult Romanticism. Maturin, Fourier, Baudelaire, Hölderlin, Apollinaire, Jarry and Goethe; all are poets and writers whose work if not necessarily directly inspired by occultism, was at least showing traces of it – traces that were furthermore

all being teased out right then by scholars such as Viatte. Even though there is no direct mention in Breton's writings of Viatte's other ground-breaking study *Les sources occultes du romantisme*, I think Breton was clearly in agreement with the spirit, if not necessarily the letter, of it.

The same can be said for the painters to be included in the basement as 'surrealists despite themselves.' They were known for their interest in and exploration of themes related to the occult, such as witches, hauntings, dreamscapes, inner visions. Hieronymus Bosch, while evidently deserving a place there for his style and iconography alone, had just been painted an alchemist in a 1946 publication. William Blake's interest in theosophy and in Swedenborg in particular, while known already, was the topic of a study published in 1947.[29] To sum up, on all sides the evidence was mounting that the surrealist precursors, whether poets or painters, had integrated some sort of occultism into their work. Their further associations with religious mysticism (Blake) and Christian heresy (another publication of the time claimed Bosch was an adamite[30]), for instance, only added fire to the idea that revolutionary heterodoxy is comprised of occultism and mysticism. I find it hardly surprising that Breton was turning his Surrealism in those directions too. Still, I hope to have made clear by now that his esotericism was mostly, if not predominantly, *mediated*. Sources in the tarot stairs, such as *The Chemical Wedding*, Swedenborg and, perhaps, Eckhart, are few in respect to the other sources, which are mainly romantic. One can wonder to what extent Breton actually even read these works – let alone other surrealists, besides Ernst and Duchamp. The only directly employed (i.e. least mediated) occult source is the tarot's Major Arcana, which were intended to function as aides to initiation; that is to say, in an occult manner. It is quite probable that Breton considered that Major Arcana to symbolise specific stages of initiation; in the catalogue's introductory essay he refers to occult author Robert Ambelain, whose publication making that claim had just come out.[31] By this time, Breton was also more or less familiar with the books of Swiss occultist Oswald Wirth, which also discuss tarot and initiation.

I find it significant that only the occult tarot served an overtly occult purpose. The esoteric sources dating from the eighteenth (Swedenborg) and seventeenth century (Rosenkreuz) were supposed to 'illuminate.' In practice, this meant that they constituted only a passive support. Breton's integration of the Major Arcana further stands out because it departs considerably from his attitude to the tarot only a few years earlier, in *A17*. There he had focused on one card only, embedded fully in the typically Bretonian context of love and Woman and given an entirely personal symbolical interpretation. Playing by the (occult) letter was not Breton's forte at all,

making his adherence to contemporary occult theory concerning the Major Arcana as a whole all the more noticeable – and highlighting his faith in *initiation* as the right process to understand the surrealist new myth embodied in his exhibition.

Second and third stage

After the staircase, visitors entered the theatrically lit 'Hall of Superstitions', designed by Kiesler.[32] Black drapes, mirrors and feathers hung from the walls and Ernst's *Black Lake* was painted on the floor. If things had been intellectual, even cerebral, before, this level was visceral. The room itself was shaped as an oval and reminiscent of an egg or womb; soft, wet and organically shaped, it was intended to suggest primeval and feminine surroundings, confronting modern urban man with a natural environment he had, apparently, become estranged from.[33] Various uncanny objects and art works were placed in it, which were supposed to further inspire the primitive, i.e. magical and pre-scientific, mind-set. This room's objective was to stress that the primitive magical worldview is an essential part of the way the human mind functions. Religious (and bourgeois) superstitions should certainly be overcome, but the superstitiously functioning (primitive) mind is a necessary instrument for true mythopoeia.[34] Partly recapturing his earlier argument, Péret argued in his contribution to the catalogue that a primitive mind-set is essential to the surrealist rapport with the world.[35] The room was, accordingly, intended to generate such a mind-set. The art exhibited served to either overcome superstition or inspire it, or both, being mainly taboo-figures and totemic objects. Installation views show *Anguished Man* (1947) by American artist David Hare, referring to the war but also to the constraints superstitions can place on the mind, and the *Cascade of Superstitions* (1947), painted with invented superstitious signs by Miró. Religion's totemic character was highlighted by two sculptures by Kiesler, the *Totem for All Religions* [plate 13] and, in similar Freudian vein, the *Anti-Taboo Figure* (both 1947).

Visitors would then pass through the 'Rain Room', a design by Duchamp that symbolised purification and rebirth. It was hung with curtains of artificial rain, replacing the real dripping water envisioned in Duchamp's original design. Artificial grass covered the floor, in the middle of which stood a billiard table.[36] A sculpture stood on the table; paintings hung on the walls. Although all the elements proper to an initiatory trajectory are present – intellectual illumination, journey through the dark superstitious

recesses of the mind, purification, rebirth – (black) humour too played an essential part in the exhibition. Creating an initiatory trajectory and simultaneously subverting it is a uniquely surrealist thing to do.[37] At no point should we take the show's occult element too seriously; as Breton instructed, it 'would be unforgiveable to take the word "initiation" literally; in our [Breton's] minds, of course, it is only intended as a *guideline*.'[38] The show's subversion does not end there: proceeding from a staircase comprised, for a significant part, of French literary heroes – cherished heritage of the intellectual and educated – through to primitivism and superstition, domains that rationalism had believed to be vanquished, was certainly a commentary on the times just past as well.

The final room was the 'Labyrinth of Initiation', another suggestion by Duchamp. The visitor was guided through it by 'Ariadne's thread,' a seemingly small detail that is of great importance, as it reveals that the labyrinth was first and foremost considered mythical, rather than occult, in nature. Duchamp even made the point explicitly that the labyrinth had no occult meaning.[39] Still, we can expect such a well-read man as Breton to be aware of the many symbolic meanings labyrinths carry in many religions, and in combination with the theme of initiation, which was prominent at least in his design and realised in an occult sense in the tarot staircase, for instance, I assume that he did consider the labyrinth partly within the context of occult initiation too. The doorway to the labyrinth was guarded by Hérold's large statue *The Great Transparent One*, based on Breton's concept of such beings. The hard and pointed forms of the sculpture reflect the war, as does the cavernous face, with its facial features displaced, half of them lost and the other half scattered to the belly, where a shattered mirror shows us our broken selves. But there are also signs of hope, and these are probably alchemical in nature: the creature carries coals and eggs in its hand, which represent the fiery furnaces of purification and rebirth. The crystalline forms in the head may refer to the philosopher's stone, at least according to Mitchell;[40] I find that speculative, as Hérold was fascinated by crystalline forms throughout his career and did not usually connect that with alchemy.[41]

The labyrinth, where a bell continuously tolled, was divided into twelve (supposedly) octagonal recesses. In each stood an altar created by a surrealist major artist. Breton not only solicited the particular artists but frequently stipulated exactly how their altar should look, too; another instance of the breadth of Breton's influence, as well as of the solid conceptual framework that lay behind his design. The altars were dedicated to a mythical character, being, or thing created by a surrealist or revered predecessor.

On or around each altar a representation of its subject and suitable relics were to be placed. Breton also attributed to each mythical being-altar a sign from the zodiac, symbolised by a coloured band in the colour of the (semi-)precious stone belonging to that sign, and an hour from Apollonius of Tyana's *Nuctemeron*. There is no doubt that Breton knew of the *Nuctemeron* only by way of Lévi's *Dogme et rituel*, and his citations of it are, in fact, paraphrases of Lévi.[42] The hours were related, in turn, by Lévi to initiation, which is doubtless why Breton picked them and the number twelve besides, as Mitchell has pointed out.[43] In practice, these colours and hours were not always depicted in a straightforward visible form, or even included in any way at all – as far as can be discerned.[44] Nevertheless, on paper the attributed hours make of the twelve-altared room a huge clock, perhaps in relation to initiation referring to the time it takes to become initiated and the idea that certain events have to take place at certain moments and in a certain order. Perhaps, too, referring to it being high time the general public became initiated into the new myth provided by Surrealism – although these ideas are, for now, conjecture on my part.

The altars were, primarily, a celebration of surrealist heroes. For example, Wilfredo Lam created the altar for 'Falmer's hair,' a phrase from Lautréamont's *Chants du Maldoror*. Matta's altar was dedicated to the 'Juggler of gravity,' an (unrealised) figure from Duchamp's masterpiece *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23). Further altars were dedicated to literary characters (mostly women, notably) from the works of Jean Ferry, Jarry, Rimbaud and George du Maurier, and Breton's Great Transparent Ones. One real person received an altar: the writer Raymond Roussel. Three animals were allotted altars too: the secretary Bird or 'Bird Superior,' identified as Ernst's alter-ego Loplop; the Gila monster, or 'suspicious Heloderm' in Breton's terms; and the Condylure or star-nosed mole.[45] The last two creatures appealed greatly to the surrealist sense of humour and had been on Breton's mind since 1945.[46]

One of the more overtly occult was the sixth altar, dedicated to the Secretary Bird/Loplop. Its sign was Virgo. The centrepiece was Brauner's painting *The Lovers* (1947), those being the Major Arcana's Magician and High Priestess [plates 14 and 15]. During his increasingly far-reaching occult studies, Brauner had also focussed upon the tarot and he was quite at home with its iconography and symbolism[47] – but also, I would add, perfectly at ease with appropriating occult symbols to his own personal ends and interpretations, along the lines of and possibly even more so than Breton. The Magician is here identified as the surrealist magician, as Brauner also considered himself. On his tray table, we see a dagger, coins and cup, together with the staff he holds in his hands suit-signs of the classical occult
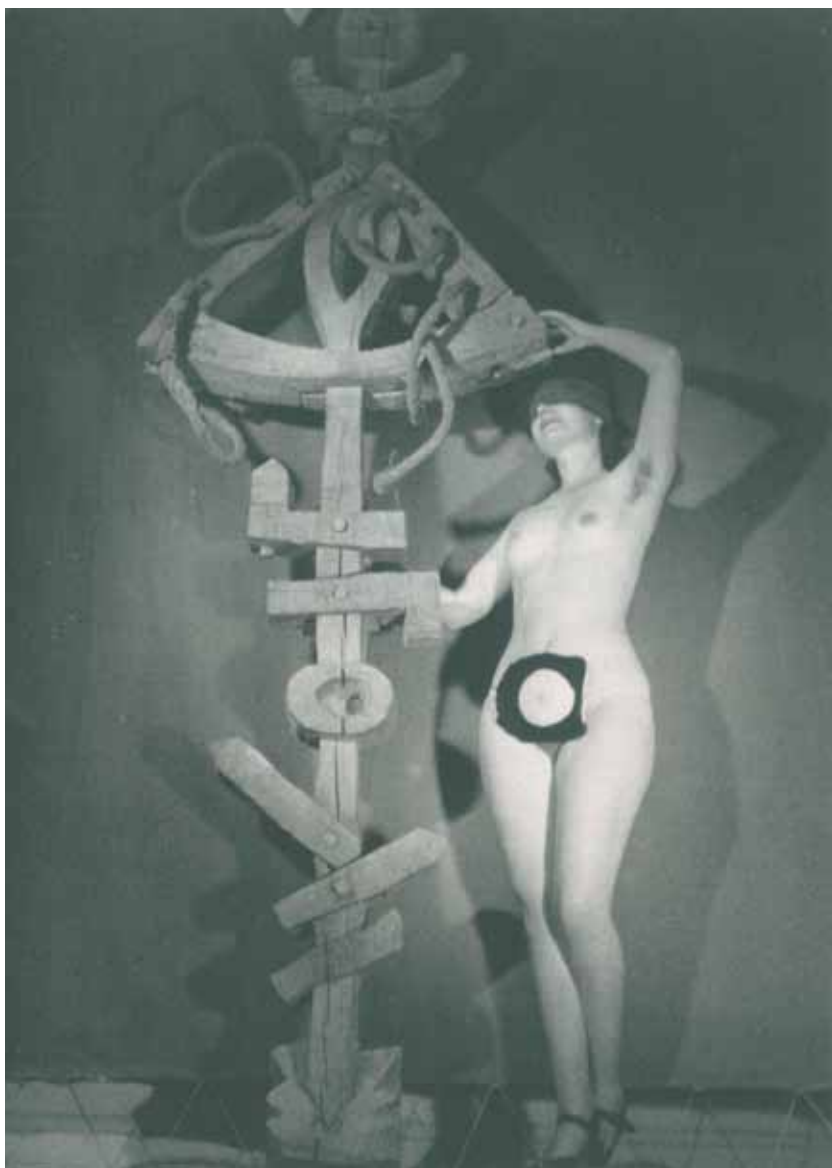
13. Rémy Duval, installation view with Kiesler, the Totem for All Religions*, and a model wearing* Please Touch *by Marcel Duchamp, 1947.*

tarot that also indicate the four elements. He stands between water, at his feet, and fire, the volcano exploding from his head. The High Priestess is identified as universal woman, the spiritual counterpart to the Magician.[48] Her bird's head, a significant departure from common tarot iconography for this card, refers first of all to the altar's dedication, but also to the bird-headed women from several of Ernst's paintings, brides of Lop-lop. She stands within a sort of box,[49] the side turned towards the viewer painted with (what looks like) Agrippian angel signs and with '1713', an homage to Breton, who considered these numbers anagrams of his initials and of personal totemic value. From the early 1930s onwards, he would sometimes sign the initials 'AB' in such a way as to resemble 1713.[50] Brauner referred here to Breton as curator of the show, but also paid homage to the recently published *Arcanum 17* in which Breton celebrated the notion of the man as magician, woman as witch/sorceress and the two of them united as a fruitful magical couple – a magical union Brauner believed in too. The staff the Magician holds in his left hand has two ends, one with a sun and the other with a moon-symbol; gendered signs the combination of which again signifies union. If '1713' symbolises Breton united, the '17' in it refers to his Star, Bindorff, which means he himself would be Death, Major Arcana card 13 – which, in turn, would fit with his apparent self-identification with Osiris and other dark (death-)gods in *Arcanum 17*.[51]

The lovers can further be compared to the androgyne, another successfully unified couple, and the hybridity of the bird-priestess as well as the somewhat indeterminate gender of the Magician may point to androgyny. The altar as a whole, dedicated as it is to the Bird Superior, pays homage to Ernst, another surrealist who had come to consider himself a magician in the early 1940s.[52] On the altar stood a hawk-like sculpture holding a woman in its claws: bird-man catches, and possibly consumes, Woman. Also, a statue of the virgin and child, referring to Virgo, perhaps symbolising Woman's nurturing powers as well,[53] but certainly also a nod to one of Ernst's more (in)famous early paintings, *Virgin Mary Chastening the Christ Child before Three Witnesses: André Breton, Paul Éluard, and the Painter* (1926).

The altar of the star-nosed mole was designed by some newly joined artists under the collective name 'Seigle.' It is extremely particular, not least because an entire cult was invented around it, complete with mythical symbolism, which has been described by Mitchell.[54] Still, the only recognisably occult part in it was a reference to the Arcana of the Star, another clear homage to Breton. The exhibition also included a thirteenth altar, by outsider artist Maurice Baskine (1901-1968), which, as the altar for the Gila monster was never realised, functioned in practice as the twelfth.
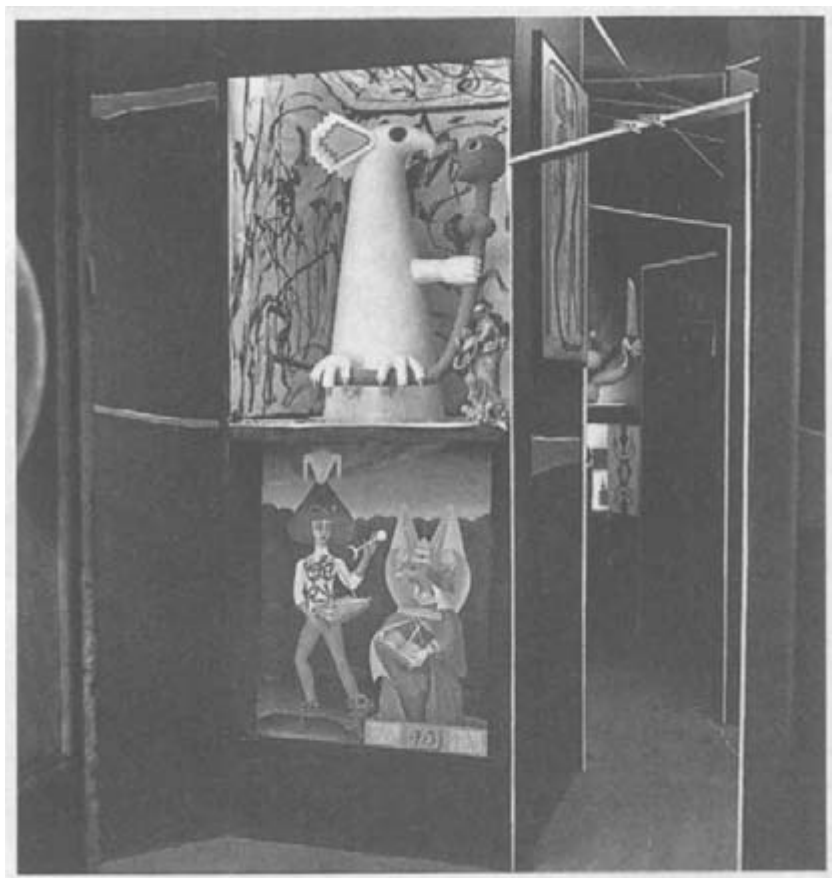
14. *Wily Maywald, installation view of the altar 'the Secretary Bird', with Brauner's* The Lovers, *1947.*

Baskine, who moved in the surrealist periphery from 1946 to 1951, had been profoundly interested in alchemy since the early 1930s, and he named his altar *'l'athanor'* after the alchemical furnace.[55] It is unclear what his exact intentions were with this altar; there is also no insight into the question of whether Breton had been part of its design in any way.

Clearly, occult elements were part of some altars, prominently among them the hours of Apollonius/Lévi and the tarot imagery in Brauner's *The Lovers*. Yet, I emphasise that there was nothing occult about the altars themselves. The beings to which they were dedicated were mythical, mainly within a literary context, or 'capable of being endowed with a mythical life', such as the star-nosed mole.[56] In his outline of the project, Breton expressly stated that the altars should be modelled upon those of 'pagan cults,' 'for instance Indian [native American] and voodoo.'[57] With each altar,

he requested particular offerings as well as designs for drawings to invoke certain beings, which are voodoo practices.[58] Breton had spent some time in Haiti at the invitation of Mabille in 1945, together with Bindorff and Lam. He had been impressed by its people and culture and fascinated by the practices of voodoo; something shared with Mabille, sustained by his interaction with Lam, and akin to Péret's interest in South American folklore. He witnessed a voodoo ritual and bought paintings by and wrote an essay about Haitian artist Hector Hippolyte (1894-1948), third-generation voodoo priest.[59] Just before Haiti, Breton and Bindorff had travelled though Hopi territory in New Mexico where they had witnessed Hopi ceremonies, something Ernst would do as well.[60] As I have argued earlier, the triad myth-primitivism-magic was a major theme for founding members such as Breton, Péret and Ernst at that time, and it is clear that this was unchanged in 1947; probably their fascination for and reliance upon these concepts was intensified after their first-hand experience of tribal cultures. Even as the superstition of (Christian) institutionalised religion should be battled and overcome by means of heterodox thought (the tarot stairs) and the blasphemous objects in the Hall of Superstitions, the new rituals and superstitions modelled upon 'primitive' religion, offered in the same Hall and in the Labyrinth, were to replace them so as to return myth and magic to the world.

Finally, in Breton's design the trajectory continued: visitors were supposed to exit through a kitchen and partake in a surrealist meal. It was never actually realised. The trajectory of initiation lacked both beginning and end, therefore – which testifies primarily to the difficulty of realising ambitious exhibition projects (certainly at that time), but also seems in line with the show's intended subversion. Where does initiation begin and where does it end?

