

French Surrealism and Germany

**Intersecting visions, affinities and critical
dialogue**

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Introduction

Georges BLOESS and Nicole GABRIEL

A survey of the ties of the French Surrealists to German artists, poets and writers and, more widely, to Germanophone culture, seemed opportune, indeed urgent. Not that research has bypassed such studies; it is simply that they have focussed on specific works or itineraries, hence provide only a limited view of what is really a vast field.

While this issue of *Mélusine* does adopt this wider perspective, it does not claim to be innovatory: our objective was simply to revive the widely-shared interest of the early 1970s in what the Germanophone world brought to the surrealist movement. The historical context of the day clearly encouraged this interest: Breton's recent death, followed shortly afterwards by a movement questioning the very basis of our society, indeed of our civilisation; a uniquely widespread movement on both banks of the Rhine which enthused a generation of students, thus encouraging dialogue and holding out the promise of closer, perhaps permanent, ties between our two countries.

Within the university sector in France the movement gave rise – among others – to the launch of the periodical *Littérature*, the title of which was a clear evocation of its links to André Breton. The papers published throughout the 1970s frequently evoked the Germanophone poetic, literary and philosophical roots of Surrealism. How did that interest and enthusiasm wane and, slowly, disappear later? The question remains. Suffice it to say that this evolution coincided with the slow decline in German teaching in France and, consequently, in Germanophone studies, currently on the verge of extinction.

Clearly, in a context such as this, our undertaking is something of a challenge and, for that very reason, we wish to express our sincere thanks to the colleagues who agreed to take part. Their positions reflect our initial objective: we had no desire to envisage Surrealism as 'influenced' by German culture. Even though German Romanticism was a source, indeed an essential reference, we envisaged the approach as one of reciprocity, exchange, an ongoing critical and fruitful dialogue. It is the approach adopted by our contributors. If they form an ensemble it is firmly within a logic dear to the Romantics, that of the fragment: the interplay is thus between articles offering a synthesis and articles focusing on specific factors and analyses, at times existential. The ensemble thus produced is dialogic and collaborative.

Surrealism, defined by Breton in the first *Manifeste* as 'automatisme psychique' or 'dictée de la pensée en l'absence de tout contrôle de la raison', replaced Dada, an anti-art movement out of which it developed, and was thus the successor of 'l'esprit moderne'. This is a somewhat nebulous concept and in marked contrast to Romanticism in general and German Romanticism in particular, with the solid corpus of works in poetry, music and painting that it can be said to continue and renew.

It would be otiose to raise here the question of the links between Surrealism and psychoanalysis ; instead it is Breton's in-depth knowledge of German literature that has to be highlighted. This is central to the opening contribution by Georges Bloess, which can be taken as an introduction to the overall themes developed elsewhere in the book. Marie-Claire Hock-Demarle shows that Surrealism absorbed or partly integrated Romanticism, and it is noteworthy that, beyond the Rhine, young researchers are currently investigating Surrealism's Romantic sources, as Silke Schauder demonstrates. One of the key texts, alongside the *Champs Magnétiques*, is *Nadja*, reread contrapuntally here by Rita Bischof who asks the question : who was the real Léona Delcourt. As for Mickaël Mesierz, he gives us the opportunity to rediscover the normally neglected question of the impact of German literature on Julien Gracq.

Yvan Goll, founder of the journal *Surréalisme* – who, unsurprisingly, fell out with Breton – continued to use Apollinaire's term until at least 1926, the year he invited Valeska Gert to the Comédie des Champs Élysées. His use of the term 'Surrealism' angered the group, who sabotaged the performance. The article by Andreas Kramer focusses on this largely forgotten figure. Responding to the significance of dream and magic in the work of Paul Klee, who is normally linked to the Bauhaus, Georges Bloess brings within the ambit of Surrealism one of Germany's greatest twentieth-century painters. Nicole Gabriel analyses the trajectory of a German artist appreciated and welcomed by the group after the war. She shows the beginnings at Sainte Anne of a museum of *art brut* and the importance of an artistic movement relatively unknown in Berlin as it emerged from the war: 'Die Badewanne'. Nicolas Villodre revisits the Surrealists' interest in cinema, and the cine-novel in particular, including their fascination for Expressionist films like *Caligari* and *Nosferatu*. Hans (or Jean) Arp, from his Dada years one of the most innovatory painters and sculptors of the period, was also Surrealist, or surrealist in spirit, while nourished by popular German folktales and poetry, as Agathe Mareuge demonstrates. Klaus Kiefer undertakes a synthesis of the aesthetic ideas and ethnographic perspective of the art historian Carl Einstein, admirer of the 'sculpture nègre' that influenced Cubists and Dadaists. Catherine Dufour highlights the impact of Herbert Marcuse, author of *Eros and Civilization*, *One-Dimensional Man*, and *An Essay on Liberation*. He had a major impact not merely in the USA but across Europe, on an entire intellectual generation. Contrasting with the

mechanisms of global oppression and the pessimism of Adorno, his colleague at the Frankfurt School of Sociology (which emigrated to the USA), Marcuse put his trust in the liberating energy of artistic creation and, in particular, the energy at work within Surrealism. His message was tantamount to a rallying cry on the eve of the uprisings of 1968, and thus confirmed the founding alliance between Surrealism and revolution.

By way of conclusion, we would hope that this undertaking will be continued: there is still a great deal of work to do ! In recognizing the centrality of photography or of collage; in revisiting the key part Walter Benjamin played in spreading Surrealism – and his indebtedness to it, as manifest above all in *Paris, Capital of the 19th Century*. But equally, in assessing the importance of Surrealism for Germanophone literature and poetry of the 20th century, in the likes of Ingeborg Bachmann, Paul Celan, Peter Weiss, and in our contemporaries. Our overarching objective would thus be within reach: because we remain convinced that, far from belonging to the past, a moment in a tale already told, Surrealism continues to thrive through its mutations and metamorphoses.

Paris, Jan. 2020

German Romantic Sources of Surrealism

Georges BLOESS

The novel idea of looking into Surrealism's roots in German Romanticism was put to me by Henri Béhar. This was quite a challenge, given the number of things that would confront the explorer. To name a few : a vast field, stretching over nearly a century and as far as Wagnerian opera, yet one that has already been frequently explored, not least in Albert Béguin's landmark study of some eighty years ago, *L'Ame romantique et le rêve*.¹ What could one add to this still-pertinent work ? Wasn't this the last word on the matter ?