The beginning of the end? Or initiation into… liberty

An incomplete trajectory can also speak of the initiation failing. Were we to treat it as a prediction, it is safe to say that it came true, as generally the show was not well received and many press reviews were critical or even outrightly negative.[61] Critics found it to be, for instance, a 'deviant synthesis of the Musée Grevin, the Musée Dupuytren, the Grand Guignol and a Luna Park;' that is, a wax museum, an anatomical museum, a theatre of horrors and an amusement park; cheap thrills, therefore.[62] Darkened rooms, tolling bells and taboo-figures were not well received so soon after the war, let alone myth, primitivism and occultism. Even those who were less critical
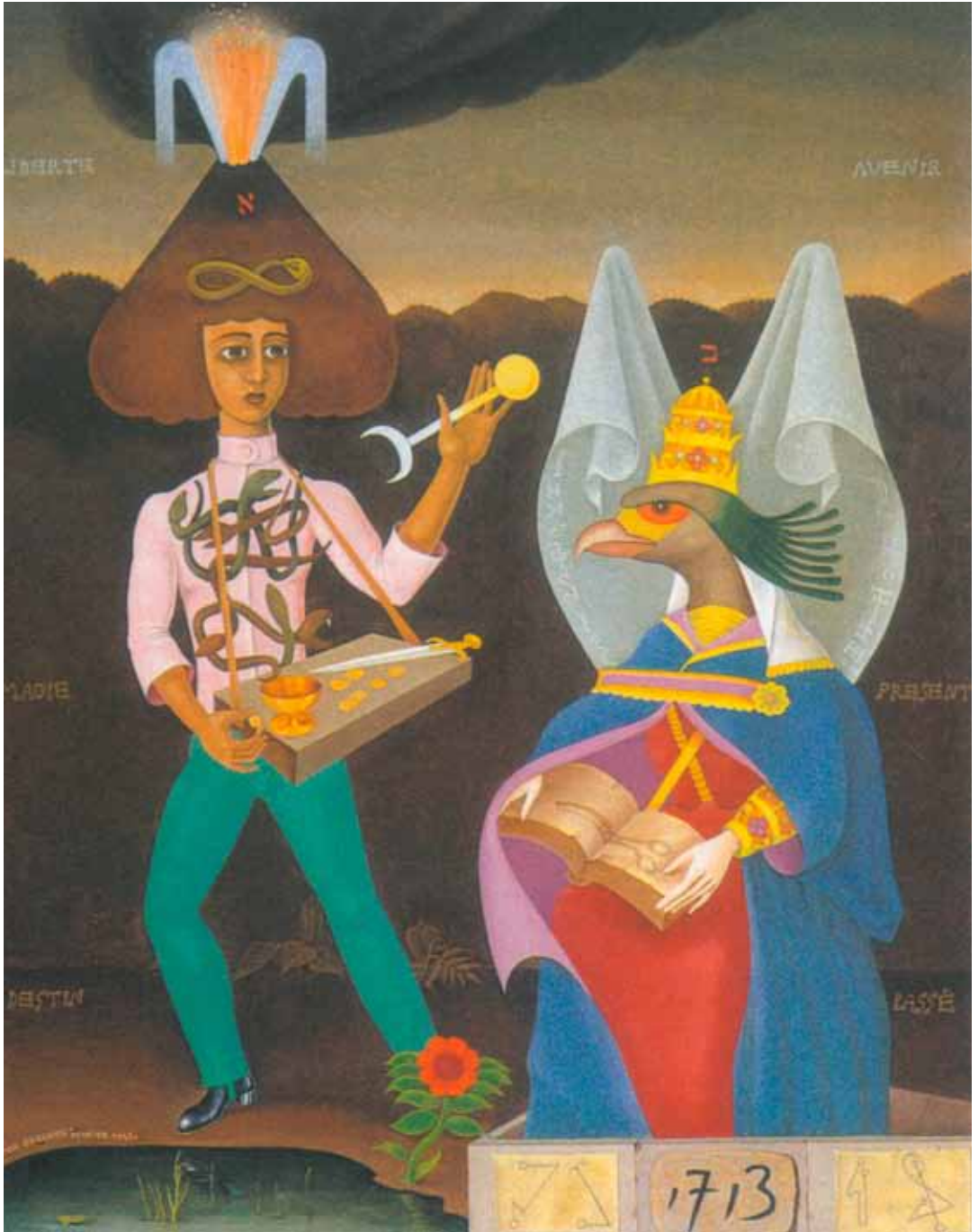
15. *Victor Brauner,* The Lovers, *1947.*

were still baffled by what was perceived as the escapism inherent in this yearning for myth.[63]

The problem for Surrealism was that its consistent investment in myth, primitivism and magic paralleled an increasing hostility to those subjects in other intellectual and political circles; an attitude the 'Theses Against Occultism' by Adorno (1946-7), for instance, formed a cornerstone of. It had already been expressed by various intellectuals in and around *View* during the surrealists' sojourn in the US, as discussed earlier. Myth was considered limiting, nostalgic, conservative or even regressive, and was burdened with unsavoury political overtones.[64] Breton's move to devote the first surrealist exhibition after the war to myth was, therefore, considered by many the beginning of Surrealism's end if not already the final nail in its coffin. One could make the argument that Breton's continuing oc-cultation of the movement by means of myth, primitivism and occultism only served to marginalise it further and alienate it from the public for good. For the communist intellectuals who dominated the political left, at least, it confirmed that Surrealism had become peripheral and irrelevant, a sentiment widely shared. Breton had totally misunderstood the cultural Zeitgeist, was the opinion.

But, then again, had he?

In my opinion, Adorno's view of irrationalism, embodied by myth, magic and occultism, as set forth his 'Theses', is actually rather close to Breton's. I think it hardly accidental that both the 'Theses' and Breton's design for the exhibition were written at exactly the same time. While Breton did not use a term such as 'regression' at this point (though he would later), both men related myth to irrationalism and that, in turn, to primitivism, to magic and to a worldview located in the past; a bad thing in Adorno's view, but positive for Breton. To Adorno, magic is based upon erroneous connections: occultism connects the unconnected, creating meaningless significance between things. Clearly, these are the correspondences Breton was after, I find. The very fact that there are no meaningful connections between sign and signifier, except absurd ones, while raising Adorno's ire, was exactly what Breton found so valuable in it. 'Occultists rightly feel drawn towards childishly monstrous scientific fantasies,' Adorno states. Surrealists do too, I might add. In occultism 'superstition is knowledge,' he continues.[65] Of course it is, Breton would have said. From where the surrealists were stand-ing, true knowledge is generated irrationally, and what better irrational mind than the superstitious one? We have arrived at what, I think, is the crux of the matter: that, contrary to popular opinion, Breton's view was very much in line with that of his time. However, where *he* valued magic

and the irrational positively, other intellectuals of the left regarded it with distaste and, by extension, the position of Surrealism became increasingly marginalised. In fact, it became more or less untenable because of a further development: certain intellectuals of the political right – conservative and pro-Catholic – were rather well disposed towards myth and magic. Finally, too, right-wing war-time political movements such as Nazism and fascism had come to be associated with occultism too. This all left the Bretonian surrealists, impossibly enough, situated on the left socio-politically, with an intellectual worldview they considered radical, but others right-wing, conservative, and even dangerous.

Breton's intention with the exhibition and the role of magic and of oc-cultism in general within it, show how, to his mind, utopian socialism and a mytho-magical worldview could be complementary. One of the few critics who reviewed the show positively recognised that the magic proposed in it was 'emancipatory,' that it was intended to offer a certain reprieve, and concluded further that Surrealism had 'resorted to its essential doctrine of realism and black magic.'[66] I agree fully with the assessment that Surrealism had resorted to its essential doctrines, as well as with the opinion of magic as emancipatory. As I have argued, for Breton, Péret, and artist-magicians such as Ernst and Brauner, magic was a revolutionary, liberating force. Breton:

> Let me just refer [...] to the invaluable observation made by no less a rationalist than Frazer: "[Magic]", he tells us in *The Golden Bough*, "has contributed to emancipate mankind from thraldom of tradition and to elevate them into a larger, freer life, with a broader outlook on the world. [...] We are forced to admit that if the black art has done much evil, it has also been the source of much good; that is if it is the child of error, it has yet been the mother of *freedom and truth*."[67]

Here, Breton rallies Frazer to his cause that is without doubt political. The very fact that the surrealists would present such a difficult, disorienting, perplexing structure as this labyrinthine initiatory course – badly lit, noisy, with a markedly non-Western character, [68] and furthermore filled with objects with a distinctly superstitious, spiritual, even *sacred and religious* character – should be understood as a conscious offensive against, firstly, the state-sponsored return to rational order in this post-war time, but sec-ondly, against communist denouncements of anything smacking of religion or other 'opiums' as well. Indeed, Breton judged that the bleak attitude of realism and rationalism of the post-war era was only another illusion and possibly a continuation of the misguided opinions that had led to the war

in the first place. In my opinion, it is clear that the 1947 exhibition offered 'initiation' into myth and its essentially magical worldview to a politically progressive and revolutionary end: liberty; namely, liberty of the mind, which would naturally create a state of liberty in the world.

The show was a deliberate attack, I argue, on the rationalist conscious-ness-affirming here-and-now policies of both state and leftist intellectuals. It emphasised intellectual knowledge from the past, on the one hand, and visceral, even automatic, experiences of the present, on the other. Instead of answering the post-war reality of the time with only more rational real-ism, Surrealism offered the realism of the irrational: marvellous literature, absurd utopias and heterodox thought of the past, and automatic supersti-tious experiences of the present. Rather than a proponent of escapism or of mysticism, as he was accused of being, I find Breton to be a realist, who offered society the alternative (sur)reality he felt it desperately needed to move beyond the quotidian. This view permeated the show and I think we can safely say that fellow old guard-surrealists were in full agreement with him. Brauner's *The Lovers* [plate 15] not only captured the essential combina-tion of the intellectual and active powers of the male magician with the female passive powers of automatic sorcery, it further paraphrases the entire integral structure of the exhibition with the word-combinations 'destiny'-'past,' 'magic'-'present' and 'liberty'-'future.'[69] Surrealism was prefigured in works of great artists in the past, symbolised by the art in the basement, and its greatness points towards destiny. The Hall of Superstition and the labyrinth represented the present, evoking, on the one hand, the deluded state of mind of the public and the magical mind-set that the surrealists had already attained, on the other. Magic is the surrealists' present and it was intended to be that of others too, who would be liberated by it in the future. Note, too, how the words destiny, magic and liberty are positioned to the right side of the Magician, with 'liberty' placed on par with the Magician's exploding volcano-head: a liberty of the mind, obviously, resulting from the surrealist-magician's psychic mechanisms.

In further support of my argument, I would also point to Mitchell's convincing case that Breton's choice of an initiatory trajectory may well have been motivated by a desire to prevent and respond to accusations of mysticism; rather than based on dogmatic acceptation of an idea on faith, the show's trajectory represented 'the non-rationalist assimilation of (spiritual) knowledge, resting on a body of ideas and concepts' that is understood intellectually.[70] Insights are not simply provided, they need to be gained. That this set-up might not please everyone is self-evident, and something Breton counted on from the start; after all, I would say that initia-

tion implies, by necessity, selection and not all, or perhaps not even most, candidates will make it to the final stage. By its very nature, occultation cannot be for everyone, but that does not impede the creation of the new myth for the common good anyway. Finally, I argue, the preponderance of feminine themes in the show – ranging from the womb-like room of superstition to the many female heroines celebrated in the altars, to such generic superstructures identified with the feminine as primitivism, magic, superstition, irrationalism in general – support the political, even *redemptive*, agenda of the show. After all, as Breton had maintained in *Arcanum 17*, it would be the ideas of womankind that would lead man(kind) out of 'spiritual ruination.' Once again, love will save the day: in love with the feminine irrational, the male surrealist-magician will assume feminine ideas and powers and become supra-rational. And what else to lead man 'through the perilous labyrinth of the mind' than poetry?[71] Breton: Surrealism 'intends to keep on pursuing' 'initiation by means of poetry and art.'[72]

Now, to the role of occultism. Initiation 'by means of poetry and art' is 'an initiation to which the latest research on Hugo, Nerval, Rimbaud and others [studies of Viatte et al.] gives us sound reason to adapt the patterns inherited from the esoteric tradition.'[73] It becomes clear that Breton did plan the initiation of his show to be an initiation in an esoteric sense too. He chose the occult patterning device he had become most familiar with, the tarot, for the most prominent position. Throughout the relevant essays and in the exhibition, Breton made the point that 'esotericism,' or possibly an esoteric viewpoint, permeated Romanticism and Symbolism, as well as nineteenth-century social utopianism of the Fourierist school. Surrealism, by this time, was a combination of those things and, therefore, esotericism was part of it too. Esotericism's primary relevance for Surrealism, I would even argue its *only* relevance, is to be found in its relevance for Romanticism and Fourierism. The very fact that, for Breton, the esoteric tradition was something beholden to the past, and not connected to anything or anyone in the twentieth century, shows that he hardly considered it a living tradition valuable on its own terms; hence my point that the only relevance is its Romanticism. For Breton, any esotericism outside of those currents that contributed to Romanticism hardly existed (hence, too, my preference for 'occultism' over 'esotericism').[74]

When addressing allegations that he was turning Surrealism into a religion, with all the altars, occult hours and religious paraphernalia, Breton drew a parallel with *The Immaculate Conception.* Even as he and Éluard assumed states of madness as the means to a creative end, they were not mad; similarly, the surrealists may assume cultic or religionist behaviour and a search for

sacredness, but that does not make them religious.[75] I would extend that
parallel: they may dabble in occultisms to their heart's content, but that does
not make them occultists. In fact, one of the things that the 1947 exhibition
makes abundantly clear, in my view, is that even though occultism had be-
come an important domain of interest for Breton, it was always subservient
to the overarching main aims of love, poetry and revolution as well as to his
particular concern, in this case, with initiation into 'new myth' and promoting
the magical worldview. Various occult elements never became more than a
means to a non-occult end. Note that Breton explicitly wrote of the *'patterns
inherited from the esoteric tradition'* (cited above); the technique but not the
belief was used. The same goes for the 'trappings' of religion:

> [I]t must remain clear that toward the beings and objects to which
> we have agreed to pay tribute [by means of the altars], this time, by
> granting them some of the *trappings* of the sacred, we assuredly intend
> to keep an attitude of *enlightened doubt*.[76]

In the appropriation of occultisms for the 1947 exhibition, I see, above all,
a repetition of earlier moves. When appropriating the 'necessary condi-
tions' of Spiritualism for the sleeping sessions in the early 1920s, Breton
pointed out that 'at no time' did the surrealists incorporate the belief in the
possibility of communication with the dead as well. When modelling the
practice of Surrealism upon mediums and clairvoyants in the late 1920s,
he made it clear that there could be no other realms than the terrestrial.
When turning Surrealism into a corresponding cryptogram in the 1930s,
he emphasised that all connections existed only in the mind. When the
active potency of the surrealist to effect change in the world by means of
his alternative worldview became an issue during the war, the surrealist
became a magician and the magical worldview, already introduced in the
1930s in direct connection with myth and primarily primitivism, now
came to dominate. Post-Viatte, what he termed 'esotericism' had become
Breton's ally. It offered him interesting material (the tarot, but also Lévi's
works, for instance[77]). Most of all, however, it cemented his Surrealism as
neo-Romanticism. As I hope I have made clear in my discussion of the
tarot staircase and elsewhere, Breton's 'esotericism' was fully embedded
in Romanticism. Indeed, there is never mention of esotericism as a current
without a direct link to Romantic poets and/or visionaries such as Fourier.
I think contemporary occultism hardly existed for Breton; he connected it
almost exclusively to the nineteenth century. Such is Bretonian occultism's
role: to present a nostalgic alternative to mainstream realism of the present.

Going backwards

Despite the constant tolling of Surrealism's death knell by its critics, it continued for two decades after 1947, arguably longer, and, as Alyce Mahon has shown, it continued to be vibrant and controversial during that entire period.[78] In 1959, another grand international exhibition was organised: *E.R.O.S.* As usual it was blasted by critics and was a commercial *succès scandale*. The show's title is representative of its content and focus. For all that Breton was the only founding member of Surrealism left by this time, in many respects he still functioned as the gatekeeper for, at least, Parisian Surrealism. Love/desire was Breton's prime mover and, therefore, still that of his movement too.

With its celebration of Freudian obsessions and faith in desire as the omnipotent force, *E.R.O.S.* was symptomatic of an entrenching of existing positions that set in after 1947. Even as its members changed, Surrealism retreated to its core points. Breton once again turned the table on his critics by proclaiming in 1952 that the way forward lay backward: regression should be the deliberately chosen path of the (dissident) artist.[79] The surrealists had blazed all trails already, he made clear: one should be inspired by enigmas (as Chirico had been), metaphysics (Kandinsky), chance (Duchamp), time-less fantasy and myth (Ernst), embryogenesis (Arp), 'the "Mother Realm" in the Faustian sense' (Tanguy), the symbolic (Brauner), voodoo (Lam), heraldry and alchemy (Seligmann), magic (Carrington), marvels (Tanning) and, for 'Indian totemism', one could look to Paalen.[80] Clearly, occultisms were still relevant; just as clearly, they were still embedded within the larger domain of the irrational. Notably, these trailblazing artists all are from Surrealism's first two decades. For an *avant-gardiste*, Breton was always markedly obsessed with the past, I find, and he was not the only one. Afterlives of selected pasts in the present fascinated the surrealists, as is evinced not only by their constant recourse to great heroes of the past (whether real or imagined) but also by their preference for Parisian struc-tures with great historical significance, such as the Tour Saint-Jacques or Porte Saint-Denis. By 1952, Breton's touchstone had become the Golden Age of his *own* Surrealism. Nostalgia reigned; the movement was now turning into neo-Surrealism. I find it hardly surprising, therefore, that this period (the 1950s) is characterised by a further investment in various occultisms too;[81] specifically, magic, alchemy and correspondences. None is new to Sur-realism, as all were first investigated and appropriated in a certain fashion during Surrealism's Golden Age. There is, therefore, a nostalgic character to them already. But I would further designate these occult concepts as

nostalgic, because Breton still, as he had done without exception before, related them to the (West's) cultural past and, primarily, to the nineteenth century and Romanticism. Even his celebration of the twentieth-century alchemist Fulcanelli, as we will see below, took place within a discussion of language that is essentially Romantic. Breton was indeed going backwards, in time certainly, but his concepts have a pastness about them too. Magic, alchemy, etc., were all explicitly related to peoples, art works, cultures, artists and poets from a bygone age. Esotericism had always been related to a (suppressed) past, but now this theme was intensified. That cultural past was bound inextricably to the domain of the marginal – all things irrational, outsider and blackly humorous – another repetition of early surrealist moves. Finally, the opinion that the primitive's irrationalism would still save the day was, by this time, a rather outdated (and colonialist) position. Alchemy and magic did become more prominent in the surrealist discourse, but the essential things had already been said about them by 1947, the most public exposition of his view. Things were not static, however; even though the essential positions may have been old news, a deeper investment in and more extended investigation of magic, alchemy and correspondences still occurred. Note that my focus upon Breton and France is limiting in this regard; later fringe-surrealist groups that were very much occultly informed, such as around the journals *Fantasmagie* (based in Belgium) or *Melmoth* (Great-Britain), are not discussed here.

Before moving on, I would point out one element that *was* entirely original to late Surrealism: sexual magic. While references to it are few and incidental, I mention it, nonetheless, as the allusion to sexual magic is one of only a very few connections to twentieth-century occultism, and an important and controversial part of it too. The first brief appearance of sexual magic on the surrealist radar occurred in 1948, when an excerpt from *Magia Sexualis* was published in the surrealist journal *Néon*. *Magia Sexualis* is a translation by occultist Maria de Naglowska (1883-1936), who resided in Paris, of original documents by American medium, occultist and sexual magical pioneer P.B. Randolph (1825-1875).[82] The excerpt deals with magic mirrors, however, not with sexual magic as such.[83] It is very probable that Sarane Alexandrian, who would later write a study of de Naglowska and who edited *Néon*, introduced this excerpt, and perhaps the entire book.[84] The second instance was a very brief profile of Randolph, written by Breton's last protégé Gérard Legrand (1927-1999), which appeared in the *E.R.O.S.* catalogue.[85] Probably, Alexandrian introduced Legrand and other younger surrealists to de Naglowska and Randolph, but even while some of them might have been taken with de Naglowska's sexual magic,[86] it remained a

particular topic involving a few people and hardly touched either Breton or the group at large.[87]

L'Art magique – magic art

The Bretonian view that the primitive mind and its magical worldview are essential to Surrealism, indeed to a properly functioning art, remained unaltered. It is the central premise of *L'Art magique* (1957), written largely by Legrand on Breton's suggestions but generally considered as authored by Breton.[88] One thing that *did* change was the concept of myth: although Breton's umbrella term of choice since the 1930s and the central theme of the 1947 show, it receded almost entirely to the background in this period and certainly in this book.[89] *L'Art magique* offers a copiously illustrated broad art historical overview, proceeding from the idea that certain forms of art are magical. Art can be a 'vehicle' of magic, the author contends, and here I would differentiate between the more generic surrealist view of magic as an emancipatory and irrational force, and the more specific functioning of art magic. Magic implies a rapport, with an audience and/or with the world at large, in which the magician wants to affect some sort of change. Clearly, 'art magic' is predicated upon such a rapport: the understanding that art affects those who perceive it, and thereby (possibly) effects change.[90] Breton locates 'art magic' in specific objects from particular cultures and selected oeuvres. In image and text the history of magic art is traced from its origins in prehistory, to Antiquity, to the Middle Ages, to the modern period, characterised as the 'crisis of magic'. Subsequently, Romanticism, playing a 'messianic' role, gives rise to the two great synthesising artists of art magic, Gustave Moreau and Paul Gauguin. This development finds its final culmination in '*la magie retrouvée*': Surrealism.[91] As I see it, *L'Art magique* presents an art history of Surrealism whereby the movement is defined by way of what came before: the surrealists despite themselves. As might be expected, favourites such as Pierro di Cosimo, Arcimboldo and Bosch are among the artists included, as are Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Lautréamont and the like. Although this seems to echo the basement section of the 1947 exhibition, I would point out that, by this time, Breton extended magic art – and therefore Surrealism, its apex – much further in both time and space. All the way into the deep past of the West in fact, represented by prehistoric and ancient artefacts, as well as into the West's furthest margins; besides Polynesian ancestor figurines, Khmer sculpture and the great heads of Easter Island, for instance, are included too. This is an entrenching of

position in two ways. Firstly, by searching for 'surrealists despite themselves' ever further into the past and the margins, and thereby disconnecting Surrealism entirely from the present, not to mention the future. Secondly, by locating the magical worldview firmly in *objects* as visible manifestations of it. The initial steps in this direction were taken with the invention of objective chance, which could also act through objects, and the invention of and increasing emphasis upon the surrealist object in the 1930s.

Creating a category of art that incorporates non-Western, outsider and canonised Western 'high' art, spanning 4000 years of history, in a variety of media and all connected by a certain magic property, is bound to be problematic. Just as problematic is Breton's definition: magic art is art that somehow 're-engenders the magic that engendered it.'[92] If, as is implied, all authentic art is magical, one not only ends up with a very broad definition, but also the difficulty of establishing what qualifies as 'authentic.' The transformative effects of art are just as impossible a benchmark.[93] Such issues are pointed out in the book itself, in the collection of over a hundred responses to Breton's inquiry concerning art magic that forms its heart. Sending out questionnaires and printing the responses was, of course, an established surrealist practice, one used in the 1930s as well to 'empirically' verify the existence of objective chance. The survey consisted of many questions, ranging from how one would examine an art object that is (or contains) magic; how the magician, who sees the real, and the modern artist, who sees the imaginary, relate to each other (as magicians) and by what means they both enchant the real; to placing a number of art objects in a decreasing order of magical potential.[94] Responses were received from old and new surrealists, art historians, anthropologists, prominent intellectuals such as Martin Heidegger, Maurice Blanchot, Marcel Mauss and Claude Lévi-Strauss as well as a smattering of occultists and scholars of the occult: Traditionalist Julius Evola, alchemist Eugène Canseliet, alchemical author René Alleau, historian of alchemy Pierre Klossowski, and historians of occultism Robert Ambelain and Denis Saurat.[95] Numerous respondents were critical of the questions, the underlying assumptions, the subject or the art selected. While many are more or less positive that some sort of relationship between magic and art could well exist, few endorse Breton's 'art magic.'

It becomes clear in *L'Art magique* that Lévi's *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* had become Breton's most important magical source.[96] For instance, Lévi is mentioned and cited in a passage discussing Viatte and his study of Hugo, a phrasing strongly reminiscent of *Arcanum 17* and indicative of Breton's reliance upon positions first formulated in 1943. Undoubtedly, the romantic connection was still Breton's preeminent touchstone; his remarks

that Starkie's study *Artur Rimbaud* and *La pensée poétique de Rimbaud* by Jacques Gengoux have shown that Lévi influenced Rimbaud too, and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and Mallarmé also reveal that Breton had continued reading (French) scholarly studies of occult Romanticism and Symbolism.[97] Breton's opinion that Lévi was the pre-eminent occult source for all his beloved poets was confirmed. I feel certain that this alone led him to grant Lévi's work a central role in his own work. He repeats Lévi's definition of the central 'dogma of magic': 'the visible is a manifestation of the invisible, or the perfect word, in things visible and appreciable, is exactly proportionate to things invisible and unrecognisable by the senses;'[98] clearly, he continues, this is close to the view of 'the poets.' I find it very probable that he chose this particular passage from *Dogme et rituel* because it vindicates his own movement as the true heir to occult Romanticism: both the correspondences between visible and invisible, and the crucial importance of the *word* as expression of the imagination and the real are quintessential parts of Surrealism and directly derived from Romanticism.

Another essential surrealist concern, love, was similarly incorporated into Bretonian magic. In 1953, in a letter to occult scholar Robert Amadou, Breton commented favourably upon Amadou's definition of magic – a letter, incidentally, demonstrating the close relations between Breton and scholars of the occult by this time.[99] Breton approved of the definition by Amadou and his co-author Robert Kanters and, indeed, of their *Anthologie littéraire de l'occultisme* in general, for several reasons. The *fine fleur* of his romantic and symbolist heroes were included in their book. Also, in the introduction the authors discuss how fruitful the interchanges between Romanticism and occultism were, and how the romantics played an important role in the transmission of esoteric thought. Furthermore, they praise and paraphrase Breton, and the very fact that these scholars hailed him as an occult thinker must have cemented that notion in Breton's mind.[100] Most important, finally, is that Amadou's view of magic strikes so close to Breton's heart. Breton paraphrases Amadou: magic is the practice that furnishes the means of acting upon the universe while making use of the analogical correspondences, which this element has in common with all other elements of the universe.[101] Note this identification of magic with analogy. Continuing with a discussion of the first time he saw *The Child's Brain* by Chirico, Breton connects magic directly to art and to the act of seeing. He implies that magic, defined as acting upon irrational correspondences, was already a part of Surrealism in its early days; we find here a tendency to project occultism into early Surrealism that can be found in other late works of Breton as well.

One in the other: Analogical metaphors and other games

Art magic depends on irrational correspondences, like so many things in Surrealism. When studying the history of playing cards Breton had come to the conclusion that 'signs outlast the things they signify.'[102] This insight underlies, I think, his emphasis on signs and the very fact that they are irrational. Breton's concern, therefore, is the magic of absurd metaphors, which, he asserts, one can detect in many art works through 'uniquely "alchemical" or "cabalistic" exegesis.'[103] We should understand 'alchemical' or 'cabalistic exegesis' as: recognising irrational signs as signs, and signs as signs of the irrational, thereby knowing them as manifestations of the unconscious and of the omnipotence of desire. Such decoding of the irrational is what Surrealism and occultism share:

> Poetic analogy [= surrealist poetry] has this in common with mystical [= esoteric] analogy: it transgresses the rules of deduction to let the mind apprehend the interdependence of two objects of thought located on different planes. Logical thinking is incapable of establishing such a connection, which it deems a priori impossible.[104]

In a familiar move, Surrealism is immediately distanced from the religious or metaphysical elements of the practice it has been likened to:

> Poetic analogy is *fundamentally different* from mystical analogy in that it in no way presupposes the existence of an invisible universe that, from beyond the veil of the visible world, is trying to reveal itself. The process of poetic analogy is entirely *empirical* [...] it remains without any effort within the sensible (even the sensual) realm and it shows no propensity to lapse into the supernatural. Poetic analogy lets us catch a glimpse of what Rimbaud named "true life" and points toward its "absence", but it does not draw its substance from metaphysics nor does it ever consider surrendering its treasures on the altar of any kind of "beyond."[105]

The reference to empiricism is reminiscent of the experiments with automatism undertaken in the 1920s. Breton's choice of phrases such as 'lapse' and 'surrendering' indicate his continuing sceptical attitude towards religious ideas about a supernatural. In the 1930s, Breton expressed a preference for 'metaphor,' switching (though not exclusively) to 'analogy' in the 1940s and 50s. I consider this another sign of his familiarity with scholarly and other writings on occult Romanticism, as the concept of analogy as an

explanation of magic is heavily used in many of those, not least Amadou & Kanters' *Anthologie*.

In the 1950s, Breton and Péret took the insatiable surrealist hunger for irrational correspondences to new heights with the just invented game of *L'un dans l'autre* (one in another), a game of metaphors.[106] Proceeding from the idea that on account of irrational correspondence things can be contained in one another, one object would be described in the terms of the other object.[107] A spin-off game was *Analogy cards*, in which passport-like attributes (place of birth, nationality, height) would be expressed in fixed categories.[108] Although both games seem to play on allegorical identities, they are based upon the fundamental assumption that things (and beings) can share a certain essential quality that facilitates conflation of the two. In *L'Art magique*, *L'un dans l'autre* is associated with a game category described by celebrated historian Johan Huizinga (1872-1945), the 'enigmatic game': a revelatory game that espouses the supralogical character of the cosmos and man's situation in it.[109] In Surrealism, the revelations are of a secular but sur-real nature, similar to objective chance; yet, the correspondences exposed by means of the games were all supposed to reveal the inner irrational workings of the surrealist world and the surrealist's place in it. With all this emphasis upon suprarational analogic relations, fundamental correspondences and essential qualities, it is not hard to see why, in the 1950s, many French oc-cultists and occult scholars felt such an affinity for Bretonian Surrealism, or why many of the surrealists of that time, including Breton, thought that what they were doing was so closely related to occultism or esotericism.

The language of birds and phonetic cabala: Alchemy's prime matter

Decoding irrational signs requires 'alchemical exegesis,' as we have seen. To decrypt, however, also supposes the facility to *en*crypt. Therefore, in the 1950s, alchemy, or to be more precise the language of alchemy, became codified as a marvellously poetical language that enlightens and mystifies at the same time. The interest in Alchemy of the Word had been present in Surrealism from the outset. Words could be transformed. Language was taken literally and considered material. Now, however, Alchemy of the Word became more defined and specific. An important development was that Breton read *Les demeures philosophales* (1930), the second book by mysteri-ous alchemist Fulcanelli, which he cites extensively in 'Fronton Virage' (1948, 1953); the first direct references by Breton to Fulcanelli.[110] All the

citations, however, derive from the same section on the 'hermetic cabala,' or the secret language of the alchemists, which is clearly Breton's main – and perhaps even only – focus. The secret language of alchemy, also known as the 'language of the birds,' is 'a phonetic idiom based only on assonance.'[111] 'It is important to note,' Breton continues, 'that this language is primarily used for *cabalistic* purposes': to send secret messages to others while 'befuddling the common run of people.'[112] Therefore, for the *avant-gardiste* who must hang on to their elitist position and continue the occultation of their work, the 'poetic resources of that [alchemical] language are invaluable (see, for instance, Valentin Andréae, *Les Noces Chimiques de Simon* [sic] *Rosenkreuz* [...]).'[113] In Surrealism, references to alchemy had always been embedded within a discourse on Rimbaud's Alchemy of the Word or Ernst's Alchemy of the Visual Image. By the 1950s, Breton and his surrealists were actively appropriating alchemical language as a rhetorical device, and *The Chemical Wedding* is considered a textbook of mystifying language. Breton's growing insight into occult Romanticism comes into play here too. Many writers, from Novalis to Baudelaire, integrated alchemical tropes, themes and references into their work. Note that for many of these romantic and symbolist authors, magic and alchemy were fascinating topics and fruitful themes, but overall signs of a (lost) past; a nostalgic undercurrent that paralleled Breton's yearning for the past in general and his own identification of esotericism with the past in particular.[114]

The concept of the 'language of the birds' has a long and complex history, originating, in part, in a secretive language developed by medieval troubadours, but having been applied, since then, to many secretive languages, alchemical, magical and divinatory. It was embraced by the artistic and literary avant-gardes, who loved to play complex language games, a continuing of earlier romantic practice.[115] This element of play, particularly the association of complicated language games with the practice of literary elites, is perhaps the most important reason for the increasing surrealist emphasis upon alchemical language. Firstly, games were increasingly accorded a central role in surrealist practice as irrational knowledge-generating mechanisms. Furthermore, Breton turned to Huizinga's study of play and subsequently retro-interpreted all surrealist activity in the 1920s and 30s as having been play as well. The majority of surrealist games were *language* games, and it is through that lens that we should see the surrealist interest for alchemy's language of the birds. This is supported by the fact that Breton's references to Fulcanelli's 'hermetic cabala' and secret languages are embedded in an essay on dandy and prolific author Raymond Roussel, specifically about his quasi-mechanical literary method of homophonic rhetorical devices with

whom the surrealists were much impressed.[116] Roussel's works fuelled the surrealist obsession with language games. That, in turn, stoked the fire of alchemy of the word as well, certainly after the second half of the 1940s.[117] Alchemical language is, generally speaking, a semi-secretive jargon often consisting almost entirely of metaphors, in which vitriol dissolving gold is described as the Green Lion devouring the Sun, for instance. Phonetic properties are often very important in alchemical language. Indeed, in the history of alchemy constructed by Fulcanelli, the phonetic similarities between 'art gotique' (gothic art) and 'argotique' (argot-like) are central to his argument.[118] There were, therefore, several similarities between the metaphorical and homophone-driven language of alchemy, on the one hand, and surrealist language games that revolved around metaphors and analogies, as well as around Roussel's homophonic experiments, on the other.

There is a third reason: Breton came into contact with the group of alchemists and occultists around Canseliet. The latter contributed to Breton's *L'Art Magique*, for instance,[119] and the relations with Ambelain, d'Ygé and others have already been discussed. D'Ygé's *Anthology of Hermetic Poetry* turned alchemical heroes such as Flamel and Michel Maier into modern poets; symbolist heroes such as Rimbaud were turned into alchemists.[120] Such an endorsement of alchemy as poetry and poetry as alchemy was a final confirmation that Breton's project of the occultation of Surrealism, which had been given an additional and serious impulse by Viatte, was on the right track.

To sum up, it is my argument that the increased emphasis in Surrealism upon language, in particular upon language games predicated upon metaphors and analogies, and phonetic qualities, as well as the appropriation of alchemical texts as modern poetry and vice versa, is directly responsible for the seemingly sudden emphasis upon alchemy and the language of the birds. Already in 1947, Breton had asked whether 'the key to the passionate interest generated successively within surrealism itself by the "word games",' could not be found in the 'extraordinary spread […] of the activity known as "phonetic cabalism" [creating and interpreting an alchemical language]'?[121] We are concerned here with the very essentials of language. In 1953, Breton asked:

> What was it all about then? Nothing less than the rediscovery of the secret of language whose elements would then cease to float like jetsam on the surface of a dead sea.
> […]

> The whole point, for Surrealism, was to convince ourselves that we
> had got our hands on the "prime matter" (in the alchemical sense) of
> language.[122]

The 'prime matter' in question is, without doubt, automatic writing.[123]
Here, Breton comes full circle to the original and most surrealist of
practices; indeed, to the practice that kick-started the entire movement
and was enshrined forever as the quintessential definition of Surrealism.
True automatism is the 'state of grace,' so tragically lost, and causing a
'ruthless' 'depreciation of language.'[124] Correspondences between inner
and outer need to be restored, and underlying all these concerns with
language and language games, I think, is the obsession with the irrational
relations between signs and signifiers, resolution of which would pave
the way for perfect automatism and perfectly authentic poetry. Occultists
are, therefore, of interest because their practices and secret languages
run parallel to the objectives of the surrealists, and because they have
hailed the Word as magical, but they have hardly been the trailblazers.
On the contrary, the real trailblazers of 'phonetic cabala' or alchemical
language are, apparently, 'Marcel Duchamp, Robert Desnos, Jean-Paul
[sic] Brisset, and Raymond Roussel;' artists of language all.[125] Surrealist
poetry's objective was to change life and, to that end, had been 'following
the path of that "internal revolution" whose perfect accomplishment
could well merge with that of the Great Work, as alchemists understand
it.'[126]

Finally, in the late 1950s, Bretonian Surrealism was at its most occult.
Everything had come, and was coming, full circle: occultism, Romanticism
and Symbolism, Surrealism. For all his failings, Carrouges grasped the
surrealist understanding of alchemy completely when he concluded that
'[a]lchemy [...] is poetry [surrealist poetry, it is implied] in the strongest
sense of the word, and surrealism is truly an alchemic transmutation.'[127]
Surrealism was, indeed, an alchemical transmutation. In fact, it was a
boiling cauldron in which concepts from occultism but also, for instance,
psychoanalysis and anthropology were dissolved, only to be reshaped into
essentially surrealist ideas. Everything that caught the attention of Breton
and his fellow surrealists was added to this cauldron, the result of which
was a solution in which everything is connected and combined. And what,
then, is the binding agent? Desire. Because, to attain the 'prime matter of
language,'

it is essential [...] to undertake the reconstruction of the *primordial Androgyne* that all traditions tells us of, and its supremely desirable, and *tangible* incarnation within ourselves.[128]

Desire (or love) – for the Other, for the irrational, for the marvellous, sexual desire for Woman – is the most magical force of all. Only when the surrealist has fully integrated that other into himself has he attained true surreality.

In closing, allow me to point out that, in hindsight, we can say that Breton once again had his finger on the pulse of contemporary culture – which, just as he passed away in 1966, was embracing magical thinking and a revived occultism, under the heading of New Age, as the countercultural response to the perceived narrow rationalist bourgeois mentality of its time.

Conclusion

Breton's celebration of Flora Tristan does not make him an advocate of women's rights. He celebrated Tristan as a heterodox socialist thinker who wrote poetically, even almost automatically on occasion, and who happened to be a woman. The case for occultism is the same. Mentioning Swedenborg's or Paracelsus' name does not make Breton a Swedenborgian, Paracelsian or an occultist. At most, it makes him a romantic, as it is invariably in that context that such luminaries are mentioned. Breton was not an occult adept and his movement was not a celebration of occultism. In my view, Breton was very adept at reading about, referring to and appropriating concepts from. His movement was a celebration of Romanticism and Symbolism, including its occult elements and traces of earlier esotericism. Selected occult thought, ideas and famous occultists, alchemists and magicians, are celebrated as heterodox and interesting in Bretonian Surrealism. The symbolical and poetical language (both verbal and visual) associated with alchemy, magic, and occultism clearly added to their appeal. The very fact that the revered precursors were influenced by certain occult and esoteric concepts made it inevitable that Breton would turn to such things too. Occultism functions as the antidote to the thought of Breton's time, and I would even put it on par with tribal masks, children's drawings, Smith's invented languages, 'primitive' mythologies, fairytales and Fourier's harmonious passions: as far as Bretonian Surrealism is concerned, it is other, heterodox, from a cultural past, and marginal.

In the 1920s, the concepts of automatism and artistic clairvoyance were defined in Bretonian Surrealism. Mediums proved instrumental in this regard, proving that allowing one's unconscious free rein could lead to inventive poetic and artistic products, generated automatically. Being in an automatic state could be paramount to becoming a seer. Discarding the possibilities of communication with the dead or outside agents, as well as actually seeing the future or being otherwise clairvoyant, the surrealists interpreted any and all actions by mediums, as well as those of madmen and women, as automatic and, therefore, inspirational. After all, Surrealism was defined as 'pure psychic automatism.'