Furthermore, and more significantly : the paradox of a possible tie between German Romanticism and Surrealism ! The Surrealists' objective was to contribute – uncompromisingly - to political and social revolution, to pursue wherever possible the liberation struggle of October 1917 ! German Romanticism, on the contrary, seems deeply, unremittingly conservative; it was even the begetter, the inventor of the conservative revolution which, for many decades, plunged post-1815 Europe into terror. André Breton was far too schooled in history to be unaware of such facts, and indeed never sought to elude them. 'Ultra-reactionary' was the term he applied to Novalis, the mastermind behind Romanticism, in his 1933 introduction to Achim von Arnim's *Contes bizarres*.²

GERMAN ROMANTICISM and SURREALISM, SEEMINGLY WORLDS APART

And yet these comments are always enthusiastic, evidence of a real fascination with a period that André Breton repeatedly refers to as 'magical'. In short, its irrationality is what guarantees its attractiveness. And therein lies the problem.

Traces of German Romanticism are frequent, indeed incalculable, not just in Breton's texts but across the entire Surrealist movement. To produce an inventory would be both pointless and fastidious. The better solution would be to plunge into the centre of this conflictual, passionate relationship, and to seek to unwrap the contradiction holding Breton prisoner. Not least because, at the same time, his key

¹ Albert Béguin, *L'Ame romantique et le rêve* [1937], Paris, José Corti 1991.

² *Point du Jour*, Paris 1970, p. 115 sq.

intuition was radically new : that the irrationality at the heart of Romanticism was a source of creative renewal ! But giving rise to what exactly ?

Primarily, to individual potential. Breton evoked or implied this on numerous occasions : German Romanticism gave birth to the individual, to their radical singularity. Simultaneously, however, such singularity gave birth to a plurality of singularities via the intense personal relationships it engendered ; giving rise to friendships as yet unknown in cultural history, outside of all logic. They spread and generate quasi-amorous constellations in which young women – Bettina von Arnim, Caroline von Günderode – take pride of place.

Individuals like these demonstrate a female power that Breton admired, that was already part of his makeup, and that he celebrated in several pages of his Introduction.

One can guess what might have struck the founder of Surrealism, what he deemed a break in German Romanticism : he perceived there a humankind linked, transported, by magical occurrences that constitute sources of creativity. Hence their resonance in the Surrealists' community. Hence, similarly, the echo of German Romanticism in the volcanic encounter between Breton and Nadja.

My hypothesis is as follows : German Romanticism shines an in-depth light on Surrealism, something close to an X-ray, as we discover in the following lines from Breton's *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* II, written in 1941³ : 'La lumière fervente qui baigne Henri d'Offerdingen ou Aurelia...'. Consequently, we shall explore not merely a fortuitous link between leitmotifs but a dynamic, a spirit shared by these two movements; a shared path that will lead from the light of Reason to the night of Sur-rationality and, from there, to a light of a totally different kind that opens onto a higher form of knowledge, regenerating humanity in the universal practice of poetry.

Let us examine that hypothesis through the seminal Romantic text *Heinrich von Offerdingen* and a selection of works by Caspar David Friedrich, literally visual interpretations of the novel by Novalis, the painter's contemporary.

I HEINRICH VON OFFERDINGEN, TRAVEL NOVEL

The trajectory of Novalis' travel novel, set within a typically German tradition, leads the reader from daylight to sunset, from night into brightness. It resorts to a favourite motif of the 'apprenticeship novel'. A proper education is provided in the school of life, and the learning process is done via the ways of the world,

³ 1965, Paris, Gallimard, 2002, p. 101.

hence, primarily, through travel. He can opt for the joyous and encouraging rhythm with which Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin* cycle opens; or adopt the funereal pace of his *Winterreise*.



C. D. Friedrich, *Traveller Above a Sea of Mist*, 1818

It is tempting to see in *Traveller above a Sea of Mist*, Friedrich's painting of 1818, the culmination of such an adventure. It could be the perfect summary of the Romantic trajectory or 'saga'. Clearly, the figure is significantly older than Novalis ever was – since he died before reaching his thirties, pining away after the death of his young fiancée Sophie von Kühn in 1796. While all-consuming, this loss was also the starting-point of exceptional philosophical and poetic inspiration of which the novel is the pinnacle. Sophie's death was thus not an end but a beginning – and one cannot help but remember that Breton was close to Novalis' age when he wrote *Nadja*, and that the mysterious disappearance of his friend fed a creative surge.

As for the Traveller in Friedrich's painting, his identity remains uncertain, but one can conjecture that it is a self-portrait: we see him from the back. Facing away from us, and from the whole of human society; having traversed hostile climes in order to engage solely with the immensity before him. It is a display of separation. In the German cultural context of the day Wolfgang Goethe was universally seen as the guiding spirit. The two stages of his *Wilhelm Meister*, the apprenticeship years and the travel years,

teach us that the mission of each individual is to find their vocation, then to take their place in a social milieu in which their talents can be usefully deployed. Something far removed from Friedrich. His hero is alone, the summit reached signals the ultimate spot, a halt facing the abyss. In Schubert, too, certain silences are less simple technical pauses than pointers to the wordless contemplation of the abyss.

The mist is key to this sublime, the source of confusion : ocean or mountain range ? In Novalis young Heinrich – embarked on a long journey across Silesia at the behest of his mother, who found him too inclined to daydream – hovers between fear and marvel when faced with a landscape of this kind : ‘Er sah sich an der Schwelle der Ferne (...) Er war im Begriff, sich in ihre blaue Flut zu tauchen’.⁴

In Friedrich’s work, however, the figure does not seem to be losing all self-control. The painter seems to have mastered the chaos. The geometric structure locates the traveller at the summit of a triangle, making him the centre, the point at which multiple forms converge – misty shapes ? – the horizon line of a mountain range ? – that he allows into his heart. A harmonious exchange between individual and universe unfolding.

This is not always the case. The universe can occasionally get the upper hand, reducing the human factor to an insignificant trace : in *Monk by the Sea* (1810) for instance : here the ink-coloured sea is more reminiscent of the river Lethe in the Greek imaginary; or in *Mountain Landscape with Rainbow*, from the same year. Such visions are closer to the exiles and stateless who, in certain Schubert Lieder, advance like wrecks in their sad chant.

The work of Novalis too harbors a pilgrim who could have inspired Friedrich’s visionary talent :

Er hatte nun das Gebirge erreicht, wo er das Ziel seiner Reise zu finden hoffte. - Hoffte? er hoffte gar nichts mehr. Die entsetzliche Angst und dann die trockne Kälte der gleichgültigsten Verzweiflung trieben ihn, die wilden Schrecknisse des Gebirgs aufzusuchen (...) Er war matt, aber still. Noch sah er nichts(...), als er sich setzte (...). Eine unübersehliche Herrlichkeit schien sich vor ihm aufzutun. Bald flossen seine Tränen, indem sein Innres plötzlich brach; er wollte sich in der Ferne verweinen, dass auch keine Spur seines Daseins übrig bliebe.⁵

Are such landscapes the reflection of these crises, or are they, rather, their source, leading them to their climax ? It matters little, for there is a deeper, more essential drama that subjects these landscapes to the test of Time. Through their most impressive shapes – plains, outcrops, mountains, forests, narrow gorges, vertiginous falls – it is the cycle of Nature that the painter makes us contemplate.

⁴ Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.

⁵ Ibid.



He studies every phase, the hours of the day, daily and seasonal variations. He lingers on the cracks, the breaks or, elsewhere, on the slow erosion.



He dwells at length on ruins : of castles, abbeys, even the ruins of mountain outcrops, deliberately fused with monuments from a heroic past. He shares with Novalis a nostalgia for ancient times when, in tune with Nature, humankind was united through stronger ties. The construction of the novel no doubt served as a model : in the constant confrontation between past and present, the crisscrossing of strata, from ancient times to long-forgotten periods, periods of action and memory, indeed of the real and the imaginary. Is not the driving force behind the novel precisely that founding dream in which the adolescent Heinrich perceived

the marvelous blue flower that he was to pursue, endlessly, in his waking life ? We should note in passing that Breton's encounter with Nadja is also located within a dream : 'J'ai toujours rêvé de rencontrer, la nuit, dans un bois, une femme belle et nue...'

Confusion between waking and sleeping states, between dream and consciousness is used by Novalis to lead the reader astray, to have Heinrich call into question his identity. Is he merely himself, with his present age, or is it rather his avatar from ancient times who is living a second life through him ? From that point his journey is a return, crossing the phases of sundry reincarnations, each one marking a stage in his search for the self. In Goethe it is quite the opposite : Wilhelm Meister does not need to know himself, it is enough for him to grow, through his works, within a community. A reflection of Haydn's *Seasons*, the essence of German Classicism : the generous melody of a Nature to be not just celebrated but worked, in perfect harmony with a humankind linked joyously to the rhythm of the harvest, the hunt, grape-picking, festivities. There is nothing of this in Schubert or in the paintings of Friedrich : Nature here is no longer to be cultivated but to be contemplated in a spirit of melancholy meditation. These contemplative figures are usually solitary, and their musing leads back to themselves, their destiny, their uncertain identity. 'Who am I ?' : the narrator of *Nadja* asks this question too once shaken, like Novalis, by an encounter which changed his life and left a void.

II THE PATH TO 'THE WORLD'S INNER SPACE' (Rilke)

Nature as the mirror of ourselves ? In which case it would be rather pointless to travel the globe. As Heinrich writes in one of the dialogues :

Wir träumen von Reisen durch das Weltall: Ist denn das Weltall nicht in uns? (...) Nach Innen geht der geheimnisvolle Weg. In uns oder nirgends ist die Ewigkeit mit ihren Welten, die Vergangenheit und Zukunft.⁶



⁶ *Fragmente*, Reclam, Stuttgart 1960, p. 116/117.

In the work of Novalis the exploration of that 'inner world' and the search for its reality will prevail henceforth. Having climbed a steep mountainside and 'stepped across stony moss-covered ground', one of his characters reaches an open space, spots an opening that seems to be 'the start of a maze cut into the rock'. Slipping inside, he eventually reaches a vast vaulted space. Friedrich, in calling up cracks, crevices, abysses, acts as the interpreter of the poet's vision : the mountain seems at times to rise , wave-like, before our eyes, hinting at underground movement. And it is not uncommon to perceive in his paintings a phantom shape stepping into dangerous rocky passageways, searching for caves, and leading the viewer towards strange sights. Such exploration is even more fruitful in Novalis since it can ferret out the spirit of a cave, in the shape of an ancient hermit, a survivor of the Crusades, witness to a heroic past. Having learned to overcome the pain linked to the loss of dear ones, he explains to his visitors, he is now devoted solely to 'inner contemplation'.

Is such exploration merely poetic fantasy ? It is really closer to the path to Knowledge, and has the rigour of a learning process.⁷ It is located at the intersection of three fields : those of philosophic and scientific thought, and the experiential (the latter also subdivided, experience through method or inter-generational transmission, 'Erfahrung'; and personal lived experience, including artistic creation, 'Erlebnis'). Thus when, in the course of the novel, Heinrich meets a group of miners, Novalis writes as a man with sound knowledge : as an engineer he can tie the poet's imagination to the precise information of the professional. There is, admittedly, some overstatement in his praise for the miners, in calling them 'lords of the earth', placing them alongside the poet. But in fact the engineer is here voicing a visionary intuition, convinced that the Earth is alive yet totally unknown to the learned of the so-called 'Enlightenment'. Novalis announces the good news : far from being inert matter, our planet functions like an organism endowed with imagination; and Nature, through its creations, communicates with us in a language rich in symbols. Even plants resort to a wordless language : Novalis writes in his *First Hymn to the Night* that Nature is 'thoughtful' ('sinnend', not 'denkend'). And while inert, he claims, even stones are not devoid of existence.

Only a few individuals have access to such knowledge, clearly. It is knowledge from the nocturnal phase of life, open to the solitary beings glimpsed in Friedrich's works. It is our task to find them, or rather to decipher them, since they do not all have human shape. They can appear as a 'solitary tree' for instance, and thus the bearers of certain secrets, like being the abode of a deceased young girl's soul, to be freed

⁷ The term is borrowed from the title of Georges Gusdorf's major two-volume study on the European Romantics, *Fondements du savoir romantique* (Paris : Payot, 1982); and *Du néant à Dieu dans le savoir romantique* (Payot, 1983).

from death's ties when a young man – reincarnated, seemingly, in Heinrich – stops beneath its branches to mourn the death of his beloved.

III THE PATH THROUGH THE SHADOWS

Death is all too familiar to the majority of Romantics – it would be otiose, consequently, to linger on this, belonging as it does to the sociology of art and literature. Death is always present in Friedrich's oeuvre; it is gentle, dangerously beguiling in Schubert; in Novalis it is cloaked in nostalgia :

Hinunter In der Erde Schoss,/ Weg aus des Lichtes Reichen,/ Der Schmerzen Wut und wilder
Stoss/ Ist froher Abfahrt Zeichen./ Wir kommen in den engen Kahn/ Geschwind am Himmelsufer
an.⁸

In relinquishing his physical being in order to reach a 'supernatural' state (übersinnlich) will he not be reunited with Sophie, his spiritual fiancée ? This call resonates throughout this canticle, as it does in his *Hymnes à la nuit*, and is fully developed in the novel.



When Friedrich writes of death he dresses it in its most lugubrious attire : images of freshly-dug graves, cemetery gates before which a young couple hesitates, barely distinguishable from the mourning-coloured mist in which the scene is shrouded. Such depictions remain nevertheless external. They fail to reveal what is essential : for most German Romantics death is a beginning, a birth; it is found not at the end but at the start of another life, an 'inner life'. Here the novel resorts to symbol and myth to celebrate this

⁸ *Geistliche Lieder I, Sehnsucht nach dem Tode*, p. 112.

unconscious life, the source of higher knowledge, under the protection of the moon. It thus recognizes the full force of maternal symbolism.