In first instance, the surrealists experimented with automatic writing and lucid dreaming during the sleeping sessions. While the last practice was discontinued, the former carried on. Artistic works by mediums and clairvoyants, but also the mad, hysteric and childish, was considered automatically created and possibly visionary and, therefore, admired.

Moreover, the surrealists should try to be like the medium, aiming similarly to 'fix' their 'most fugitive visions.' Indeed, treading in the footsteps of Rimbaud, the surrealist should make himself a seer. The experiments with automatism were followed in 1929 by Breton's call for occultation: an agenda to make Surrealism less easily accessible, but also an indication that there should be some confrontation with occultism. In the 1930s, the surrealist corresponding universe was formed and the automatic material was slowly, but surely, replaced by myths, legends, quests and fairytales. The primitive, or magical, worldview, in which the links between disparate and seemingly unconnected events or objects turn out to be meaningful, became the dominant surrealist view.

In the early 1940s, nineteenth-century revolutionary thought and occult thought were added to this mix. Indeed, around 1940, Bretonian Surrealism made a distinct turn towards the occult. This was part of a larger turn towards the heterodox, prompted by the rising political tensions and the eventual outbreak of the Second World War. In exile, the idea that the surrealist artist was a magician, which had been brewing for a while, came to full fruition. Notably, the surrealist magician retained the recourse to automatism as a valid avenue for generating knowledge and art. Still, this does not mean that love, poetry and revolution – three essential surrealist concerns – became less important; on the contrary, their relevance only increased. Occultism, in the fragmented form of selected publications such as Lévi's *Dogme et rituel*, or of objects such as tarot cards, and further in the generic form of a current of a heterodox tradition suppressed by the mainstream, became intertwined with these concerns. Desire, and primarily the love for Woman, remained the omnipotent force. Love works magically; that is to say, in non-rational ways. In the 1930s, desire became Surrealism's prime mover, the motor behind every interaction with the world both inside and outside of one's mind. The Other, Woman, should be fully subsumed into the surrealist's own personality, thereby turning him into an androgyne, a complete dual being: a magician who has 'jealously' made the automatic sorcerous powers of the (female) witch his own. The surrealist-magician effects change, for instance by means of his art. He strives to connect by irrational means signs and signifiers, thereby creating the surrealist corresponding universe as such but also functioning within it. All surrealist correspondences operate irrationally, which is why they are valued, why they are magical, and also why it is the mind-set of 'the primitive' that primarily serves as an inspiration. It is, furthermore, why the magician is just like 'the primitive,' but also just like the madman. Like those two, surrealist-magicians such as Breton, but also Péret, Ernst or

Brauner, can decode as well as create suprarational connections, allowing them, besides other things, to become a prophet of objective chance.

The surrealist-magician assumes a magical mind-set at will, but should strive to share it with the world at large. After all, reason and rationalism have led to total political failure, and it is the magical mind and its (feminine) capacity for making irrational connections that will liberate mankind. To support this undertaking, one should look to nineteenth-century and earlier heterodox thought, preferably of a spiritual or occult bent, but also radically utopian, and even just absurd generally. Texts serve best, as the prime tool of the surrealist-magician is, after all, language. Language is the prima materia, the capillary tissue of the universe of Surrealism. By means of the metaphor, and later analogy, the Bretonian surrealist uncovers irrational correspondences, and also covers them up again. Such phonetic cabalism, which touches upon the essential nature of things – a nature transcendent though secular in a way that is only possible in Surrealism – is not fit for the 'common run of people,' despite the 1947 attempt to initiate a broader public into the secrets that Surrealism had to offer.

The role of occultism in the long history of Bretonian Surrealism is clear. Breton's final position was recaptured in a 1950 interview.[1] Surrealism 'could not avoid rubbing shoulders with esotericism,' seeing how it 'follows the historical determinations' that pass through poets such as Hugo, Nerval and the whole list of occult romantic and symbolist predecessors. Yet, the intersection with 'certain fundamental esoteric theses' only occurred because of 'strictly poetic' motives.[2] The Great Work of the alchemists, Breton wrote, is similar to the 'internal revolution' the poet works towards on the basis of Rimbaud's dictum to 'change life.'[3] History, as it is written, he continues, 'is a web of dangerous nonsense.' *Myth* alone can offer response, yet occult and esoteric thought have their role to play: '[a]s soon as we stand before the enigma of these myths, we are forced to realise that esotericism teaches us most about them.'[4] Still, for all its potentiality in teaching about myth, with regards to what was called esotericism – and 'no need to tell you,' Breton added – '"fideism" is to be avoided here just as much as anywhere else.'[5] Experimental knowledge prevails, rather than belief of any kind. In Surrealism's early days, spiritualist and psychical research practices were employed to investigate the mind and its creative possibilities. As Breton emphasised in 'The Mediums Enter' and elsewhere, at no point did the surrealists adhere to the spiritualist viewpoint. Occultism is employed, I argue, in a similar manner: as an investigative technique, a treasure trove of interesting material, a patterning device, a means towards a rapport with

the world – but at no point did Breton or his very immediate circle become practicing occultists.

The 'occultation' of Surrealism, therefore, has turned out to be a process much more concerned with making Surrealism complex and multi-layered, and magical in the meaning of pre-rational in its rapport with the world, than with making it an occult movement. In the end, the public declaration in 1947 of allegiance to myth, magic and heterodox spiritual thought, including esoteric or occult thought, indicated that such an 'occultation' of Surrealism was an ongoing and deepening process. Finally, I feel confident to say that there has also been a mirror-movement: a 'surrealisation' as it were, of twentieth century occultism, although this development, however, is a topic for another study.

Notes

Introduction: The Occultation of Surrealism

1. The adjective 'surréaliste' was first coined by Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918) in 1917. A coterie of young admirers, including Breton, appropriated it in 1919. Poet Yvan Goll (pseud. of Isaac Lange, 1891-1950) also used the term, for the first and only edition of his journal *Surréalisme* (1924).
2. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 178.
3. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 26.
4. Polizzotti, 'Profound', 5; Assailly, 18-19.
5. Bandier, 141.
6. 'Declaration of the Bureau de Recherches Surréalistes', 27 January 1925. Harrison & Wood, 457.
7. Breton, *Free*, 81.
8. Manning White.
9. Hopkins, *Duchamp*; Kuni, *Brauner.*
10. Also relevant in this context is *Surréalisme et tradition: la pensée d'André Breton jugée selon l'oeuvre de René Guénon* by Eddy Batache (1978), the first study to explicitly make a connection between Surrealism and Traditionalism, a twentieth-century French occult movement under leadership of René Guénon (1886-1951). Find my discussion of this book and why its central thesis is mistaken in Bauduin, *The Occultation*, 33, 38-41.
11. Gershman, 'L'Affaire', 154-7; or Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 571-3.
12. Carrouges, *Basic*, 10-11.
13. Carrouges, *Basic*, 39.
14. Shattuck, 'The D-S', I.
15. Breton, *Conversations*, 56, 193, 202-3. Cf. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 114.
16. Audoin, *Breton*, e.g. 106-16, 150-1, 174. See also idem, *Les surréalistes.*
17. Balakian & Shattuck.
18. Balakian, 'Au régard', 220.
19. Laurant, 'Lévi'.
20. Balakian, *Breton*, 35.
21. Monnerot, 86, ch. IV generally.
22. Balakian, *Breton*, 35; idem, 'Reminiscences', 23.
23. Alexandrian, e.g. *Breton*, 158-65; Waldberg, e.g. 43, 44.
24. In his – by now canonical – work Nadeau divided Surrealism into a prelude or 'elaboration' (1914-1922); a period of establishment (the 'heroic period', 1923-1925); a period of growth (1925-1930); and one of consolidation or 'autonomy' (1930-1939). Although I have partly followed this model, the turn of the 1940s as well as the later period is just as relevant for my story.
25. Cardinal, 'Du modèle', 73; find a more extended overview of scholarly judgements in Bauduin, *The Occultation*, Ch. One.

26. *Littérature* 11-12 (October 1923), 24-5. Cowling, 455.
27. Waldberg, 43. Péladan (1858-1918), occult author and organiser of the symbolist Salons de la Rose-Croix. Laurant, 'Péladan', 938-9. More on the Rose-Croix Salons in Pincus-Witten.
28. Valente; Greiner.
29. Belgian artist and poet Maeterlinck is also mentioned, for whom occultism was a very important influence, although it is unclear how much of that was known to the proto-surrealists in 1923, if at all.
30. More on the reception of Romanticism in Surrealism in Hubert, *Surrealism*, Ch. Five; and Massoni.
31. More in Hanegraaff, 'Romanticism'; Materer; McCalla, 'Romanticism'; McIntosh, Ch. 17; Poulat.
32. Breton, *Free*, 120; I have paraphrased Breton somewhat here. Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a Christian visionary; Rose et al.; Larsen et al.
33. Chadwick, 'Eros', 52.
34. Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1378. Béguin, 'Poetry', 13, 17; Blix; McIntosh, 195-99. Note that Balzac knew Swedenborg's ideas only imperfectly; Boyer; and Baron.
35. Balakian, *Literary*, 23.
36. Béguin, 'L'Androgyne'. Belton, 213.
37. The 'Correspondances' were part of the collection *Fleurs du Mal* (1857, and second, censored but also enlarged edition 1861). Blix, 261; Béguin, 'Poetry', 14, 17. More on Swedenborg's influence upon the nineteenth-century French literary landscape generally in Wilkinson. Also, Amiot, *Baudelaire*; Arnold.
38. Béguin, 'Poetry', 19-24. Kaplan; McIntosh, 204. The pre-eminent study (still) of Rimbaud's alchemy is Starkie, *Arthur Rimbaud*.
39. E.g. Bays, 'Rimbaud'.
40. Bate, 98; Cellier, passim. Cf. Jouffroy, 38.
41. McIntosh, 198.
42. See further Béguin, 'Poetry', 18-19.
43. Cf. also Cellier, 55.
44. Note that the few references Breton makes to Viatte are all to *Victor Hugo* and his possible consultation of *Les sources occultes* is speculation on my part.
45. Saurat, 'Thèmes'; *Le religion*; and *Victor Hugo*.
46. Breton, *Arcanum*, 161, 163; idem, *Conversations*, 218. Also Cellier, 50-51; Hammond, 132.
47. Cellier, 55, 60.
48. Breton, *Free*, 85.
49. Breton, *O.C.*, III: 349-63; idem, *Anthology*, 39-52; Breton cites Viatte directly and refers to Éliphas 'Lévy' on 49. See also Polizzotti, 'Introduction: Laughter', viii. Charles Fourier (1772-1837) was a radical philosopher, who developed various theories of utopian socialism that became intermingled with occult thought.

50. Lamy, *Breton*, 146-7; Fabre d'Olivet (1767-1825) was a philologist and esoteric theosophist. McCalla, 'Fabre'. Lévi (1810-1875) is the father of French occultism and possibly the most influential occult figure of the last two centuries. Laurant, 'Lévi'.

51. Hubert, 'Notes', Breton, *O.C.*, IV: 1229.

52. Bergé; Var. After the war, Breton intended to entitle a new surrealist journal 'Supérieur Inconnu' – 'unknown Superior' is the third degree of the Martinist order as founded by occultist Papus. In the end, he suggested the phrase to Alexandrian for his journal.

53. Amadou & Kanters, 304-8.

54. For instance, Breton mentioned Amadou and his definition of occultism favourably in Breton & Legrand, *L'Art*, 7. Breton, 'Lettre à Robert Amadou', *Perspective cavalière*, 42. Cf. Dumas, 'Notes sur', 123-25. Amadou, for his part, turned Breton into an 'occult poet' by including him in his *Anthology* and referred to him in its introduction as well, in addition to mentioning him in another book, *L'Occultisme*. Amadou & Kanters, 10-1. Amadou, *L'Occultisme*, 93-4, and 193, in both cases a citation. See also, the notes in which he refers to several of Breton's publications (chiefly *Arcanum 17*): 220n77, 220n83, 221-2n85, 231n133, 241n200.

55. Dumas, 'Notes sur', 119.

56. Cf. Cellier, 55.

57. Béguin, 'Poetry'.

58. Belton, 121n147. Chadwick, 'Eros', 51-2; Peters, 467.

59. Petitier, 9-16; see Bénichou, *Le temps*, 497-564.

60. Belton, 211-2; McIntosh, 206. On Michelet's construction of the witch see Edelman, 'Médicine', 109-26.

61. Bataille wrote a preface to a new edition of *La Sorcière* (1946) and devoted a chapter to Michelet and his *Sorcière* in *Literature and Evil*, 45-57; one can safely assume that this familiarity with Michelet's works can be extended to the rest of the Bataille group.

62. *Häxan*, directed by Benjamin Christensen (1922), known in English as *Witchcraft through the Ages*. Milne, 71-2.

63. Aragon & Breton, 320. E.g. Michelet, 186.

64. Breton, 'The Automatic' (discussed in Chapter Two).

65. Belton, 170.

66. Belton, 169-72. McIntosh, 177-94. Also Szönyi, 65.

67. Leiris, 'A propos'. Warlick, *Max Ernst*, 30-3.

68. See particularly Leiris, 'À propos', 111-12.

69. *Le Musée* boasts 365 (!) illustrations in black and white, and a further ten in colour.

70. Belton, 207; Warlick, *Max Ernst*, 94-5.

71. *Minotaure* 6 (1935): 38-44. Breton had had his palm read already in 1917, by bookseller Adrienne Monnier, who could 'see his fascination with madness and insanity' in his hand; Monnier, 86-89.

72. Givry, *Le Musée*, 262-279, figures 240-259. Only moderate research has been done on the visual influence of *Le Musée*; Belton, 207, 210-1. Warlick, *Max Ernst*, 30-3, 138, 204, 210, is the only one who actually points out iconographical similarities between illustrations from *Le Musée* and surrealist paintings, specifically by Ernst.

73. For a brief introduction into Surrealism's primitivism, see Maurer; Stansell, 121-6.

74. *Documents* 6 (1929): 334-335. On page 329 the same book is mentioned by Bataille.

75. It is, at this point, impossible to say what would have fascinated the surrealists (whether Bretonian or Bataillian) more: Seabrook's wild travelling adventures, his knowledge and practice of occultism, his personally experiences and knowledge of tribal magical and religious practices, his personal practice of sadomasochism, or just his eccentric persona generally. See Mileaf, *Please*, 75-84; idem, 'Between'.

76. Review by Leiris of *Myths of the Origin of Fire* in *Documents* 5 (2nd series): 311; Caillois refers to a number of Frazer's books in for instance *Minotaure* 5 (1934): 24. Rabinovitch, e.g. 45-6; Maurer, 549.

77. Usually, these titles occur only once and are often incomplete, in notes, and/or offhand. They may not have been known by anyone other than the author of the article in question. Caillois refers in *Minotaure* 5 (1934): 24 and 24 n11 to *La Magie et l'Astrologie dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen* Age by A. Maury (1884) and *Mythes, cultes et religion* (French translation, 1896) by Andrew Lang. *Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la Magie* (volume VII, 1904) by Hubert & Mauss, *Minotaure* 7 (1935): 10 n51. *Der bose Blick und Verwandtes* (1910) by Kurt Seligmann, *Minotaure* 7 (1935): 10. Marcel Griaule wrote an article on the evil eye for *Documents* 4 (1929), mentioning (on 218) Doutté's *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (1894); volume II of the two-part *Sciences Occultes*, in turn part of the multi-volume E*ncyclopédie Théologique* by Migne (1849); and 'Über den Aberglauben des Bösen Blicks bei den Alten' by Otto Jahn, which originally appeared in *Berichte der königlich sächsischen Gesellschaften zu Leipzig* 7 (1855): 28-110.

78. Cf. Choucha, 84-7; see also Albers. Furthermore, he was a member of the *Société de Psychologie Collective*, which counted the collective expressions of the sacred, the miraculous and the occult among its topics of interest; Hand, 53.

79. *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* 9-10 (1927): 61-63. In other places he referred to *Dogme et rituel* by Lévi and Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia* (respectively *Documents* 7 (1929): 350 and *Documents* 1 (1929): 51); as well as to *De la démonomanie des sorciers* (1580) by Jean Bodin (*Documents* 7 (1929): 350), as did Caillois (*Minotaure* 5 (1934): 25n15).

80. See also Clinton, 58-9. See Hollier, *Le Collège*, for a selection of relevant lectures. Find an excellent discussion of Caillois' concept of the sacred in Brown, 77-139.

81. Not much is known about *Acéphale*, but what is, is the importance that was apparently accorded to the Place de la Concorde as a mysterious place. See Jamin; also Lütticken, 31, 33, 34.

82. Warlick, *Max Ernst*, Ch. 3.

83. Hopkins, *Duchamp*, Ch. 1 and 2, where the various approaches to Duchamp's possible alchemical pursuits are discussed as well. Hopkins has made a very convincing case for an exchange of specific ideas between Ernst and Duchamp, showing in the process that Duchamp's ideas were far too idiosyncratic to have transferred easily to the surrealist group generally.

84. Laville.

85. Mabille, 'La conscience', 22-5, reproductions 25-35.

86. Alexandrian, *Le Surréalisme*, 444.

87. I have been unable to find anything other than rather general information concerning the breadth and content of Mabille's occult knowledge; the most important source is Alexandrian, *Le Surréalisme*, 444-55. See also Roudinesco, 11-2. Perhaps the best (although not quite objective) glimpse into the scope of Mabille's interest is provided by Breton in his introduction 'Drawbridges', in Mabille, *Mirror*, viii-xv.

88. Matheson, 741-44. Sawin, 'Magus'.

89. Arcq, 'Mirrors', 102, 105.

90. Cf. Rabinovitch, 19-20, 109, 113.

91. Fulcanelli, possible pseudonym of Jean Julien Champagne (1877-1932). Caron, 'Fulcanelli'. Warlick, *Max Ernst*, 30-2, is convinced that the surrealists must already have read Fulcanelli's important first book, *Le mystère des cathédrales* (1926), in the late 1920s; the earliest date I can confirm is that Breton, for his part at least, had read Fulcanelli's second book, *Demeures philosophales*, by 1948. Breton, *Free*, 116, 190-5; also Dumas, 'Notes', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1394.

92. Caron, 'Alchemy V', 54-5; idem, 'Canseliet'. Szulakowska, 38; Warlick, *Max Ernst*, 33.

93. On his 'hermetical lectures', see Alleau.

94. Caron, 'Canseliet', 238. According to Canseliet, these dinners only took place on three occasions, and D'Ygé, whom Breton apparently did not like, attended only once. Most of Canseliet's contact with various surrealists took place via an exchange of letters. Lennep, *Alchemie*, 419.

95. Caron, 'Canseliet', 238. Amadou was primarily a specialist of the eighteenth-century theosopher Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, but published a variety of works on occultism and modern literary movements (in France) too.

96. Breton, 'The Automatic'.

97. Flournoy, *From India*; *Nouvelles*; *Esprits*.

98. Murat, *Breton*, 135-7.

99.   Murat, *Breton*, 135-7.

100. Dion Fortune (pseud. of Violet Mary Firth Evans, 1890-1946). *Le Cabbale mystique*, Paris, 1937; a translation of *The Mystical Qabalah* (1935).

101. Lotus de Païni (pseud. of Elvezia Gazzotti, 1862-1953). In 'Fronton Virage' Breton mentioned the 'old Rosicrucian tradition' that the Phrygian red cap symbolises bloody foreskin, a notion taken from *Les trois totémisations*: Breton, *Free*, 194 and 288n31.

102. Adamowicz, 'Hats', 83.

103. Murat, *Breton*, 137. Stanislas de Guaïta (1861-1897), occultist, poet and co-founder of the Rose-Croix Salons with Péladan. *Essais de science maudite*, II. *Le Serpent de la genèse, première septaine: Le Temple de Satan*. Paris, 1890-97. Wirth, *Stanislas de Guaita*.

104. E.g., Choucha, 24; Szulakowska, 35.

105. Breton, *O.C.*, III: 138, 1208.

106. Ferentinou, 'Ithell;' idem, *Women.*

107. Massoni, 196; Kanters, 'Ésotérisme', 15.

108. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 182; he mistakenly calls it *L'influence*. Faracovi, 136; Bonnet et al., 'Notes', 1620.

109. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, chapter 1, 240-52; idem, 'Tradition'; idem, *New Age*, 327-30. Laurant, *L'Ésotérisme*, 37-41.

110. As put most famously in the 'Theses against occultism' by Adorno, but see also Webb.

111. Making that one book by Dion Fortune (one of the pioneers of modern British witchcraft), in Breton's library, all the more remarkable.

112. As discussed in Bauduin, *Science.*

113. One of the interesting things about the politics of Surrealism is that while the surrealists were very left-wing, radical and progressive where certain political issues were concerned, they were at the same time rather conservative with regards to other issues, not least women's rights and the rights of the peoples of France's (former) colonies; Belton, 248; Short, 'The Politics'; Stansell.

114. See for instance Hanegraaff, *Esotericism*; idem, *Western Esotericism*; Stuckrad, *Locations*, as well as Bernd-Christian Otto's very insightful review.

115. Although the category 'Western esotericism' has increasingly been problematised, analysed, deconstructed, and reconstituted in various forms, the epithet 'Western' is just as, if not more, problematic; see the analysis of Kennet Granholm.

116. Bogdan & Djurdjevic, 3-5.

117. Breton, *Conversations*, 217.

118. Bauduin, *The Occultation.*

1.   The Time of Slumbers: Psychic automatism and surrealist research

1.   Breton, *The Lost*, 95.
2.   Durozoi, 38-41; Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 178-88; cf. Jean, 100-7.
3.   'Entrée des médiums', *Littérature* (new series) 6 (November 1922), in Breton, *The Lost*, 89-95. 'Une vague des rêves', originally *Commerce* 2 (1924), Aragon, 'A Wave'.
4.   Breton, *O.C.*, I: 276; the English translation in Breton, *The Lost* reads 'hypnotic slumber' (92). Breton, *Nadja*, 31; cf. Nadeau, *Histoire*, 45. Polizzotti: 'Preface: Steps', xix.
5.   Ades, *Dada*, 177.
6.   Polizzotti, 'Preface: Steps', xx.
7.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 26. Rainey, *Modernism*, 717.
8.   Rainey, 'Shock', 203.
9.   Monroe, 28-9; Shamdasani, 'Automatic', 102-3.
10.   Breton, *The Lost*, 92.
11.   Breton, *The Lost*, 92.
12.   Aragon, 'A Wave', 6; originally 'l'état somnambulique', Aragon, *Oeuvres*, I: 89.
13.   Gauld, 39-49, 111-5, Ch. 20-24; Méheust, *Somnambulisme* I & II.
14.   Crabtree, *From*, 86-8, 283, 289-91.
15.   Barušš, Intr., spec. 9-10.
16.   Crabtree, *From*, 39-45, 159; Méheust, *Somnambulisme*, I: 156-216; Monroe, 68-9.
17.   Crabtree, *From*, 41-2.
18.   Crabtree, *From*, 43-5; 171-81.
19.   Monroe, 70-1; Edelman, *Voyantes*, 19ff.
20.   Hanegraaff, *New Age*, 433.
21.   As analysed by Baier, for instance; spec. Ch. IV. Also Monroe, 233ff; Owen, *The Place*, e.g. 6.
22.   Crabtree, *From*, 155-62; Baier, 246-52; Gauld, 279-87.
23.   Ellenberger, 89-101. Crabtree, *From*, 164-5. More on the construction of hysteria as a spectacle in Didi-Huberman; Andriopoulos, *Possessed*, 67-73; Herman, 10-1, 15-7
24.   Crabtree, *From*, 165-6; Didi-Huberman, passim but specifically 175-280; Ellenberger, 95-6, 98-9; Pick, 67. Désiré M. Bourneville & Paul Regnard. *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière, service de M. Charcot.* Paris: 1878, 3 vols.
25.   Gordon, 51ff. Ellenberger, 100.
26.   Du Maurier, George. *Trilby*. London [etc.]: Everyman, 1977. More on somnambulists in literature and *Trilby* in particular in Faivre, 'Borrowings'; Gordon; Grimes; Pick; Tatar; Winter.
27.   Gordon, 51ff; Grimes, 76-80.
28.   Wiene. See also Andriopoulos, *Possessed*, 91-104; Nelson, 167-9.

29.   Andriopoulos, 'Suggestion', 16; Warner, 212.

30.   Gordon, 136.

31.   Textbooks such as *Précis de psychiatrie* by Régis and *La Psychanalyse* by Régis and Hesnard; Roudinesco, 22.

32.   As Breton and others did not read German, they had to make do with French introductions to the ideas of Freud, accompanied by incomplete and one-sided translated abstracts. Roudinesco, 22. See Starobinski for a convincing argument in favour of Myers' influence upon Breton. Compare Lomas, *The Haunted*, 67. The psychodynamic sources of Bretonian Surrealism are further discussed in Bonnet, *Breton*; idem, 'Le rencontre'; Chevrier; Chénieux-Gendron, 'Towards'; Polizzotti, *Revolution*; Shamdasani, 'Encountering', xliii-xiv; see further Amiot, *Mélusine XII*.

33.   Ellenberger, 837.

34.   Roudinesco, 5; Bate, 58; Legge, *Max Ernst*, 11ff. Breton and Aragon had trained at the same hospital in Paris in 1914-15.

35.   Bonnet, 'Le rencontre', 116, 125, passim.

36.   Letter by Breton to Apollinaire (August 16, 1916); cited in Polizzotti, 'Introduction: Phrases', 5-6. See further Melville, 'Introduction', 152; Breton, *Conversations*, 60 and passim; Chénieux-Gendron, 'Towards', 74-90.

37.   Shamdasani, 'Encountering', xliv.

38.   Flournoy, *From India*.

39.   Shamdasani, 'Encountering', xiii.

40.   Flournoy, *From*; Shamdasani, 'Encountering'. 'Dissociation' and 'speaking in tongues' are medical (and medically biased) phrases; from her own spiritualist perspective, Smith communicated with various guiding spirits.

41.   Shamdasani, 'Encountering', xix.

42.   Ellenberger, 315-318. Flournoy, *From*, 101-6, 129-34.

43.   E.g. Breton & Éluard, *Dictionnaire*, 25.

44.   For instance, Breton, 'The Automatic', passim; and idem, *Conversations*, 60. His comments show that besides Flournoy's second study of Smith, *Nouvelles*, and another work (Flournoy, *Esprits*), he was also familiar with the 1932 study of Smith's art by Waldemar Deonna.

45.   Myers, *Human*, I: 222.

46.   Aragon & Breton, 'The Fiftieth', 321. Originally 'Le Cinquantenaire de l'hystérie, 1878-1928', *LRS* 11 (1928).

47.   Aragon & Breton, 'The Fiftieth', 321. Roudinesco, 23; also Rabaté, 'Loving', 64-5.

48.   Breton, *The Lost*, 91-2.

49.   Ellenberger, 835.

50.   Breton & Éluard, 'The Immaculate', 175.

51.   Breton, *The Lost*, 90.

52.   Breton & Soupault, 'The Magnetic'. See Bonnet's commentary, Breton, *O.C.*, I: 1121-1146; and Gascoyne, 39-54.

53.   Cited in McNab, 21.

54. Ellenberger, 835.

55. Gee, 85-6. Ernst's psychoanalytical sources, interests and exploits are dis-
     cussed by Legge, *Max Ernst.*

56. Breton, *The Lost,* 91-2.

57. Ades, 'Between', 36.

58. This largely parallels the argument of Carr and Zanelli, 893. I might add that
     the surrealists' attempt to manifest dreams as creative products in them-
     selves runs rather counter to Freud's notion of dream-work. Rabaté, 'Loving',
     59. See also the letters exchanged by Freud and Breton, in Breton, *Commu-
     nicating*, 149-55.

59. Aragon, 'A Wave'.

60. Aragon, 'A Wave', 7.

61. Breton, *The Lost*, 90.

62. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 29.

63. Myers, *Human*, I: 222. Rainey, 'Shock', 203.

64. Breton, *The Lost*, 92.

65. Andriopoulos, 'Suggestion,' 16; Warner, 212.

66. A note not reproduced in Breton, *The Lost,* but in Rainey, *Modernism*, 744n9.

67. See Myers, *Human*, I: 222.

68. Béhar, *Mélusine* XXVII; Lomas, 'Modest'; Parkinson, *Surrealism.*

69. Aragon, 'A Wave', 3-7. E.g. Browder, 65; Conley, *Robert Desnos*, 3; Roudinesco,
     25.

70. Polizzotti, 'Preface: Steps', xvii.

71. Lachapelle, 88-91.

72. Richet.

73. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 178; Breton, *Conversations*, 60; Richet, Ch. 2. Polizzotti,
     Revolution, 179; Pouget, 164.

74. Albach, 183-7; Méheust, 'Où Breton', 1.

75. *Minotaure* 11 (1938): 18. Péret, Benjamin. 'Brauner le Hibou'. *Invitation Expo-
     sition Victor Brauner du 19 mai au 5 juin 1939.* Paris: Galerie Henriette, 1939: 4.

76. Ellenberger, 315-18.

77. Breton, *The Lost*, 92.

78. Breton, *The Lost*, 90.

79. Breton, *The Lost*, 92; Aragon, 'A Wave', 7

80. Duplessis, 60; Clair, 'Le surréalisme'.

81. See Polizzotti, 'Preface: Steps', xix. For instance, Desnos predicted the death
     of almost everybody who attended the sessions.

82. Note that it was solicited, as he was asked while entranced to create a 'Rrose
     Sélavy-type poem'. Conley, *Desnos*, 29, 31. Breton, *The Lost*, 101-2.

83. Polizzotti, 'Preface: Steps', xix.

84. Conley, *Desnos*, 30-1.

85. Breton, *The Lost*, 102.

86. Conley, *Desnos*, 94-5.

87.   Breton, *Nadja*, 79-81; see also Breton, *Manifestoes*, 201. Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 244.
88.   Clair, 'Le surréalisme'; idem, *Du Surréalisme*.
89.   Ellenberger, 837.
90.   Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 68.
91.   Carrouges, *Basic*, 120; cf. Choucha, 52.
92.   Monroe, 257. Compare Choucha, 49; see also Clébert, *Dictionnaire*, 543ff.
93.   Kripal, 7-8.
94.   Méheust*, Somnambulisme*, II: 322.
95.   Announcement in *LRS* 2 (1925), 31; Lomas, 'Recording', 637.
96.   Breton, *O.C.,* I: 481. For more on the BRS, see also Durozoi, 77-84; Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 219-20, 224-6, 229-34. Thévenin, Paule (ed.). *Archives du surréalisme*. Vol I: *Bureau de recherches surréalistes*. Paris: Gallimard, 1988.
97.   *LRS* 1 (1924) – 12 (1929); Ades, *Dada*, 189-203.
98.   Conésa; Poivert, 'Images'; idem, 'Le rayogramme'.
99.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 27-8.
100.   It paraphrases the method for mental dissociation provided in Régis' *Preçis de Psychiatrie*, see Bonnet, *Breton*, 104. See also Clinton, 13.
101.   Letter from Smith to Flournoy, 1901, Shamdasani, 'Encountering', xxxiv. It is unknown if Breton knew of this letter.
102.   Winter, 60-78.
103.   Andriopoulos, *Possessed*, 66-90; Gordon, 128.
104.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 44.
105.   Andriopoulos, *Possessed*, 158. True psychic automatism was 'exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern'; Breton, *Manifestoes*, 26.
106.   Beaujour, 'From', 869.
107.   Ades, 'Between', 24; Duplessis, 69ff.
108.   Both Crevel and Desnos admired Breton with an adulation bordering on worship, because he – Polizzotti suggests – functioned as a stand-in father figure for both. Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 180-1.
109.   Conley, *Desnos*, 118.
110.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 29.
111.   '[O]ne had to have been there to know that sometimes he [Desnos] came very close to the abyss'; Breton cited in Matthews, *Surrealism, Insanity*, 47.
112.   Warlick, *Max Ernst*, 65.
113.   Conley, *Desnos*, Ch. 1.
114.   See also Edelman, *Voyantes,* 90.
115.   To give one example: for all that Desnos passed his spoonerisms off as those of Rrose/Duchamp, he was widely known, acknowledged and also acclaimed as their author. Of course, Breton devoted an essay to them, 'Words without Wrinkles', *The Lost*, 100-2.
116.   Cited in Taves, 255; and see Ades, 'Between', 36.
117.   Conley, *Automatic*, 8, 10-11; Jordanova.
118.   Polizzotti, 'Introduction: Phrases', 5-6; Conley, *Desnos*, 120.

119.   Letter by Kahn to her cousin, cited in Polizzotti, 'Profound', 5.
120.   Gordon, 31.
121.   E.g. Ellenberger, 171-3; Micale, 'Discourses'.
122.   Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 182; ulterior motives may have played a part.
123.   Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 180-1.
124.   Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 183.
125.   Aragon, 'A Wave', 7.
126.   Lomas, 'The Omnipotence', 62.
127.   Rabaté, 'Loving', 65.
128.   See also Lomas, 'The Omnipotence', 62.
129.   Cited in Conley, *Desnos*, 21.
130.   Breton & Éluard, 'The Immaculate'. Chénieux-Gendron, 'Towards'.
131.   Cited in Shamdasani, 'Encountering', xvii.
132.   Breton & Éluard, 'The Immaculate', 175; and see also Melville, 152. Chénieux-Gendron, 'Towards', 85; furthermore Rabaté, 'Loving', 65.
133.   Chénieux-Gendron in 'Towards', 85-7.
134.   Foster, *Compulsive*, 2, 50.
135.   For those of *abnormal* mind, such as mental patients, assuming and discarding of mental illnesses at will is not the case, which shows that for all that the Surrealists conflated subject and object in many instances, they never considered themselves to be patients. Actual mental instability was not tolerated at all within Surrealism, see further Matthews, *Surrealism, Insanity.*

2.   The Period of Reason: Mediums and seers

1.   Breton, *Nadja*, 64-5.
2.   Breton, *Nadja*. For the story of the real 'Nadja', see Albach, *Léona*. I will refer to Breton's supposed alter-ego in the novel as 'André.'
3.   Breton, *Nadja*, 74.
4.   Breton, *Nadja*, 80-7.
5.   Breton, *Nadja*, 91.
6.   Breton, *Nadja*, 99.
7.   Breton, *Nadja*, 129.
8.   Breton, *Nadja*, 136.
9.   Suleiman, *Subversive*, 108-9.
10.   Orenstein, 'Nadja', 91; Conley, *Automatic*, 1, 9, 116-7; Suleiman, *Risking*, 101; Cohen, *Profane*, 108; Kuenzli, 'Surrealism', 19; Shattuck, 'The Nadja', 55.
11.   Breton, *Conversations*, 108.
12.   Conley, 'Not', 119. Gauthier, 182, 184. Barry, 290-2. Duplessis, 128-9, 141.
13.   Breton, *Nadja*, 136.
14.   Hötter, 44ff.; Kuenzli, 'Surrealism', 19.
15.   Breton, *Nadja*, 11.
16.   Sheringham, 271.

17.   Breton, *Nadja*, 81, plate 19.
18.   Breton, *Nadja*, 93 (note).
19.   Breton, *Nadja*, 105.
20.   Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 244.
21.   Benjamin.
22.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 201.
23.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 201.
24.   Aragon, 'A Wave', 6.
25.   Breton & Éluard, *The Immaculate*.
26.   Sheringham, 274.
27.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 201.
28.   Cf. Sheringham, 274.
29.   Sheringham, 275-6, 278.
30.   Bandier, 343.
31.   Breton, *Nadja*, 144.
32.   Beaujour, 'From', 868-71.
33.   Guerlac. Also, Matlock; Thévoz, *Art Brut*, 128-32.
34.   Breton, *The Lost*, 91; cf. Breton, 'The Mediums Enter' in Rainey, *Modernism*, 743n8.
35.   Matlock, 55-6.
36.   Polizzotti, 'Introduction: Phrases', 15.
37.   Breton, 'The Automatic', 11, 24.
38.   Breton, *Manifestoes,* 195-203.
39.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 199.
40.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 200, 202-3.
41.   Morise, 480; originally 'Les Yeux enchantées', *LRS* 1 (1924): 26-7. Cardinal, 'Masson', 80-1.
42.   Naville, 27.
43.   Morise, 'Enchanted', 479. Painting should be understood here as a general category including drawing, sculpture, etc.
44.   Cardinal, 'Masson', 83.
45.   In 1941, Breton wrote: 'At the beginning of 1926 [...] the question of whether painting could possibly comply with surrealism's imperatives was still being debated. [...] [I]t is obvious now, looking back, that it was already fully in evidence in the work of Max Ernst.' Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 64.
46.   This essay appeared in *LRS* 4 (1925), 6 (1926), 7 (1926) and 9-10 (1927), and was published as *Surrealism and Painting* in 1928.
47.   Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 4, and see also xvii-xxx. Cf. Krauss, *Originality*, 93-5.
48.   Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 1.
49.   Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 1, paraphrased. No other sense even came close to the superiority of the eye in Surrealism. In fact, apart from hearing, no other sense is even acknowledged.
50.   Lewis, 3-5.

51. Freeman and Musgrove, spec. part 1.
52. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 273 (emphasis original).
53. Prinzhorn. Röske, 'Inspiration', 10-2; Brand-Claussen, 11-21.
54. Von Beyme, passim (162 for Ernst and Natterer); Röske, 'Ernst'; idem, 'Inspiration'.
55. Foster, 'Blinded', 18-30.
56. Foster, 'Blinded', 3, passim. Fineberg; Pernoud, 'From Children'; idem, *L'Invention*; Maurer; Antle, 166-7.
57. Réja. Thévoz, *Art Brut*, 71-98.
58. *LRS* 4 (1925): 1.
59. Rimbaud, *Complete*, 372-81.
60. Rimbaud, *Complete*, 377 (emphasis original).
61. See also Taylor, *Sources*, 423.
62. Mitchell, *Secrets*, 63-5; McCalla, 'Romanticism', passim; idem, 'Eternal', 3-4. Hanegraaff, 'Romanticism', 256-61. Classical studies of (French) Romantic poetry and occultism are Viatte's *Les sources* I & II, and idem, *Hugo*; Béguin, *L'Ame*; Roos.
63. Clearly, the issue of the Romantic poet-seer is much more complex and the process of its formation much more intricate than I can present here. Besides the sources mentioned above and elsewhere, see also Amiot, *Baudelaire*; Mayer; Rosenblum.
64. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 153.
65. Breton & Éluard, *Dictionnaire*, 4. In the 1930s Breton would begin to describe other symbolists and romantics as seers too, such as Huysmans and Hugo.
66. Béguin, *L'Ame*, II: 434-5, passim. Starkie, *Rimbaud*, 95-103.
67. Rimbaud, *Complete*, 377.
68. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 175, 263. Bays, 'Rimbaud', 46-7.
69. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 274.
70. Cf. Noêl, 20.
71. Rimbaud, *Complete*, 374-5 (Fowlie's translation: 'I is someone else').
72. Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 46.
73. Breton, *Nadja* (French ed. 1964), 129.
74. Breton, *Nadja*, plate 32 and 29.
75. Breton, *Nadja*, 74, 83.
76. Nadja takes Breton to this sign and compulsively touches it; Breton, *Nadja*, 85 and 100.
77. Breton, *Nadja*, 27.
78. Polizzotti, 'Introduction', ix.
79. See Margaret Cohen's interesting and penetrating analysis of the similarity between Breton's account of Parisian locations and tourist guides of the time; *Profane*, 61-77.
80. There is no doubt this was intentional. Breton stated: 'the tone adopted for this narrative [*Nadja*] is copied from the one used in medical observations

[…] which tend to preserve a trace of everything that examination and interrogation might reveal, without seeking to give its expression the least stylistic polish.' Cited in Polizzotti, 'Introduction', xx.