C. D. Friedrich, Mann und Frau in Betrachtung, 1824

The moon takes centre stage in many of Friedrich's works, at times quite unrealistically : to gaze upon it humans do not need to raise their eyes; rather, they stand with bowed heads. The moon can become a heart, its light spreading a fruitful energy⁹, and such a night is beneficial; it looks upon us perhaps, the poet hopes, 'with some kindness'.¹⁰

Is this the goddess that ancient gods, in their pointless rivalry, led to destruction ? Novalis believes that her ashes were later gathered up, mixed with liquid and imbibed by her descendants in order to inseminate a new generation and thus give life to the universe. With this argument he is following the theosophic reasoning of Jakob Boehme : visible nature must die in order to give way to eternal, invisible Nature.

Hence the Mother – indeed, for the Romantics, even the youngest of fiancées – holds the power of mediation between the natural world and the spiritual; she is the one who gives life to the poet. It thus comes as no surprise when, in Friedrich's work, we see her bathed in a crepuscular supernatural light – is

⁹ In German moon is masculine (*der Mond*), but the poets often resort to the Latin feminine name Luna (Herder, *Die Meere*, and Henrich Heine frequently). It thus brings together the masculine and feminine in the German imaginary, the power to inseminate and the power to receive.

¹⁰ Cf. *First Hymn to the Night*. This word is to be understood in its strongest sense of a real kinship; the moon contains a part of ourselves, it is our 'astral body', according to Jacob Boehme,

this the moment when she is immolated ? – or, in everyday life, moving up stairs and disappearing as she turns a corner. In catching this ascent the painter becomes a visionary.

This same light shines out of a religiously-oriented work and one which, consequently, attracted the ire of church institutions : a crucifixion destined for the altar of a chapel stands in the midst of firtrees. Could the Son have been impregnated by the Earth ? Absolutely not ! Not least because the rays which magnify this vision emanate not from the skies but from the depths. C.D. Friedrich, quite naturally, has reworked the myth forged by Novalis. Because, under the guise of the Redeemer, the Sacrificial victim, what is rising here is a new prophet who has in his possession Knowledge born of the darkness, the poet who at long last has been granted the privilege of looking upon the blue flower. Nature, now divine, speaks through him.



There is no better summary of this triumph of poetry than that of Philip Otto Runge, in the 1809 testament expressed in his *Great Morning*. The painting's division into panels suggests from the outset the notion of simultaneous representation. Its movement brings together two worlds, heaven and earth; two stages of humankind, childhood and destiny.¹¹ The new-born is the son of Nature, the Elect to whom his brothers offer bunches of flowers. And at the centre of the painting : Woman, mother, mediatrix. Above, the

¹¹ There are echoes here of Goethe's hypothesis on the 'original plant' which contains all the stages of the development of existing forms. The new-born is both the seed and the promise of a radiant future, containing the potential of the Blue flower in bloom.

flower, almost transparent in the supernatural light, while Cupids' music celebrates the return to cosmic harmony. This meeting of the arts, true to the aesthetics of Novalis, is the ultimate expression of the desire for eternal beatitude.

ROMANTIC UTOPIA, SURREALIST UTOPIA : THE FRUITFULNESS OF A DREAM

The utopia of a reunited humankind, regenerated through the magic of poetry – in short the coming of the individual with his unique voice that liberates each individual – has not been fulfilled. Novalis remained unaware of both the immense richness of his thinking and the savage wars that swept Europe in the name of freedom. Unaware, too, of the White Terror that followed, while out of sight the explosion of the industrial era, and the new form of enslavement it generated, were in the making.

Was History, finally, victorious, in reducing to nought the Romantic dream ? That would be to ignore the underground workings of the dream : from Carl Gustav Carus' philosophy of the Unconscious, via the clinical theory and practice of Carl Gustav Jung (the forenames themselves pointing to the legacy), to Surrealism (while Breton never mentions Jung, everything leads to their rapprochement, rather than to Freud). In all these the magical idealism of Novalis stayed active and, with it, the miracle of the Encounter that had the power to change a destined path, to restore meaning to life.

The blue flower of Novalis is echoed in Breton's Nadja : she in turn is the mediatrix showing the way into the Other World. The revolution, perhaps, has Nadja's face.

What lies ahead : faith in the power of the dream, which cannot be reduced to fantasy, but is the language of an authentic, creative Unconscious. We would not be betraying Max Ernst when we write 'la Révolution la nuit'.

Women of Stone and Water. From the Legacy of German Romanticism to Surrealist Metamorphosis

Marie Claire HOOCK-DEMARLE

It seems all too obvious to bring together Surrealism and German Romanticism, as did the Surrealists themselves who, like Breton, refer many times to Novalis, Achim von Arnim, Joseph von Eichendorff or Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann. It is true that the two movements share a number of themes including the recurrent theme of the forest, so that from Eichendorff, 'poet of the German forest' to Max Ernst, who paints its mysteries (*Jolie Forêt allongée* 1925 or *La Forêt pétrifiée* 1927), an undeniable continuity can be observed. Because of the predominance of this theme other shared themes, which raise the same question of the legacy of Romanticism, are sometimes forgotten. 'Legacy', the term is intriguing and raises questions, since it seems somewhat incongruous among the Surrealists who claim to be the creators of a new art, born ex nihilo – unless it is from their creative imagination – and reject any chronological restriction in the name of absolute temporal and spatial freedom. Before discussing the theme to be developed here, the representation of women in its different artistic expression in the two movements, it is therefore appropriate to ask the question: which German Romanticism has Surrealism inherited? Then, juxtaposing the perceptions and representations of women from both sides, we will attempt to understand the workings of what, beyond simple continuity or borrowing, can be characterised as transposition, transfer and metamorphosis.

WHICH GERMAN ROMANTICISM DO THE SURREALISTS CLAIM TO HAVE INHERITED?

In his various *Manifestes* Breton refers several times to German Romanticism, underlining from the outset the similarity of significant historical events, the French Revolution for the one and World War I for the other. Both German Romanticism of the beginning of the 19th century and Surrealism of the 1920s and 1930s are avant-garde movements which have emerged from chaos. While declaring that 'nul n'a besoin d'ancêtre', Breton explicitly accepted the inheritance of 'ce romantisme dont nous voulons bien

historiquement passer aujourd'hui pour être la queue mais alors la queue tellement préhensile'.¹ Among the group of writers from a fragmented Germany who, from 1798, published essays, poems and novels which caused scandals and invented hitherto unknown styles such as the fragment or irony (Witz), Breton makes a rather arbitrary choice among those he considered the figureheads of the movement, Novalis, Hölderlin or Kleist. He favoured two writers in particular.² First, Novalis is often evoked and quoted in a text titled 'Les Grands Transparents', an appendix to *Prolégomènes à un troisième manifeste du surréalisme ou non* written in 1942: 'Je crois devoir faire observer que je ne m'éloigne pas sensiblement ici du témoignage de Novalis.'³ The second writer for whom he expressed his admiration is Achim von Arnim, author of *Contes bizarres* for which he wrote a preface in 1933: 'D'où viendrait [...] qu'un témoignage littéraire comme celui qu'il m'est donné de présenter ici trouve en nous ce merveilleux écho?'⁴ The fact the the word 'témoignage' or witness account should be used in both cases underlines the continuity established by Breton between German Romanticism and French Surrealism. But German Romanticism as perceived by Breton is the result of an amalgamation based on a misunderstanding of German culture and literature that had prevailed in France for decades, in fact since the 1870s, increasing during and after the Great War, in which Breton and Éluard had served as medical orderlies, and when Apollinaire died. In contrast to French Romanticism which has a clear start date, later than the rest of Europe, with 'la bataille d'Hernani' following the publication of Victor Hugo's tragedy, German Romanticism developed in successive waves, superimposed layers where the same characters can be found in very different, even contradictory contexts and configurations. To talk of German Romanticism in the singular as a single and unique entity is obviously contrary to the reality of a movement characterised by its many phases, going from the search for an inner world – 'Nach Innen geht der geheimnisvolle Weg' (It is towards the inner world that the mysterious path goes)⁵ – and the supposed reign of universal poetry, to end the following decade with a national, ultra-conservative craze which would become the hallmark of the century. There is a break between an early Romanticism (Frühromantik) born out of the immediate post-revolutionary period and a later Romanticism (Spätromantik) linked to the total disappearance of the Holy Roman Empire and the

¹ André Breton, *Second Manifeste du Surréalisme*, 1930, (1946), in *Manifestes du Surréalisme*, Paris, Gallimard, Folio essais, 1985.

² Breton, *Du Surréalisme en ses œuvres vives*, in *Manifestes du Surréalisme*, op.cit., p. 169. Note that Hölderlin was from an earlier generation and stopped writing in about 1804, suffering from madness.

³ Breton, *Manifestes*, p. 162.

⁴ Breton, 'Introduction aux *Contes bizarres* d'Achim von Arnim', in *Le Point du jour*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. Idées NRF, 1970, p.117.

⁵ Novalis, *Blütenstaub*, in *Athenaeum, eine Zeitschrift 1798-1800*, Rowohlt's Klassiker der deutschen Literatur, Hamburg 1969, p. 53.

emergence of nationalism provoked by Fichte's publication of *Reden an die deutsche Nation* in 1807. Early Romanticism, to which Breton attached little importance - apart from Novalis who was its ephemeral mouthpiece - was distinguished by its sociability in the form of circles (Kreise) dominated by exceptional women liberated by the often dangerously lived experience of the Revolution. Between 1796 and 1798 the Jena circle brought together the Schlegel brothers and their companions, Caroline, a former radical from Mainz married to August Wilhelm whom she left for the philosopher Schelling, also a member of the Jena circle, Dorothea, the daughter of the liberal Jewish theologian from Berlin Moses Mendelssohn, who divorced in order to follow Friedrich to Jena, changing her first name (she was born Brendel) and religion (protestantism this time, but there would be other conversions). Ephemeral yet essential, the Jena circle was dissolved in 1799, replaced by other equally ephemeral groups, in Heidelberg with Clemens Brentano, or in Berlin with Achim von Arnim. Late Romanticism, completely different, was informed by the patriotic feelings of the time of the wars of liberation (Befreiungskriege). The poetry collection *Leyer und Schwert* by Theodor Körner (killed in action in 1813), was published posthumously in 1814. Some of the former members of the Jena circle resurfaced in the second wave of German Romanticism, for example Schleiermacher and other free agents such as Clemens Brentano, or Achim von Arnim, marching on the streets of Berlin armed with quite harmless lances.⁶ By chance, epic texts from the 12th century, *Die Nibelungen*, were republished in 1809, reawakening the German past in all its mythified glory. Arnim took an interest in Charles V (*Isabella von Ägypten*) and chivalry (*Die Kronenwächter*). Interest in Novalis (d. 1801) was revived thanks to an unknown text written in 1800 whose title *Die Christenheit oder Europa* fitted perfectly in the context of late Romanticism. As for Clemens Brentano, the lithe spirit of Romanticism around 1800, he turned to mysticism and for years recorded the illuminations dictated to him by the nun Katharina Emmerick on her sick bed.

Breton amalgamated these successive waves, erasing the first, taking liberties with the second, confusing the issue, and ended up constructing a version of German Romanticism to which the Surrealists could and, indeed, had to refer. His introduction to Arnim's *Contes bizarres* gives quite a precise image of his perception of German Romanticism through the author and his work. For Breton, Arnim represented a condensed form of German Romanticism in general, as the antithetical combination of a 'cerveau organisé' and a 'cerveau poétique', creating an oscillation between the real and the imaginary, between 'virtualité' and 'réalité' which end up creating a state of doubt, 'l'éparpillement du Moi dans l'objet extérieur'. To which

⁶ In 1806 the two friends Arnim and Brentano (in 1811 Arnim was to marry Brentano's sister Bettina) published an anthology of popular songs, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, which became an emblematic work of early Romanticism.

is added for Breton another inner conflict, linked to Arnim's personal life and his relations with Bettina Brentano whom he married in 1811. While Breton fully understood the scruples and what he terms the 'renversements de sablier' in the biography of the writer Arnim, disillusioned with Romanticism at an early stage, he builds around the Arnim/Bettina couple an imaginary version strongly inspired by his own experiences narrated in *Nadja* and *L'Amour fou*.

Breton discusses the correspondence Bettina had from an early age with Goethe, also born in Frankfurt, whose mother had told her about his childhood and youth. These passionate letters were published under the title *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde*,⁷ written in a form invented by Bettina, the 'Briefroman', which would bring her fame and the reputation of enfant terrible of German Romanticism. The book was published in 1835, five years after the death of Arnim who, according to Breton, therefore never knew the shadow cast on his fame by Bettina's own fame. Breton presents Arnim as 'un homme frappé dans son orgueil... Victime d'une véritable trahison mystique'.⁸ It is in terms recalling *Nadja* that Breton introduces his first female character in his version of German Romanticism, Bettina, who cruelly pursues her 'invraisemblable cantique à Goethe' in front of Arnim. It provides a revealing example of the process of construction a century later of a version of German Romanticism where women live and sometimes write 'dans l'idée d'une mission à remplir propre à hanter l'esprit d'êtres comme Bettina ou comme Caroline, qui vivaient alors en pleine exaltation'.⁹ Bettina is not the only woman to figure in Breton's pantheon of Romantic women. They include Caroline de Günderode, Bettina's close friend from adolescence, a poet who published - under a pseudonym, as was the rule at the time for women embarking on a literary career - a poetry anthology in 1804 and who committed suicide through love in 1806.¹⁰ Like Bettina but in a different register, Caroline, whose 'personnalité est bien faite pour fixer sur elle tout ce qu'il peut y avoir encore d'entraînant, d'égarant dans la conception romantique de la femme',²⁴ corresponds to the idea of the Romantic woman developed by Breton. For him the Romantic woman, like the Eternal Feminine, 'est la clef de voûte de l'édifice. C'est la terre qui, en quelque sorte, ordonne à travers la femme', echoing a sentence by Carl Ritter: 'one only loves the earth and, through woman, the earth returns the love.'¹¹

⁷ Bettina von Arnim, *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde*, Berlin 1835.