81.   Breton, *Nadja*, 80 and 105, plates 20, 26.
82.   For an analysis of the photographs in *Nadja*, see Bate, 91-101.
83.   Snyder & Wash Allen.
84.   Krauss, 'The Photographic', 14.
85.   Benjamin, 51. My argument here is based upon Bate, 92ff. The judgement of the photographs as banal is based upon Breton's own disappointment in them, Polizzotti, 'Introduction', xxvi-xxvii.
86.   A review in *Art et decoration* (January 1930) cited in Bajac, 126.
87.   Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 46.
88.   Le Gall, 217.
89.   'The enchantments that the street outside had to offer me [Breton] were a thousand times more real.' Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 3. Ray, *The Surrealist*, 20.
90.   Ray, *The Surrealist*, 20.
91.   Sass, *Madness,* 283-4.
92.   Felman, 2.
93.   Sass, *Madness*, 44 and 45.
94.   Aragon, *Paris*, 204.
95.   Aragon, *Paris*.
96.   O'Connell, 451-2, 468-9. I find Warlick's argument that St. James' Tower and other Parisian landmarks are prominently present in *Nadja* and *Paris Peasant* foremost because of their alchemical resonance (*Max Ernst*, 94) interesting but unconvincing. Clearly, both Breton and Aragon had some familiarity with the legend of Flamel in connection with the tower, but only after 1928-9 and the review of Givry's *Witchcraft* by Leiris does the interest in alchemy as such really grow.
97.   Cohen, 'Mysteries'; *Profane*, 154-72.
98.   Cohen, 'Mysteries', 102.
99.   Breton writes that if he were to reread the draft of *Nadja*, it would be 'with the patient and somehow *disinterested eye* I would be sure to have'; Breton, *Nadja*, 151.
100. E.g., Breton, *Nadja*, 83, 107, 121.
101. Noêl, 24.
102. Breton, *Nadja*, 32, plate 7 on 33.
103. Breton, *Nadja*, 90.
104. Cowling, 459.
105. Fanés, 137.
106. Breton, *Anthology*, 113.
107. See *La subversion* 225 ff., for many more examples of surrealist art works with eye(s) or the act of seeing as motif.
108. See also Eburne, *Surrealism*, 74-95, spec. 93-4; Rosemont, *Surrealist*, xlvi.

109. *LRS* 1 (1927), 17; citation taken from Baudelaire's preface to *Artificial Para-dises* cited in Eburne, *Surrealism*, 93.

110. Ray, *Emak Bakia* (Basque for 'Leave me Alone'). The film can be seen online at www.ubu.com/film/ray_emak.html. Time-indications are from this version.

111. Short, *The Age*, 27.

112. Ray, *Emak*, 19:30-19:50.

113. Hedges, 'Constellated', 100.

114. Hedges, 'Constellated', 100; Kuenzli, 'Introduction', 4.

115. Ray, *Emak*, 00:30-00:39.

116. Vision is further stressed in the film through shots of revolving mirrors and reflecting cubes and the resulting play of dots and blotches of light; as well as through the use of techniques such as soft focus. Hedges, 'Constellated', 99-100.

117. Buñuel & Dali*, Un Chien*, 01:20-01:27.

118. Schneede, 355, 356.

119. This portrait and its far-reaching visionary consequences are discussed in the next chapter.

120. www.wikipaintings.org/en/max-ernst/oedipus-rex-1922 (accessed 24-1-2014).

121. Cf. Schneede, 352.

122. Bezzola e.a.; Mundy, *Desire*.

123. Ernst, *Beyond*, 9.

124. Mabille, 'L'Oeuil', 54. Le Gall, 221.

125. Bataille, (published under the pseudonym 'Lord Auch'). *Story of the Eye*. New York: Urizen Books, 1977.

126. Fanés, 132-45.

127. Le Gall, 220.

128. For a discussion of the surrealist erotic gaze in Surrealism, see Caws' excellent *The Surrealist*.

129. Eburne, *Surrealism*, 93.

130. Balakian, 'Breton and Drugs'.

131. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 36.

132. Compare also Breton's comments on the pleasure principle's sway over the reality principle, *Manifestoes*, 273.

133. Conley, *Automatic*, 9.

134. Jardine, 159-77; Kuenzli, 'Surrealism', 19.

135. Aragon, *Paris*, 204 (emphasis original).

136. Belton, *The Beribboned*; Conley, *Automatic*; Colville & Conley; Ferentinou, 'Surrealism'; Suleiman, *Subversive*.

137. "Hélène, c'est moi', Nadja used to say.' Breton, *Nadja*, 80.

138. Breton, *Conversations*, 108.

139. For instance, in 'A Letter to Seers' Breton implies that the seers are passive because they are women, *Manifestoes*, 203.

140. Prinzhorn, 271.

141. Sass, 'Surrealism', 289.

142. Battersby & Gould, 18.

143. I have paraphrased Breton, *Manifestoes*, 260.

144. Rimbaud, *A Season*; 33-46, based also upon the 1976 translation by Paul Schmidt.

145. Bays, 'Rimbaud'. Bivort; Richer, *L'alchimie*; Bouvet; Guerdon.

146. Breton, 'The Automatic', 30.

147. Ernst, *Ernst: Oeuvres*, 28 (my translation).

148. Ernst, *Oeuvres*, 38. Translation mine, partly based upon Lippard, 702.

149. Warlick, 'Max Ernst's Alchemical', 72. More on the Ernst's alchemy in: Warlick, 'An Itinerant'; idem, *Max Ernst and Alchemy*; idem, *Max Ernst's Collage*. Hopkins, *Duchamp*, ch. 3; idem, 'Hermetic'; idem, 'Max Ernst'.

150. Breton, 'The Automatic', 14.

151. *Minotaure* 3-4 1933, 12.

152. Ernst, *Beyond*, 7.

153. Ernst, *Beyond*, 8.

154. Breton, 'The Automatic', 32.

155. Adamowicz, *Surrealist*, 189.

156. Sensory and motor automatisms 'will be seen to be *messages* from the subliminal'; Myers, *Human*, I: 222 (emphasis original).

157. Breton, 'The Automatic', 18.

158. Breton, *Nadja*, plates 29, 32, 34 on pages 117, 120, 124.

159. Breton, 'The Automatic', 13, 26-9, 34. Dichter et al., 103-4, 159, 92-3, 157-8.

160. Two anonymous fragments of ink drawing, one of automatic writing and one of automatic drawing; a drawing of Martians by 'Mme Smead'; two drawings by Léon Petitjean; a drawing by August Machner; and drawings by a certain 'X' and 'Mme A.'; Breton, 'The Automatic'. Dichter et al., 98-9, 158-9.

161. Breton, 'The Automatic', 23, 21, 25. Dichter et al., 86-9, 157.

162. A plate of incubi and succubi from Jules Bois's *Le Satanisme et la magie*, and a detail of Gustave Moreau's painting *Les Chimères*. Breton, 'The Automatic', 16, 31. Both Bois and Moreau are symbolists, and it is evident that there is a subtext relating to Symbolism present in 'The Automatic Message'. This may be because of the symbolist validation of mediumism and mediumistic art, as discussed by Keshavjee.

163. The origin of all the reproduced works has been researched by Dichter et al., 33-55.

164. He further mentions von Schrenk-Notzing, William James, Charles Guilbert, Cuendet, René Sudre, Lipps, Georges Petit, Pierre Quercy, and the 'masters' of 'the Marburg School', Kienow and Jeansch. Dichter et al., 39-55.

165. Breton, 'The Automatic', 23, 24.

166. Breton, 'The Automatic', 23.

167. Reiterated in Breton & Éluard, *Dictionnaire*, 25.

168. Thévoz, *Art Brut*, 25-8.

169. *Variétés* (1929), special issue. Between pages 38 and 39 two reproductions of photographs of Cheval's palace are inserted, accompanied by a statement attributed to Cheval (1907): 'Toutes mes idées me viennent en rêve et, quand je travaille, j'ai toujours mes rêve présents à l'esprit.' Note the reference to dreams here, which makes it clear that Cheval was guided by an internal model.

170. Fanès, 164.

171. 'CHEVAL (Ferdinand), 1836-1924 – "Le maître incontesté de l'architecture et de la sculpture médianimiques a été hanté par les aspects de plancher de grotte, de vestiges de fontaines pétrifiantes de cette région de la Drôme ou, durant trente-six ans, il effectua à pied sa tournée." (A.B.)' Breton & Éluard, *Dictionnaire*, 7.

172. Breton, 'The Automatic', 22.

173. In 1948, Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985), Breton and others started the *Compagnie de l'Art Brut*. Breton resigned in 1951 but remained an active proponent of outsider art. Thévoz, *Art Brut;* Peiry.

174. Although Outsider art and art brut are not entirely the same, for the discussion here they can be understood as interchangeable. I refer to the art of marginal and untrained groups, which the avant-garde favoured so much, as outsider art (un-capitalised). In the surrealist context, I understand it to include the art of children, asylum patients or those considered mentally ill, mediumistic art, and 'naïve' or folk-art. Maclagan, 'Outsiders', 34-5; Thévoz, *Art Brut*, passim.

175. 'Medium-derived drawings are the work of people "who do not know how to draw".' Breton citing Flournoy's *Esprits*, in 'The Automatic', 21.

176. Breton, 'The Automatic', 21-2. Although there are more criteria, I consider these three the most relevant.

177. Breton, 'The Automatic', 20-1. This information is again a citation, now from Bois's *Le Satanisme*. In the description of Sardou's technique Breton cites from the article on Sardou in *Le Revue Spirite*.

178. See further criteria in Cardinal, *Outsider*; Maclagan, *Outsider*; Méheust, 'Un Schmürz', 43-56; Thévoz, 'Médiums'. Such criteria are often rather artificial. For instance, Desmoulins was hardly untaught but a trained and celebrated engraver and painter, while Sardou was hardly of a simple background but in fact highly educated and a rather famous dramatist. Dichter et al., 154, 159.

179. Mediumism is considered an 'alibi' in the sense that it functions as an accepted category allowing one not trained and/or of socially unacceptable status to still be allowed to make art. Thévoz, *Art Brut*, 114.

180. Thévoz, *Art Brut*, 109-10, 114.

181. Cardinal, 'Du modèle', 71; Poivert, 'Images', 310.

182. Breton, 'The Automatic', 17.

183. Breton, 'The Automatic', 11, but see original for the caption.

184. Breton, 'The Automatic', 14.

185.   Breton, *Manifestoes,* 260 (emphasis original).
186.   Breton, 'The Automatic', 29 (emphasis original).
187.   Breton, The Automatic', 30 (emphasis original).

3.   The 'Golden Age' of the omnipotent mind

1.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 133-4.
2.   See also Harris, 51-3, 248n6.
3.   Chadwick, *Myth*, 1-6.
4.   Walz, 146-7.
5.   For the complex issue of surrealist politics see Harris (spec. 49-83 for an
       analysis of the 1930s); the essays in Spiteri and LaCoss, 'Introduction: Revo-
       lution' by the editors, Short's classical 'The Politics', and Lubar in particular.
       Béhar, *Mélusine* V.
6.   Cottom, 173.
7.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 117-94.
8.   Polizzotti, 'Preface: In', ix-xvii; and 'Notice' to *Vases Communicants* by Bon-
       net & Hubert in Breton, *O.C.*, II: 1348-69, spec. 1351-2. Taminiaux.
9.   Harris, 2.
10.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 177-8 (caps and emphasis original).
11.   For instance, Béhar & Carassou, 301; Carrouges, *Basic*, 39.
12.   Hanegraaff, 'Occult', 844.
13.   Valente.
14.   Book III, Ch. 2: 'Du silence, et de l'occultation des choses qui sont des
       mystères' (English ed., 'Of concealing of those things which are secret in
       religion'). Agrippa, *Three*, 443; Bonnet et al., 'Notes', 1619.
15.   Béhar & Carassou, 301.
16.   Carrouges, *Basic*, 39.
17.   Chadwick, *Women*, 190.
18.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 173-80.
19.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 173.
20.   Bonnet et al., 'Notes', 1620, 1621.
21.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 173.
22.   Givry, *Le Musée*; idem, *Witchcraft*. Leiris. The relevant book by (allegedly)
       Flamel is the *Livre des figures hiérogplyphiques*, first published in 1612, in
       which the *Book of Abraham the Jew* is discussed.
23.   Poisson, Albert. *Histoire de l'alchimie, XIVe siècle, Nicolas Flamel* (Charcor-
       nac, 1893); see Caron, 'Alchemy V', 53; Bonnet et al., 'Notes', 1616. Remarkably
       enough Bonnet et al. do not mention Grillot de Givry at all, whereas I think
       that *Le Musée* must have played an important part in fuelling Breton's inter-
       est in these subjects.
24.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 174. Desnos, 'Le mystère d'Abraham Juif', *Documents*
       5 (1929), 233-39. Bataille – who worked in the French National Library and

had access to the original manuscript – had selected the illustrations for Desnos' article, Leiris had prompted its writing; Rivière, 384.

25. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 174-5.
26. Caron, 'Alchemy V', 52; Lennep, 'L'Art'.
27. Pierre, 'Notice' to the *Second Manifesto*, Breton, *O.C.*, I: 1588.
28. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 180.
29. Coudert, 46-7; Caron, 'Alchemy', 52, 54-4. Hanegraaff, *New Age*, 508-13. Also, Bonnet et al., 'Notes', 1616.
30. Breton calls them the 'Third' and 'Fourth Book of Magic', *Manifestoes*, 175, 178. Breton may have had access to a Chacornac edition of 1910-11 that included the (wrongly attributed) fourth book; Bonnet et al., 'Notes', 1616.
31. Agrippa (attrib.), *The Fourth*, 173. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 178, 179. Bonnet et al., 'Notes', 1620, 1621.
32. These are plates 1 and 6 from the 17th-century manuscript *Figures d'Abraham Juif*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (MS 14765); *Documents* 5 (1929): 235 and 238. Plate 7 is also reproduced but not discussed by Breton. Givry, *Witchcraft*, 352; he reproduces plates 3 and 10. Bataille obviously selected three plates for Desnos's article that hadn't been seen yet within surrealist circles.
33. Bonnet et al., 'Notes', 1616-7.
34. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 176; Bonnet et al., 'Notes', 1618.
35. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 174-77 (emphasis original).
36. This point is also made a couple of times by Bonnet et al..
37. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 177. Maranatha is originally an Aramaic term and can be found in the Bible. It is possible that Breton did not know that it originally means 'the Lord comes' or he might have had some qualms about using it. His use of it as a malediction is consistent with occult practices of the time. Bonnet et al., 'Notes', 1618-9.
38. Here I diverge from Bonnet et al.
39. Breton *Manifestoes,* 178-81.
40. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 182.
41. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 182, citing Choisnard, *Influence*, 58-9, although he mentions the original essay from 1893, which in fact dates from 1898; Bonnet et al., 'Notes', 1620-1.
42. *Min* 3-4 (1933): 38. See also Clébert, *Dictionnaire*, 64.
43. Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 3-4. Breton officially changed his birth date in 1934, but had already incidentally used 18 February years earlier.
44. Chadwick, *Women*, 190.
45. 'I turn toward those who are not afraid to conceive of love as the site of ideal occultation of all thought.' Breton, *Manifestoes*, 181.
46. Harris, 2.
47. Mabille, 'L'oeil'. Hilke, 147.
48. Breton, *Mad*, 55-7; idem, *Selections*, 71-2.
49. Breton, *Mad*, 65.

50.   Breton, *Mad*, ch. 4, spec. 61, 64. Hilke, 149-397.
51.   For instance, in a note in 'Before the Curtain': Breton, *Free*, 80-7, 281-3.
52.   The play is 'S'il vous plait'. Hilke, 147-8, 395.
53.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 202.
54.   Breton & Aragon, 'Le trésor des jésuites', *Variétés* (1929), in Breton, *Free*, 282. Hilke, 395.
55.   Breton, *Free*, 80-1. Duplessis, 158-9; Demos, 'The Exiles', 181-2. One should note, as Hilke does (396), that although Breton treats all these predictions as one of a kind, they are not really alike. Clearly, all of them depend on the author's reinterpretation, but in cases such as *S'il vous plait* there are recognisable, perhaps even controllable, names and dates, while in the Sunflower-case the reader has to take Breton's version of what transpired between him and Jacqueline, upon which his whole prophetical re-interpretation is based, at face-value.
56.   Hilke, 148.
57.   Hulak, 87-9.
58.   Breton*, Nadja*, 29-31.
59.   Cottom, 224.
60.   *Littérature* 14 (1920); cited in McNab, 106.
61.   Breton, *O.C.*, I: 473.
62.   Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 245.
63.   E.g. Foster, *Compulsive*, 36.
64.   E.g. Hilke, and Duplessis.
65.   Breton, *Free*, 81.
66.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 303. Richardson, *Dedalus* II: 285.
67.   'On Surrealism and its Living Works' (1953), Breton, *Manifestoes*, 302-3 (emphasis original).
68.   Beecher, 349; McCalla, 'Romanticism'.
69.   Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 68. This is the second aphorism from *The Emerald Tablet*, which has many translations; Kahn.
70.   E.g., Carrouges, *Basic*, 10.
71.   Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 22 (my emphasis).
72.   Breton, *Anthology*, 92. Hubert and other editors of Breton's *Oeuvres* fail to mention where this particular form of the saying originates; Breton, *O.C.*, II: 1471-7.
73.   Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 22.
74.   Bonnet, Hubert and other editors of his work do not provide sources for any of Breton's various paraphrases. Apollinaire turned Breton's attention to Agrippa, and so perhaps to the *Tablet* too. Givry mentions *The Emerald Tablet* and this specific aphorism very briefly (*Witchcraft*, 125, 240). It has been suggested that Ernst was familiar with the *Tablet*, but whether he was pointed to it by Breton, or the other way around, if at all, remains unclear; Warlick, *Max Ernst*, 180. In 1928, Breton totally reverses the meaning of the saying ('there is neither high nor low'), whereas in 1941 and 1953 he phrased it correctly ('all is above as below'). This might mean that he was just repro-

ducing something from hearsay in 1928, albeit mistakenly, and that it was only in later years that he had a proper version of the *Tablet* at hand. On the other hand, the 1928 inversion might also be an example of surrealist black humour and a dig at the religious undertone of the aphorism.

75. Goethe: 'Nichts ist drinnen, nichts ist draußen: Denn was innen, das ist außen' (what is within is also without), to be found in the poem 'Epirrhema', see the 'Notices', Breton, *O.C.*, IV: 1279.
76. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 302-3.
77. Cf. Rabaté, 'Loving', 62.
78. Breton, *Break*, 3-20, 18.
79. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 302-3.
80. Belton, 55. In *Nadja*, for instance, objective chances (the *bois-charbons*-incident) are known as 'petrifying coincidences'; Breton, *Nadja*, 19.
81. Short, 'Dada', 307. Bastien, 2, passim.
82. Freud, *Totem*, ch. III and spec. 85, 88-93.
83. Belton, 223-4.
84. Or otherwise call for 'delirious interpretation', Breton, *Communicating*, 92.
85. Breton, *Mad*, 25-34.
86. See also Breton, *Mad*, 111. Rabaté, 'Loving', 70.
87. Breton, *Mad*, 23 (my emphasis).
88. See also the brief analysis of Bonnet in her comments upon *Mad Love*, Breton, *O.C.*, II: 1712n1.
89. Breton & Éluard, 'Enquête', *Minotaure* 3-4 (1933), 101-16.
90. See also Caws, 'Introduction: Linkings', xiii; and Mitchell, 30.
91. Compare Harris, 86ff.
92. Breton, *Communicating*, 86. Caws, 'Introduction: Linkings', ix, xii.
93. Cf. Beaujour, 'Breton', 215.
94. Gille, 48.
95. Breton, *Trajectoire.* Bastien.
96. Mitchell, 113; Maurer, passim.
97. Mitchell, ch. 2. Chadwick, *Myth*, 16-8. See furthermore Clifford.
98. *Revue française de la psychanalyse* VII, 1 (1934, special issue 'La Pensée Magique'). Mitchell, 126.
99. See also Horton, 97.
100. Surette, 59.
101. See Hanegraaff, 'How Magic', 365-71; Styers, 11-3, 79-81; Surette, 57-60.
102. Mitchell, 112; Hanegraaff, 'Magic I', 716, 717.
103. Mitchell, 113ff.
104. Chadwick, *Myth*, 17.
105. See also Maurer, 542.
106. Breton's thought may also have been influenced by the ideas of French sociologists Henri Hubert (1872-1927) and Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), who also related magic very closely to desire, see Mitchell, 113-4.
107. Stambovsky, *Myth*, 45-72.