⁸ *Point du jour*, p. 138.

⁹ *Point du jour*, p. 137.

¹⁰ Friedrich Creuzer, archeologist and philologist, published *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (1810). Caroline committed suicide by drowning in the Rhine having realized that Friedrich Creuzer, unable to give up his bourgeois life in Heidelberg, would not divorce.

¹¹ *Point du Jour*, p. 143. Carl Ritter founded comparative geography with Alexander von Humboldt. He wrote a geography of Europe and a general comparative geography in 20 volumes. In his *Nachlass aus den Papieren*

The presentation of these two female figures is a manifestation of Breton's belief, shared with other Surrealists, in the fusion and mysterious link between woman and earth, a symbiosis of the female and nature. When evoking Bettina, Breton recalls the LIGHTNING STONE and 'les aérolithes aztèques appelés Miroirs d'amour... une coupe pratiquée dans celui-ci ne livrerait rien d'autre que le visage admirable d'Arnim auprès du visage de Bettina.'¹² While Bettina appears to be hewn out of stone, Caroline falls prey to the waters of the Rhine which 'immobiliser[ont] un matin sous les saules le cadavre de la belle Caroline'.

Woman of stone or water, woman linked to the elements of the earth, is the vision of the Romantic woman as evoked by Breton really a legacy of German Romanticism?

THE RETURN TO ORIGINS

Readers of Breton's preface to Arnim's *Contes bizarres* will have noted that the two female figures evoked in the text – which functions as a manifesto of German Romanticism for the French Surrealists – far from being imaginary creatures, are real women whose personal destiny was to experience Romanticism in all its contradictions and even, in the case of Caroline von Günderode, to die of it. The expression Romantic woman can be interpreted in various ways, however. It can refer to all the women, as companion, spouse, lover or sister, who shared the lives of German Romantics, strong-willed women like Dorothea Schlegel or Therese Forster-Huber, sociable women (*Geselligkeit*, a term invented to refer to them by Schleiermacher in 1799)¹³ such as Caroline Schlegel-Schelling, Henriette Herz or Rahel Varnhagen, passionate women such as Sophie Mereau, Charlotte Stieglitz and, of course, women of genius like Bettina Brentano-von Arnim and Caroline von Günderode.

Romantic women can also be the most diverse beings created by the imagination of the Romantics themselves. We must therefore come back to the texts – of whatever nature – in which German Romantics transposed their vision of woman linked to the elementary forces of earth/nature. Stone or marble statues, metal dolls, straw or wax mannequins, automatons that break down, but also water women, water nymphs and mermaids, are everywhere at the beginning of the 19th century which also witnessed Mary Shelley's creation of Frankenstein on the banks of Lake Geneva. However enchanting they all are, there are too many to be mentioned, and so only the most emblematic will be referred to here, those who, entering a form of 'correspondence' (in Baudelaire's meaning of the word) with beings created by the Surrealists'

eines jungen Physikers (quoted by Breton) published in 1810 he expressed an interest in spiritist automatic writing, forerunner of the Surrealists' automatic writing.

¹² *Point du jour*, p. 133.

¹³ Friedrich Daniel Schleiermacher, *Versuch einer Theorie des geselligen Betragens*, published anonymously in *Berlinisches Archiv der Zeit und ihres Geschmacks*, January – February 1799.

poetic imagination, will allow us to identify the legacy of German Romanticism, of which the Surrealists are strange beneficiaries.

OF A FEW STONE, MARBLE OR EARTH WOMEN

From *Godwi oder das steinerne Bild der Mutter*, the only, very chaotic, novel by the young Clemens Brentano, published in 1802,¹⁴ Achim von Arnim's novella *Isabella von Ägypten*,¹⁵ published in 1812, to Joseph von Eichendorff's novella *Die Marmorstatue* from 1819,¹⁶ the cohort of stone women haunts Romantic works.

In Brentano's complex novel *Godwi*, two scenes provide a key to the mystery of the birth of the hero's constant quest to solve the 'mystery of his birth'. On a night-time walk in a park he thinks he sees the statue of a woman with a child in her arms start to move, which brings to mind the time when, as a motherless child, he had almost drowned in the pond of the family estate, attracted by the statue imploring him:

Und es schien das tiefbetrübte	It seemed that, ravaged by
Frauenbild von Marmorstein, das ich	suffering,
immer heftig liebte	The marble figure of the woman
An dem See im Mondenschein	that I had always loved so much
Sich mit Schmerzen auszudehnen	By the lake in the moonlight
Nach dem Leben sich zu sehnen	Stretching with pain
Kann nicht weinen, denn die Augen	Yearning after life,
Und die Tränen sind von Stein	Cannot cry, for her eyes and
Kann nicht seufzen, kann nicht	tears are of stone
hauchen,	Cannot sigh, cannot breathe
	Ah, with this painful force

¹⁴ *Godwi oder das steinerne Bild der Mutter* 1800/1802 Berlin, Wildmans. The subtitle of the novel is *Ein verwilderter Roman von Maria* (pseudonym of the author).

¹⁵ Achim von Arnim, *Isabella von Ägypten, Kaiser Karl des Fünften erste Jugendliebe*, was published in 1812 in the *Novellensammlung* which also published the novella 'Meluck Maria Blainville' where an evil wicker mannequin has a key role.

¹⁶ Joseph von Eichendorff, *Die Marmorstatue*, in *Almanach für die Damen* 1819. p.p. by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué. Trans. Remi Laureillard, *La statue de marbre*, (preface M.C. Hock-Demarle), ed. Sillage, Paris 2003.

Ach vor schmerzlichen Gewalten The whole image would shatter
 Möchte das ganze Bild zerspalten

In this first example of a marble statue, the woman, who is the dead mother appearing in the form of the the Virgin and child, seems to be alive, a prisoner of the stone which will finally yield in the face of suffering. The statue reflected in the water, forming a double image, adopts one after the other the natural elements which join to send the child the message of love and nostalgia engraved in the heart of the stone.

The second marble statue in *Godwi* is quite different, showing the Romantics' varied visions of women. Full of remorse for having abandoned young Violetta, his mistress' daughter who, having become a prostitute, sinks into madness, Godwi erects a grandiose monument on his estate, 'the apotheosis of a prostitute'. On a pedestal in the shape of a die decorated with frescoes representing stages in the life of Violetta, a spirit brandishes a lyre while holding the semi-naked body of the dead girl. In this classical-style monument recalling sculptures by Canova or Schadow, the religious theme is replaced by a pagan theme. However, the symbolism of living nature under the stone or in death with which woman is fused in a mysterious unity, is maintained. Death is a return to nature, a movement, a transition and the source of poetic creation: 'Ich knie an des Bildes Marmorstufen. All meine Sinne rufen: Gieb Lieben mir und Lied in Tod und Leben'. At the end of this 'savage' novel Godwi comes back to 'the two beautiful poles of [my] life: 'All my suffering was caught in that marble statue, I was the child in the cold arms of the statue... but rising above the verdant trees is my freedom; in Mary pain and love were prisoners, in Violetta life became free.'¹⁷

Ten years later, Achim von Arnim published his novella *Isabella von Ägypten* which took up in a different, inverted, form the theme of the statue. It is not a marble statue, it is not placed in a park or buried among the ruins, it is not the work of an artist but of a mandrake root that the young gypsy girl Isabella shapes to her will to win the love of the young Charles V. This time the woman is not the prisoner of a statue to which she gives life but, knowing the magical powers of nature, she has the power to create¹⁷:

¹⁷ *Godwi*, in Clemens Brentano, *Werke*, ed. Friedhelm Kemp, Munich, Hanser, 1963, vol II, p. 373.

a being in the image of a human being, a sort of moving sketch, like a butterfly's larvae... No mother could be more tender with her child, who she thought had disappeared in an earthquake, than Bella removing the last bits of earth from her Mandrake and clutching it to her breast... Both joyful and serious, creating a being which, like mankind and its creator, was to make her grieve to the end.¹⁸

Later in the novella, the little gnome, in love with Bella who turns him away and yet who was able thanks to him to be united with the young Charles, takes his revenge by creating Bella Golem, Isabella's evil double, the dark image of the woman who returns to the earth that swallows her up.

Joseph von Eichendorff's novella *The Marble Statue* was published in 1819. The action takes place in Lucca in Renaissance Italy with its Palladian villas and parks full of statues. As the young Florio encounters a marble statue and contemplates it 'with his eyes closed' as in a dream, the night becomes alive, run through with a cosmic shiver, only the statue stays 'terrifyingly white and motionless, staring at him with its stone eyes'.¹⁹ The second time the statue, constantly changing, appears as a woman with a lute only to be transformed into the sensual figure of Venus who, on hearing the invocation to the Virgin murmured by Florio 'beside himself', suddenly 'stands stiffly before him, her eyes closed, her face and arms deathly pale... her gaze, which could be so charmingly playful, seemed to falter like stars fading' in the midst of the fantastical unleashing of the elements.²⁰ Mixing neoplatonism and Renaissance religious art, this fantastic vision, half-pagan and half-christian, opposes a petrified Venus and Bianca, the pure young girl with the face of a Botticelli Madonna in a natural environment with two temporalities, day against night, and two spaces, the luminous Palladian landscape against the disturbing nocturnal forest and the chaos of haunted ruins.

ON MERMAIDS AND OTHER WATER WOMEN

Water is the other element favoured by the German Romantics to express the link between the female element and nature perceived as a maelstrom in constant movement. Günderode's suicide and the magical attraction of the Rhine on the Romantics, from Clemens Brentano to Heinrich Heine, played an important role in the attraction of an elusive element that poetic language is capable of expressing thanks to its fluid nature. It is therefore unsurprising that it should be Brentano who created the most seductive of water

¹⁸ Achim von Arnim, *Isabella von Ägypten*, in A. von Arnim, *Sämtliche Romane und Erzählungen*, ed. Walther Migge, Munich, Hanser, 1968, vol II, p. 468. It was first published in French in *Contes bizarres* (translated by Théophile Gauthier), Lévy Frères, 1856.

¹⁹ *The Marble Statue*, O.C. p. 57.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 95.

women, Lore Lay, who slips from her rock into the waves of the Rhine, leaving nothing but the supernatural echo of her name indefatigably repeated:

Zu Bacharach am Rheine
 Wohnt eine Zauberin,
 Sie war so schön und feine Und riss viele Herzen hin

 Und immer hats geklungen
 Von dem drei Ritterstein
 Lore Lay
 Lore Lay
 Lore Lay
 Als wären es meiner drei.²¹

Heine's poem 'Die Lorelei' dates from a later period and is not directly part of the poetic legacy of German Romanticism. But its similarity to the Lure Ley from the beginning of the century makes one understand the power of themes created by the Romantic imagination as well as the exceptional magical qualities of their works. The legacy of German Romanticism starts with Heine and extends to the early 20th century.

Another water woman, Undine, is the heroine of a novella by Frédéric de la Motte-Fouqué,²² a member of the Berlin Romantics circle, a reactionary passionate about the recently rediscovered German Middle Ages. The theme of the mermaid who must marry a human being to find her soul, is already present in stories from the French Middle Ages.²³ In Motte-Fouqué's version the word soul remains deeply religious, but it is also a quest for a fluid identity, 'ein fließendes Ich'.²⁴ What is attractive in the story is Undine's mischievous innocence and her extraordinary power over the natural element water. In her presence the landscape itself is reshaped, recreated by water, whether the stream that saves the knight in his fall, the flood that inundates the land, the tide creating a small island which isolates the lovers and where Ondine finds her soul thanks to the knight's kiss, and where the king of the water spirits, uncle Kühleborn (Fresh Fountain) emerges, and finally the river where Undine disappears for ever.

The Wasserfrau or water woman, comes back to haunt literature with *Undine*, E.T.A. Hoffmann's opera and Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* (1837). Closer to us are Franz Kafka's *Das Schweigen der Sirenen*, an example of the absurd, Giraudoux's play *Ondine* (1939) clearly inspired by La Motte Fouqué's novella, and *Undine geht* (1961) by Ingeborg Bachmann, close to Fouqué's *Undine* in the fusion between the water woman and nature:

²¹ The poem appears in *Godwi*, p. 426.

²² 'Undine', *Die Jahreszeiten*, 1811.

²³ In particular the figure of Mélusine.