108.   Cf. Lavergne, 19.

109.   'Political Position of Today's Art' (91 April, 1935), and 'Surrealist Situation of the Object' (29 March, 1935), published (together with other political papers) as *Position Politique du Surréalisme* in 1935: Breton, *Manifestoes*, 205-278.

110.   Prefigure the political tract on the revolutionary potential of art he would write with Leon Trotsky a later, Breton, *Free Rein*, 29-34.

111.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 231.

112.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 232.

113.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 232 (emphasis original).

114.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 210.

115.   See also Breton, *Manifestoes*, 210; Bonnet, 'Notes', in Breton, *O.C.*, II: 1585; Gershman, 'Surrealism', 52.

116.   Ellenberger, 203-5, 279, 396-7.

117.   See also Beaujour, 'André', 219.

118.   Gershman, 'Surrealism', 53.

119.   Browder, 63.

120.   Chadwick, *Myth*, 8. The one exception is Louis Aragon's *Les Aventures de Télémache* (1922).

121.   Breton, *Free*, 17. Chadwick, *Myth*, 9; Veseley, 88.

122.   Chadwick, *Myth*, 19-45.

123.   Masson, *Mythology*. See also Chadwick, 'Masson's', and idem, *Myth*; Lomas, *The Haunted*, 26-51; Schmiedt, 421; Masson, *Mythologie*.

124.   Chénieux-Gendron, 'Lectures'; Eburne, 'Surrealism noir'; Gracg, *Breton*.

125.   Lavergne, 29-42.

126.   Béhar, *Mélusine* VII. The topos of the castle is another important motif; Beaujour, 'André', 221-2; idem, 'De l'océan'.

127.   Lavergne, 41.

128.   Gracq, *Breton*, 34, 102.

129.   Alquié, 106.

130.   My emphasis. Breton, preface to Ray, *La photographie*, no page numbers.

131.   Breton, *Mad*, 114.

132.   Chadwick, *Myth*, 7. The story of Gradiva was told by Wilhelm Jensen in *Gradiva* (1903) and then retold and analysed by Freud, 'Der Wahn und Die Traume in W. Jensen's *Gradiva'* (1907).

133.   Chadwick, *Myth*, 77-86; idem, 'Masson's'.

134.   Rabaté, 'Loving', 69.

135.   Rabaté, 'Loving', 70.

136.   Rabaté, 'Loving', 68; Eburne, 'Surrealism', 96. Roudinesco, 109-17.

137.   Eburne, 'Surrealism', 95, 101, 106.

138.   Jenny; Rabaté, 'Loving'.

139.   For instance Vadé, 320, 422, and passim.

140.   Tambiah, passim, spec. 343 and 349.

141.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 303. Note that this is one of the few instances Breton uses the term 'correspondence'.

142. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 303.
143. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 303, continued: 'Surrealism is here of the same mind as such thinkers as Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin and Schopenhauer, in the sense that it believes, as they did, that we must "seek to understand nature through ourselves and not ourselves through nature".' De Saint-Martin (1743-1803) was French theosophist and philosopher, and influential in the development of the esoteric current of Martinism, founded by Martinez de Pasqually. Breton probably paraphrased his maxim that 'one must explain things through man, and not man though things', as put forth in his second book *Tableau naturel des rapports qui existent entre Dieu, l'homme, et l'univers* (1782). McCalla, 'Saint-Martin'; Hubert, 'Notes', in Breton, *O.C.*, IV: 1214.
144. Jentsch's 'Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen' was published in the *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* 8, 22 (25 Aug. 1906): 195-8 and 8, 23 (1 Sept. 1906): 203-5.Freud, 'Das Unheimliche', *Imago* 5-6 (1919): 297-324.
145. 'Der Sandmann', 1816.
146. Masschelein, 'A Homeless', and *The Unconcept*.
147. See also Warner, 53ff.
148. 'La Poupée', *Minotaure* 6 (1934-35), 30-1. Conley, *Automatic*, 84.
149. Benjamin Péret, 'Au Paradis des fantômes', *Minotaure* 3-4 (1933), 29-35. See also Foster, 'Exquisite', 159-61; Pick, 105.
150. Kuenzli, 'Surrealism'; Lehmann, 89.
151. Freud, *The Uncanny*.
152. It is clear he aimed at situating this book alongside Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Breton, *Communicating*, 149-55.
153. Gille, 180.
154. Letter from Freud to Breton, 6 December 1937, Breton, *Trajectoire*, 127. Freud wrote that 'a collection of dreams without association does not tell me anything [...]' and 'it is hard for me to imagine what it can mean to anyone else'. Breton, *O.C.*, I: 1192.
155. Rosolato, 161.
156. Faivre, *Access*, 10-15; idem, *Theosophy*, xxi-xxiv. His very influential and still relevant definition is not without its problems, particularly if one wants to apply it to post-Enlightenment currents. Hanegraaff, 'Esotericism'; Bogdan, Ch. 1.
157. Bodgan & Djurdjevic, 2.
158. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 14 (emphasis original).
159. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 122.
160. Reproduced in Breton, *Mad*, 114.
161. Carrouges, *Basic*, 24-9.
162. Browder, 69.
163. Breton, *Conversations*, 118. Hegel's is called the 'point extrême'. Chénieux-Gendron, 'Surrealists', 445.
164. Eburne, 'Surrealism Noir', 94.
165. Beaujour, 'De l'océan', 363.

4.   Magic in exile

1.   Kuni, *Brauner*, 14-8; Mitchell, 263, 269-70.
2.   I am condensing developments discussed at length by Kuni, *Brauner*, 25-70; and Mitchell, 270-92.
3.   Seligman; alternatively titled *The History of Magic*. See also Sawin, 'Magus'. The foreword to the French edition (1948) was written by Robert Amadou; this may have been one of the things eventually leading to his contact with the Parisian surrealists.
4.   Arcq, 'Remedios', 53; Moore; Needleman, 912-3.
5.   See my discussion of the reception of this dimension in modern art and the relevant sources in Bauduin, 'Science'.
6.   Parkinson, 'Surrealism', 565-72; and idem, *Surrealism*, 149-68. N-dimensionality and non-Euclidian geometry remained primarily an interest of Matta and Paalen rather than the group as a whole. Duchamp had been exploring it since his early career. Bauduin, 'Science', 26-34; Henderson, *Duchamp*.
7.   Parkinson, 'Surrealism', 572-6.
8.   Colville, *Scandaleusement*, 290-301, 48-59, 218-27, 178-185, 100-111, 60-73. Rosemont, *Surrealist*, 52-63, 74-7, 103-6, 225-7. The issue of women surrealists is a complex one, and the selection of artists I have mentioned here is arguably arbitrary.
9.   Chadwick, *Surrealist*, 182.
10.   Such an argument raises the question of why so many male artists *also* joined in the 1930s.
11.   Breton, *Anthology*, 335.
12.   Breton, *Anthology*, 341.
13.   Hubert, *Magnifying*, 113-39, 255-75.
14.   Hille, 99, 100.
15.   Hille, 99-102. Ferentinou, 'Surrealism'. I have not mentioned British surrealist Ithell Colquhoun here, as she was not intimately connected to the Parisian group. However, of all the women surrealists, her knowledge of and engagement with occultism was probably the most extensive, as she was a practising occultist – in that regard surpassing male surrealists too. Ferentinou, 'Ithell'; idem, *Women*.
16.   Arcq, 'Remedios', 53; idem, 'Mirrors', 100, 113-14. Carrington, *The Hearing*.
17.   Aberth; Arcq, 'Mirrors'; Ferentinou, *Women*.
18.   Colville, 'Beauty', 160.
19.   Arcq, 'Mirrors', 98-105; Colville, 'Beauty', 164-7; Ferentinou, *Women*, 143-70.
20.   Hille, 120.
21.   There is a parallel here with Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) who was hailed as a 'self-invented' surrealist by Breton, but who always considered herself a *realist*; she did not paint dreams or fantasies, but rather her (personal) reality. Herrera.
22.   Arcq, 'Remedios', 52.

23. Rosenblatt, 139.
24. Breton, *Anthology*, xii.
25. Bedouin, Jean-Louis. 'L'Affaire Gurdjieff – Force et faiblesse de la volonté de puissance'. Idem. Interview with Jacques Bergier, 'Qui fut M. Gurdjieff'. *Médium* 3 (May 1954). Cf. Duits, 116.
26. Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 145-50.
27. Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 149.
28. Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 485-96.
29. Clébert, *Dictionnaire*, 34; Constantini.
30. The cards were published in *VVV* 2-3 (1943), 38, 58, 81, 88. The pages are reproduced in Constantini, 94-7.
31. Lévi, *Dogme*, I & II; he first introduces the tarot as secret repositories of occult wisdom dating to ancient Egypt in the introduction to part I.
32. Faivre, 'Etteilla'; Laurant, 'Lévi'; idem, 'Papus'; idem, 'Tarot'; Mercier-Faivre.
33. Béhar, 'D'un', 8.
34. Givry, *Witchcraft*, Book II, Ch. VII (280-98, including many illustrations).
35. André Derain, frontispiece and 'Critérium des As', *Minotaure* 3-4 (1933): cover & 8.
36. Mesch, 66; or www.johncoulthart.com/feuilleton/2006/03/17/ surrealist-cartomancy/ (accessed 5-2-2014). Such a comment merely indicates limited knowledge of occultism generally and of occult games in particular, as there is nothing specifically occult about these suits.
37. Constantini, 98-9.
38. Breton, *Free*, 48-50.
39. Béhar, 'D'un, 8.
40. Polizzotti citing Jean-Louis Bédouin, 'Introduction: Phrases', 31.
41. Breton, *Free*, 49.
42. Sawin (*Surrealism*, 130) states that Breton learned in Marseille that the original four suits of clubs, spades, etc., are derived from military signs, which might have contributed to the decision to change the four surrealist suit-signs.
43. Hanegraaff & Versluis, 'Novalis', 870.
44. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 39 note. Breton cites Baudelaire directly here, who had translated a story by Edgar Allen Poe for which the particular quote from Novalis, originally from his *Fragments*, served as an epigraph. It is probable that Breton did not actually read Novalis at that time. Rainey, *Modernism*, 736n65; Bonnet, 'Notes et variantes', Breton, *O.C.*, I: 1361.
45. Béguin, 'Les romantiques'; idem, *L'Ame*.
46. Breton & Éluard, *Dictionnaire*, 18
47. Béguin, 'L'Androgyne'.
48. Béguin, 'Les Romantiques'; idem, *L'Ame*. In both, Béguin discusses the relations between research into the unconscious, analysis of dreams, mesmerism and certain occult movements; obviously all topics cutting close to the

heart of Surrealism. The relation between Béguin's works and Surrealism is discussed by Mitchell, 66-75; also Lamy, *Hermétisme*, 99ff.

49. See also Polizzotti, 'Introduction: Laughter', ix.

50. Bays, *The Orphic*, 12.

51. As has been argued by Bays, *The Orphic*; and Wilkinson.

52. For instance, even though Breton already refers to Swedenborg and his *Memorabilia* in the first *Manifesto* (Breton, *Manifestoes*, 25), this is done in direct connection with de Nerval. In a letter from that time, Breton writes that he had been searching for Swedenborg's 'Mémorables' because the book was mentioned by de Nerval, but had been unable to find it and had made do with some citations elsewhere. Bonnet, 'Notes et variantes', Breton, *O.C.*, I: 328. Moreover, Paul Valéry had become interested in Swedenborg after reading a biography by Martin Lamm (1915), which may well have been another incentive for Breton (who really admired Valéry at that time) to mention Swedenborg's name in the first *Manifesto*.

53. E.g. Balakian, *Breton*; Browder.

54. For instance, in the *Anthology of Black Humour*, in the essay on Fourier, Breton cites Baudelaire citing and describing Swedenborg; Breton, *Anthology*, 41. Note further that this essay was added to the *Anthology* in the 1950 edition, and postdates Breton's discovery of Viatte.

55. Bays, *The Orphic*, 12-3, 31-125; and Mitchell, 66-74.

56. Mitchell, 61.

57. Kuni, *Brauner*, 49, 68-9.

58. Novalis, *Notes*, 181 (aphorism 1075); see further Wood, 'Introduction', xxiv.

59. Novalis, *Notes*, 13 (aphorism 79).

60. Novalis, *Notes*, 8 (aphorism 50).

61. Kuni, *Brauner*, 55.

62. Sawin, *Surrealism*, 115, 308-12; idem, 'Magus'; Stokes; Warlick, *Max Ernst*, 171.

63. Seligmann, Kurt. 'Heritage of the Accursed'. *View* 5, 5 (Dec 1945); in Ford, *View*, 179-82.

64. Seligmann, Kurt. 'Magic Circles'. *View* 1, 11-12 (Feb-Mar 1942): 3.

65. Ochoa, 134-6. Some of the surrealists who were drifting away from the movement during the war did express an interest in Jung, such as Ford.

66. Ernst very probably knew (some of) Jung's early works, such as *Wandlungen und Symbolen der Libido* (1916), but there are few traces of any familiarity with Jung's later work. Legge, *Ernst*, 56-7.

67. Sawin, *Surrealism*, 157-9, 160-3, 183, 199.

68. *View* 1, 7-8 (1941); Breton, *Conversations*, 181-90. For a brief time, before moving to Marseille, Breton and his family had stayed in Mabille's house in Salon-de-Provence, the village where Nostradamus is buried, where Breton brooded on Nostradamus's *Centuries*. Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 484.

69. Breton, *Conversations*, 182.

70. Paris was liberated in August 1944; the war ended officially 7 May 1945.

71. Ades, *Dada*, 374-83, 386-7.

72. In New York, Breton and Lévi-Strauss, accompanied by Ernst, would often visit shops specialising in tribal art. Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 496, 500, 502, 505; Wilcken, 122-5, 128-31. After their return to France, Breton and Ernst remained in occasional contact with Lévi-Strauss, but it is unclear to what extent his thought influenced that of Breton, if at all. Lévi-Strauss would publish his most important works after his return to France in 1948.

73. Mitchell, Ch. 1, 4 and 5.

74. For Brauner, see also Kuni, *Brauner*, which focuses explicitly on the magically formative period 1940-1947. For Ernst, see further Warlick, *Max Ernst*; idem, 'Magic'. I have not been able to trace what the role of Novalis may have been in Ernst's self-perception as a magician.

75. 'Some Data on the Youth of M.E. As Told by Himself', *View* 2, 1 (April 1942), 29-30, reproduced in Ernst, *Beyond*, 26-9. Albert the Great (Albertus Magnus, 1193/1206-1280), well known theologian, philosopher, reputed magician and alchemist, is also connected with Cologne, and it seems clear that that city functioned as a defining characteristic here.

76. Ernst, *Beyond*, 29.

77. Brauner, Victor, 'Du fantastique en peinture', *VVV* 2-3 (March 1943): 74-5. Mitchell, 204.

78. Tyler, 3.

79. Tyler, 3.

80. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 286. Originally *VVV* 1 (June 1942).

81. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 287-8. Adams, *After*, 34ff.; Demos, 'Duchamp's', 108, 198.

82. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 293-4.

83. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 293-4.

84. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 293. Matta may have suggested the idea of these beings to Breton. Adams, *After*, 75-6, 199; also Hubert & Pierre, 'Notice', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1136-7.

85. Péret, Benjamin, 'Magic, the Flesh and Blood of Poetry', *View* 3, 2 (1943): 44, 46, 63, 66. I have used the pamphlet 'La Parole est à Péret', the version of the text the surrealists endorsed; Péret, *Les déshonneur,* 23-67. Péret's *Anthologie* was published in 1960.

86. Péret, *Les déshonneur*, 21-2. Mahon, *Surrealism*, 84.

87. Péret, *Les déshonneur*, 58-9.

88. Rosenberg, H. 'Breton – a dialogue'. In: *View* 2: 2 (May 1942), cited in Demos, 'Duchamp's', 102.

89. Breton: 'deep affinities' exist between 'so-called primitive thought' and 'Surrealist thought'; Interview for the *Haiti Journal* (1945), Breton, *Conversations*, 193.

90. Ernst in a letter to Seligmann, cited by the latter in 'Magic and the Arts', *View* 7, 1 (1946): 15-17.

91. Péret, *Les déshonneur*, 51.

92. Breton, *Arcanum*, 147.

93. Breton, 'The Automatic', 32.

94.   Breton, *Free*, 72.
95.   Breton, *Arcanum*. Beaujour, 'Breton'; Eigeldinger, *Lumières*; Krell; Lamy, *Breton*.
96.   Etiemble.
97.   Löwy, 17.
98.   Rosemont, *Surrealist*, 248.
99.   Hille, 35. See also Beaujour, 'Breton', 221. The different categories of surreal-ist Woman have been listed by Gauthier, 71-194.
100.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 80.
101.   See Ferentinou, 'Surrealism'; idem, *Women*, Ch. 8 and 9.
102.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 80.
103.   '[M]ay we be ruled by the idea of the *salvation of the earth by woman*', Bre-ton, *Arcanum*, 69 (emphasis original). See also Browder, 138-41.
104.   The tale of Melusina is much older than 1392, but Arras was the first to write it down. For a brief discussion of the tale and its origins see Krell, 375-80.
105.   Beaujour, 'Breton', 225.
106.   Frangos.
107.   See Krell, 378-80.
108.   Krell, 376, 382-3.
109.   See also Conley's interpretation in *Automatic*, 123-4, 129-30.
110.   Breton, *Nadja*, 111.
111.   Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 225-30.
112.   See also Goldammer's extensive analysis of Melusina and of the undine in Paracelsian sources, and their reception in Romanticism. Goldammer, 89-130.
113.   Breton, 'Fata Morgana', in Idem, *Poems*, 130-55; see note 1 on 251. Clearly, the phrase's secondary meaning, the weather-related illusion, is also implied. The parallels between Melusina and Morgan le Fay are many, as the last is also a character with magical powers, a sorceress even, originally from medieval legends (Arthurian in this case), who meddles in men's lives to either benefi-cial or detrimental effect. She too was reinvented in romantic literature and Pre-Raphaelite and symbolist painting. Although Morgan le Fay (or Morgana) is an English fairy, while Melusina is French, in her undine form she is con-nected to the Morgans, legendary sirens from Bretagne. Melusina's essential *Frenchness* – legend has it she is the ancestor of the French Lusignan family, and she symbolises France's heritage of troubadour literature – may have been a further reason she figures so prominently in *A17*, alongside the many references to French history and culture. Traveling through (Francophone) Quebec surely aggravated Breton's homesickness; Balakian, 'Introduction', 12.
114.   Beaujour, 'Breton', 219, 230.
115.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 112, 114.
116.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 118.
117.   See Eburne, 'Surrealism Noir'; Chénieux-Gendron, 'Lectures'. Gracq, 39-42.
118.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 90, 84.
119.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 89-90.

120.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 100-4.
121.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 90.
122.   Hubert, 'Notice', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1164. See also Browder, 139.
123.   Lepetit, 104.
124.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 60, 117, 118.
125.   Breton would cite Paracelsus only once, in *L'Art magique* of 1957 (28), but
       that citation in turn is taken from *La Magie* by J.A. Rony.
126.   Hubert, 'Notice', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1171.
127.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 131.
128.   Hubert, 'Notice', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1171.
129.   Viatte, *Hugo*, 239-43, spec. 242-3. Lévi, *Dogme*, II: 5-9. See Breton, *Arcanum*, 131.
130.   For instance Breton, *Manifestoes*, 98-100. Compare Browder, 50-1.
131.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 132.
132.   Novalis, *Notes*, 13 (aphorism 80), emphasis original.
133.   Laurant, 'Tarot', 1111.
134.   Hubert, 'Notice', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1175.
135.   Something that may have further prompted Breton's interest in the tarot,
       is that Lévi described the Spanish mystic Ramon Llull (ca. 1232/3-ca. 1316),
       whom the surrealists were also interest in, as a cryptic commentator on the
       tarot. Lévi, *Dogme et Rituel*, I: 76, 220, 355. Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*,
       30-2. Bernier, Herbert & Dumas, 'Notes et variantes', Breton, *O.C.*, IV: 1272;
       also idem, I: 633.
136.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 89-115.
137.   Hubert, 'Notice', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1171, and although he mentions no titles, the
       books in question doubtlessly are Court de Gébelin's *Le monde primitif*, Papus's
       Le Tarot des Bohémiens, *Le Tarot des imagiers du Moyen-Âge* by Wirth (Paris:
       Tchou, 1926), and Haven's *Le Tarot* (Lyon: Raclet, 1937). At a later date Breton's
       library included such books as Wirth's *Le Tarot* and *Tarot de Marseille* by Mar-
       teau (1949), besides books by other tarot authorities such as Falconnier, Max-
       well, and Rijnberk; Constantini, 104-5. For instance, Breton mentioned Gérard
       van Rijnberk's *Le Tarot* (Lyon: P. Dérain, 1947) in 1948, Breton, *Free*, 287n30.
138.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 130. Cf. Hammond, 132.
139.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 130. That letters of the Hebrew alphabet resemble the
       shape of the tongue in the mouth is a point first made centuries earlier,
       by alchemist and doctor Francis Mercury van Helmont (1614-1698) in *The
       Alphabet of Nature* (1667).
140.   Hopkins, 'Max Ernst', 242.
141.   Hille, 32.
142.   Givry, *Witchcraft*, frontispiece.
143.   Breton, *O.C.*, III: 127-42, spec. 138.
144.   Breton, *Arcanum*, 154-5 (emphasis original); cf. also 153.
145.   Compare Dumas, 'Notes', 128.
146.   Breton, *Arcanum 17*, 117.
147.   See also Hubert, 'Notice', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1172, who also uses the term 'rapport'.

148.   See also Breton, *Conversations*, 160.

149.   Viatte, *Hugo*, 65-77 (Fourier & Fourierism), 91-7 (Tristan & Lévi), 181-5 (Fabre d'Olivet).

150.   Breton, *Conversations*, 222; see also 207.

151.   Breton, *Conversations*, 207. Beaujour, 'André Breton', passim; Browder, 130.

152.   Breton, *Free*, 85.

153.   Breton, *Anthology*, 39-41; he refers to Viatte's *Victor Hugo* in a footnote.

5.   Arcanum 1947: Poetry, liberty, love

1.   Adams, *After*, 95-6.

2.   Durozoi, 461.

3.   Breton, *Free*, 83-4.

4.   Breton, *Free*, 84-5.

5.   Alexandrian, *Surrealist*, 190.

6.   Breton et al., *Le Surréalisme*.

7.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 205-78; 281-94.

8.   Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1367.

9.   Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1367-70; Rioux, 168-70; Alexandrian, *Surrealist*, 190-4.

10.   Breton, *Free*, 84.

11.   Mahon, 'Staging', 283; Rioux, 168-70. The Fool was not assigned a stair.

12.   Jean, 420. Perhaps this is a book Breton wished existed or would have liked to write himself.

13.   Rioux, 168-70.

14.   The third step: The Empress and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Rêveries d'une pro-méneur solitaire* (1776-78). Fifth: The Pope and Charles Baudelaire, *Les fleurs du mal* (1857). Sixth: The Lovers and Johan Friedrich Hölderlin, *Poèmes de la folie* (French edition 1929-30). Seventh: The Chariot and D.A.F. de Sade's *Justine* (1799). Tenth: The Wheel of Fortune and Franz Kafka, *Le process* (French ed. 1933). Eleventh: Fortitude and Comte de Lefebvre de Noëttes' (rather absurd) *L'Attelage et le cheval de selle à travers les ages. Contribution à l'histoire de l'esclavage* (1931). Twelfth: The Hanged Man and Jean-Pierre Brisset, *La science de Dieu ou la création de l'homme* (1900). Brisset (1837-1919) was a French outsider writer, (in)famous for his vast philosophical works detailing the descent of mankind from frogs, evinced in particular in the French language. Thirteenth: Death and Guillaume Apollinaire, *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* (1909). Fifteenth: The Devil and Alfred Jarry, *Ubu Roi* (1896). Sixteenth: The House of God (currently known as the Tower) and Goethe's *Faust*, in particular the second part (1832). Eighteenth: The Moon and Antoine Xavier Forneret's short story *La Lune donnait et la rosée tombait* (1836). Forneret (1809-1884) was a forgotten romantic poet with eccentric gothic lifestyle, unearthed by Breton. Twenty-first: the World and Lautréamont, *Oeuvres Complêtes* (1869). Rioux, 168-9; Jean, 420-1; see also LaCoss, 'Attacks', 275.

15. Mahon, *Surrealism*, 118.

16. See also Lennep, 'L'art', 304.

17. Bonnet & Hubert, 'Notice', Breton, *O.C.*, II: 1178.

18. Breton, *Selections*, 106-10, 109-10 specifically. The radicals are early feminist Angélique Arnaud (1799–1884) and revolutionary journalist and politician (Jean-Paul) Marat (1743-1793). Polizzotti, 'Introduction: Phrases', 28; Bonnet & Hubert, 'Notes', Breton, *O.C.*, II: 1783-5.

19. Breton, 'The Legendary', 34.

20. Breton, *Selections*, 109-10. Just like Novalis, Hegel was deeply interested in Eckhart, whose works he studied together with the philosopher and Christian theosopher Franz von Baader (1765-1841). Hegel mentioned Eckhart and some of his views in several of his works, which is obviously whence Breton derived Eckhart. Bonnet & Hubert, 'Notes', Breton, *O.C.*, II: 1784. Hegel was furthermore familiar with (and referred to) Paracelsus, Bruno, and Boehme, among others; see Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*. Breton held Hegel in high regard, and I find it probable that the latter's references to hermeticism must have contributed to Breton's growing interest in it; unfortunately, no studies of that particular route of transmission of ideas are available.

21. Bonnet & Hubert, 'Notice', Breton, *O.C.*, II: 1780.

22. Breton, *Selections*, 106; Breton, *O.C.*, II: 1179.

23. Hubert, 'Notice', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1171.

24. Breton, *Conversations*, 218.

25. Hopkins, 'Hermetic', 723; idem, 'Ernst', 237-40; idem, *Duchamp*.

26. Breton, *Free*, 107.

27. Hubert, 'Notes', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1377.

28. Breton's last mention of Swedenborg is in *L'Art magique* (1957), 41, embedded in a discussion of Baudelaire and his *Correspondances*.

29. Combe,'Sources'; and *Bosch*. Lemaître.

30. Fraenger, Wilhelm. *Le Royaume millénaire de Jérôme Bosch*, 1947, originally *Hieronymus Bosch: Das Tausendjährige reich: Grundzüge einer Auslegung*. Coburg: Winkler, 1947.

31. Ambelain. Breton, *Free*, 86. Dumas, 'Notes' in Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1371; also Mitchell, 343.

32. Kiesler's 1947 manifesto on 'Magic Architecture' (in *Magical*) includes a first page with statements applicable to this particular room.

33. See also the comments of Hans Arp reproduced in Mitchell, 353.

34. Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1369; Jean, 421; Mahon, *Surrealism*, 119.

35. Péret, 'Le sel répandu', in Jean, 424-5. This essay offers primarily a long list of new superstitions to replace old, testifying to the specifically *surrealist* reordering of the superstitious mind that should take place.

36. Mahon, 'Staging', 283; idem, *Surrealism*, 119, 124; Rioux, 169.

37. Duchampian in particular. Duchamp's designs for the 1938 exhibition as well as the 1942 show were also very subversive, undermining Surrealism itself too as has been argued by Demos, 'Duchamp's'.

38.   Breton, *Free*, 96.

39.   Letter to the author, Lennep, *Alchemie*, 420. In the same letter, Duchamp
      disavows all interest in 'the occult sciences', even – which may be a reaction
      against the many essays Arturo Schwarz had dedicated since the 1950s to
      interpreting almost everything Duchamp had ever done and did as occult.

40.   Mitchell, 348.

41.   However, there is no definite interpretation of the crystalline forms, see
      Adams, *After*, 201-4 for a discussion that also touches upon Breton's associa-
      tions with crystal; Faucherau, 'La magie', 310-2.

42.   Rioux, 170.

43.   Mitchell, 346. Lévi provided Apollonius's *Nuctemeron* hours in a supple-
      ment to his original French edition; *Dogme et Rituel*, II: 385-410. Breton did
      not even comment on any of the genies, elements or hieroglyphs that Lévi
      ascribed to the hours as well.

44.   We can be certain that it *was* planned (Rioux, 170).

45.   The division of altars was as follows: 1) the Fashionable Tiger, a character cre-
      ated by Jean Ferry (1906-1974), writer and exegete of Roussel's works. Breton
      added Ferry's 'Le tigre mondain' to a new edition of his *Anthology of Black
      Humour* in 1950. 2) the hair of Falmer (Lautréamont, *Les Chants*). 3) the He-
      lioderma suspecta. 4) Jeanne Sabranas (heroine from Jarry, *La Dragonne*). 5)
      Léonie Aubois d'Ashby (Rimbaud, 'Dévotion'). 6) the Secretary Bird or Bird
      Superior (Loplop/Ernst). 7) the Juggler of Gravity (Duchamp). 8) the con-
      dylure. 9) the *Wolf-Table* by Brauner. 10) Raymond Roussel (1877-1933); more
      about him below. 11) the Great Transparent Ones. 12) The Window of Magna
      sed Apta (du Maurier, *Peter Ibesson*). Rioux, 169-70. Breton had wanted to in-
      clude Giacometti's *Invisible Object* too, but could not get the object on loan.

46.   There exists a little known and undated notebook by Breton (probably 1945),
      in which he outlined a Fourier-esque bizarre utopian scheme where the Gila
      monster and star-nosed mole played important roles; LaCoss, 'Attacks', 278-9.

47.   See also Kuni, *Brauner*.

48.   Kuni, *Brauner*, 158-66.

49.   Although it seems probable that she stands between earth and sky, in paral-
      lel to the Magician's positioning between water and fire, I hesitate to identify
      the odd box with earth and am not certain the headdress' veils signify air or
      sky (apart from the papal crown, which originally indicates spiritual power).

50.   Lamy, *Breton*, 13, 20.

51.   On the tarot staircase Death was identified as Apollinaire, Breton's mentor
      and first hero, whom he strived hard to equal; could we interpret this as his
      (Freudian) usurpation of his hero-father's position?

52.   Kuni, *Brauner*, 163-4.

53.   Mahon, *Surrealism*, 127-9.

54.   Mitchell, 348-50.

55. Mitchell, 350. Baskine is a very particular and somewhat understudied art-
     ist, who explored many occult themes in his works. He partook of Surreal-
     ism briefly and sparingly.
56. Breton in Jean, 421.
57. Jean, 421.
58. Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1368-9.
59. Adams, *After*, 206, 213-4.
60. Mitchell, 355.
61. This did not mean that it was not commercially successful, on the contrary:
     around 40,000 people went to see it. Durozoi, 472.
62. As summarised by Jacques Fouquet in 'Peinture surréaliste', 99. Further
     critical reactions are discussed in Durozoi, 472; Mahon, *Surrealism*, 139-40.
63. Mahon, *Surrealism*, 140.
64. Bell, 'Introduction', 1.
65. Adorno, 175.
66. Mahon, *Surrealism*, 139, paraphrasing Bourniquel, 775-6.
67. Breton, *Free*, 85; Frazer, *The Golden*, 45.
68. Mahon, *Surrealism*, 140.
69. Kuni, *Brauner*, 164.
70. Mitchel, 340.
71. Breton, *Free*, 96, see also 87.
72. Breton, *Free*, 96.
73. Breton, *Free*, 96.
74. There is one exception to this rule: Fulcanelli, a twentieth-century alchemi-
     cal author whom I will discuss below.
75. Breton, *Free*, 95.
76. Breton, *Free*, 96 (emphasis original). This essay, 'Surrealist Comet', was
     written alongside 'Before the Curtain' and originally also intended for the
     exhibition's catalogue; Breton, *Free*, 88-97.
77. This example illustrates why I prefer to speak of occultism, as both the oc-
     cult tarot and Lévi belong to nineteenth-century developments of *occult-
     ism*. In fact, allow me here a brief digression to argue why I would call this
     occultism too. Both *The Chemical Wedding* and the works of Swedenborg fall
     squarely within the current of esotericism. However, their reception history
     does not necessarily fall within the confines of esotericism; at one point
     these books cross from esotericism to occultism. I hesitate to delineate it or
     pinpoint it exactly in one year or another, which would be a mere con-
     struction (in a way, just as these categories themselves are). This does not
     preclude a fundamental difference in outlook that I think distinguishes eso-
     tericism from occultism. Indeed, one of the interesting aspects of reception
     history is that the thing (idea, current, person) being received moves easily
     between periods, currents and mentalities even while retaining its urgency
     and relevancy. That which is received is always relevant in the now, meaning
     a redefinition or even reiteration with respect to its earlier incarnations that

guarantees a structural integrity across time, space and mind. After all, the one performing the appropriation constructs it as having certain characteristic that are relevant in this moment. In other words, and to come back to the topic, while seventeenth-century Swedenborgian concepts may have been Early Modern when Swedenborg wrote them down, they were appropriated by late romantics such as Baudelaire for distinctly nineteenth-century, that is to say Modern, reasons. More specifically, within the context of the occult revival, with a very specific outlook on the occult that has come to be called occultism. Therefore, the Swedenborgianism of Baudelaire or Balzac falls, as far as I am concerned, within the broader perspective of occultism.

78. Mahon, *Surrealism*.
79. Breton, *Conversations*, 249-55.
80. Breton, *Conversations*, 251-2 (paraphrased). Also mentioned are Magritte, Toyen, and Hérold. Kandinsky is hardly a surrealist, but increasingly in the 1940s and 50s Breton appropriated him for Surrealism.
81. Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 565.
82. For a comprehensive overview of sexual magic, see Hakl; Naglowska is discussed in 465-74. Also, Deveney, *Randolph*.
83. Randolp, P.B. 'Les conditions spéciale de préparation et de travail pour les miroirs magiques spéciaux à couches magnétique vivantes'. *Néon* 2 (1948): 4.
84. Alexandrian, 'Maria'.
85. *Lexique*, 61.
86. Deveney, *Randolph*, 370n20.
87. In his foreword to Deveney's book on Randolph, Franklin Rosemont argues, rather unconvincingly in my opinion, that Randolph should be considered a surrealist *avant-la-lettre*; and furthermore that the surrealists must have known of Randolph in the early 1930s. That is, although not impossible, certainly unproven, and has given risen to even more unfounded rumours that Breton, Bataille, Ray and others attended sessions of sexual magic hosted by Naglowska's magical order in the 1930s. At that time, the Parisian press reported the scandals around Naglowska's order, and while it is certainly conceivable that some surrealists would have heard of it, it is questionable whether they would participate. I place more stock in Rosemont's point that the surrealists learned of sexual magical groups (in Paris) – if at all – by way of books such as Pierre Geyraud's *Parmi les sects et les rites* (1936). Rosemont, 'Foreword', xvii-xix.
88. Breton & Legrand, *L'Art*; Breton, *O.C.*, IV: 47-289. On a side note, there is no evidence that Breton or Legrand were familiar with *Art Magic* (1898), allegedly by spiritualist Emma Hardinge Britten.
89. Breton & Legrand, *L'Art*; 43: 'Myths seem more or less done for, by now […]'. I suspect that this was, to a large extent, due to a mixture of pressure from other surrealists and external political pressures, as it was clear on all sides that an adherence to myth was just not tenable.

90.   See also Bang Larsen's comments on the 'affective turn' in occult art, 'The Surface', 42-3.
91.   Breton & Legrand, *L'Art*, passim.
92.   Breton, 'L'Art magique', in *Perspective*, 27, 61.
93.   See also Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 595.
94.   Breton & Legrand, *L'Art*, 261.
95.   'Enqûete', Breton, *O.C.*, IV: 109-64.
96.   Breton & Legrand, *L'Art*, 34; also 35, 36, 37, 70.
97.   Breton & Legrand, *L'Art*, 34-5.
98.   Breton & Legrand, *L'Art*, 37; Lévi, *Dogme*, I: 139.
99.   Breton, *O.C.*, IV: 873-9.
100. Amadou & Kanters, 10.
101. Breton, *O.C.*, IV: 877.
102. Breton, *Free*, 49.
103. Breton & Legrand, *L'Art*, 42.
104. Breton, *Free*, 105. These are the very lines that Amadou and Kanters cite (10) as an example of Breton's insight as an 'occult poet'.
105. Breton, *Free*, 105.
106. *Médium* 2 and 3 (February & May 1954), in Breton, *O.C.*, IV: 883-907.
107. For example, a sword in terms of a necktie: 'I am a gleaming necktie knotted around the hand so as to run across those throats at which I'm placed' (Toyen); Brotchie & Gooding, 31.
108. Brotchie & Gooding, 88-9.
109. Breton & Legrand, *L'Art*, 41-2.
110. Breton, *Free*, 175-95, spec. 188-95, 113n3, 116. Also Dumas, 'Notes', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1394. Fulcanelli, *Les demeures*.
111. Breton, *Free*, 188. See further Dumas, 'Notes', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1397n3.
112. Breton, *Free*, 188. Dumas, 'Notes', Breton, *O.C.*, III: 1394.
113. Breton, *Free*, 287n15.
114. Vadé, 222ff.
115. Khaitzine, 17-8.
116. Roussel was the only real person allotted an altar in the 1947 exhibition, evidence of the very high esteem he was held in. Playing upon phonetic incidents and homonymic jokes, Roussel wrote numerous novellas and plays, most of them quite absurd, fantastic and endlessly digressive, as well as a complete break with literary tradition. Audiences were baffled, critics irritated, the surrealists delighted. During, *Modern*, 195, 196ff, 202-3; Tresch, 309-10, 315. Béhar, *Les enfants*, Ch.3; idem, *Mélusine V*. Inevitable is Foucault's *Death and the Labyrinth* (London: Continuum, 2004).
117. Golan, 'Matta', 42.
118. Fulcanelli argues that the gothic cathedral is work of 'argot': a particular language interpreted as a 'cabalistic' language of alchemy. Fulcanelli bolsters this argument with a discussion about the Argonauts, Jason's com-

panions on the quest for the Golden Fleece, thought to be an alchemical legend. Fulcanelli, *Master*, 42; also Khaitzine, 28.

119.   Canseliet, 'Formes et reflets', in Breton and Legrand, *L'Art*, 116.

120.   D'Ygé's anthology of 'hermetic poetry', *Anthologie*, consists of excerpts of alchemical manuscripts by (pseudo-) Flamel, Maier and Valentin Basile presented as poetry. In the preface, Canseliet positions them as 'poètes maudits', an epithet traditionally bestowed upon such poets as Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud and Lautréamont; d'Ygé, *Anthologie*, 12. Canseliet, meanwhile, was publishing his discovery of alchemical metaphors in the books of Rabelais and Swift, and his reading of Rimbaud's *Voyelles* as an alchemical text. Canseliet, 'Introduction' to *Alchimie*. Caron, 'Canseliet', 239. Vadé, *L'enchantement*, 460.

121.   Breton, *Free*, 86.

122.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 297-99.

123.   See also Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 565; Bays, 'Rimbaud', 49.

124.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 297.

125.   Breton, *Free*, 86. Similarly, in 1945 Breton mentioned the 'esoteric tradition' in relation to Duchamp and, as examples of it, refers to Paolo Uccello and Georges Seurat – hardly occultists but painters. Breton, 'The Point', 122.

126.   Breton, *Conversations*, 229.

127.   Carrouges, *Basic*, 74.

128.   Breton, *Manifestoes*, 301-2 (emphasis original).

Conclusion

1.   Breton, *Conversations*, 227-30.

2.   Breton, *Conversations*, 228.

3.   Breton, *Conversations*, 229.

4.   Breton, *Conversations*, 229.

5.   Breton, *Conversations*, 229.

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