²⁴ Renate Böschenstein, 'Undine oder das fließende Ich', in Irmgard Roebing, ed., *Sehnsucht und Sirene. Vierzehn Abhandlungen zu Wasserphantasien*, Pfaffenweiler, Centaurus-Verlag, 1989

I like the dense transparency of water, its green colour and its silent creatures (soon I too will be silent), my hair intertwined with them in the water, the just water, indifferent mirror forbidding me to see you differently... Never again will anyone talk thus of the elements, the universe and all the stars.²⁵

LEGACY OR METAMORPHOSIS

The Mandrake in Arnim's story evokes an organic world to which the female element has access and even the right to transformation and creation, when it realizes that the young gypsy has the power to destroy as well as create it: 'This ineffable universe, which does not yield to our efforts but uses us for its experiences and entertainment'.²⁶ The Mandrake's observation echoes Breton's sentence on the Romantic woman who alone can penetrate 'l'infraçassable noyau de nuit de l'univers... c'est la terre qui, en quelque sorte, ordonne à travers la femme'.²⁷ If we have chosen to limit the legacy to the theme of the fusion of woman with nature and the cosmos, it is because the themes as treated by the Romantics and taken up by the Surrealists are linked to the idea that the universe is infinite and in constant movement, and that nature is an organic whole that escapes man's limited perception. Art is 'polyform sympoetry' which tends to communicate, to commune through poetic reflection – in both senses of the word – with this universe:

Romantic poetry is a progressive universal poetry... Free of real or ideal interests, on the wings of poetic reflection, it can rise ceaselessly to a higher power and increase as in an infinite succession of mirrors... [It] is in constant evolution and its very essence is to become and never to be achieved.²⁸

Baudelaire's poem 'Correspondances' belongs to the same tradition:

La nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laisent parfois sortir de confuses paroles ;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

The German Romantics drew widely on the subtle art of synesthesia which responded to their idea of both ramifications and unity of a total universe, as well as infinite correspondences between different artistic expressions: 'Poetry is music for the inner ear and painting for the inner eye; but it is quiet music and painting that passes and fades away.'²⁹

²⁵ Ingeborg Bachmann, 'Undine geht', in *Das dreissigste Jahr*, in Ingeborg Bachmann, *Werke*, ed. c. Koschel, I. von Weidenbaum, C. Münster, Piper, Munich 1982, vol II, p. 254 and 262.

²⁶ Kafka represents Ulysses who naively believes he is protected from the sirens' song thanks to his tricks, while in fact the sirens are silent.

²⁷ Breton, *Point du Jour*, p. 142.

²⁸ Friedrich Schlegel, *Fragmente*, p. 131.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 119.

The Romantics' favoured form of expression of this 'Sympoetisieren' was poetic language, whether the prose of the marvelous story or the poem appearing within prose as its supreme crystallisation. Female statues are found especially in literature, few in the works of contemporary artists.³⁰ As for painting, apart from portraits, German Romantic painters are above all painters of landscapes transfigured by their new perception of nature. P. O. Runge, Carus and especially C. D. Friedrich rarely portrayed women in their paintings, and when they did she is seen from the back in front of an open window, or as a distant graceful figure in the landscape while the figure contemplating the scene in the foreground or on a mountain top is always a man-hermit-pilgrim of nature, a fact that needs to be underlined when we consider English Romantic painters from the same period, William Blake or Johann Heinrich Füssli, an artist of Swiss origin but who lived all his life in England.

We find a number of variations on the theme of woman, creature of the elements and mysterious mistress of the forces of nature, in the Surrealists' texts, whether in their prose or their poetry, as in Breton's portrayal of Nadja:

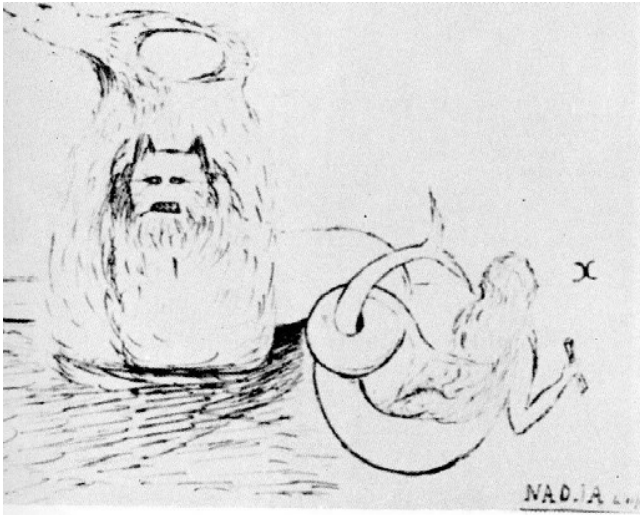
Nadja, qui a rejeté un pan de sa cape sur son épaule se donne, avec une étonnante facilité, les airs du Diable tel qu'il apparaît dans les gravures romantiques. Il fait très sombre et très froid. En me rapprochant d'elle, je m'effraie de constater qu'elle tremble, mais littéralement « comme une feuille ».³¹

She herself evokes those 'personalités mythiques' she feels closest to, such as Mélusine or the mermaid she identifies with:

Le dessin, daté du 18 novembre 1926, comporte un portrait symbolique d'elle [...]: la sirène, sous la forme de laquelle elle se voyait toujours de dos et sous cet angle, tient à la main un rouleau de papier.

³⁰ Johann Gottfried Schadow, although a contemporary of the Romantic generation, is in fact a neo-classical sculptor.

³¹ Breton, *Nadja*, new edition, Paris, Gallimard, 1964, p. 120.



Un portrait symbolique d'elle et de moi... (p. 140).

In Robert Desnos's poem 'Sirène-Anémone' the fairylike inhabitant of water and sea as well as high ferns and stars falling in a cascade of anemones on earth and in the sea, is a creature who possesses the mysteries of nature in constant metamorphosis:

Heureuse de nager loin des hauts promontoires
 Parmi les escadrons de requins fraternels
 La sirène aux seins durs connaît maintes histoires
 Et l'allée des trésors à l'ombre des tunnels.³²

The artistic medium which, in the eyes of the Surrealists, is best able to make visible and tangible this vibrant cosmic world and the fusion of the feminine with this maelstrom, is painting, not only as line and contour but more essentially as colour in movement.³³ The act of painting makes the vital energy animating nature tangible, and infinity beyond reality visible. In one of Max Ernst's last paintings, *Le Jardin de la France* (1962),³⁴ a faceless woman, wrapped as if in a shroud, becomes one with the river, a sand bank as found in the Loire or a floating log drifting indefinitely, her out-stretched body flows like the current that is carrying her, she moves with no fixed destination and makes visible what is beyond banal reality, materialised in a map representing the confluence of the rivers Loire and Indre. The floating woman 'raises [the image] to a higher power and increases it as in an infinite succession of mirrors', to quote Schegel.

Among other artistic expressions and representations of the fusion between woman and nature, also marked by the legacy of the German Romantics, are Henri Laurens' sculptures which fuse the stone

³² Robert Desnos, *Corps et biens*, 1929.

³³ In the 1920s Paul Klee developed a theory of pictorial rhythm according to which colour has its own rhythm and movement transmitted by the painter's gesture.

³⁴ *Le jardin de la France*, exhibition catalogue *Max Ernst*, Beaubourg / Centre Pompidou, 1992.

woman and the water woman. Here again all is in movement, the stone or marble body springing up from the water in *L'Amphion* or flowing like water in *Undinerna* in Sundbyborg in Sweden.³⁵ While marble statues are present in Surrealism, the effect of distancing which characterises them is present in painting rather than in sculpture, as in Giorgio di Chirico's works where they stand in formal poses at improbable crossroads.



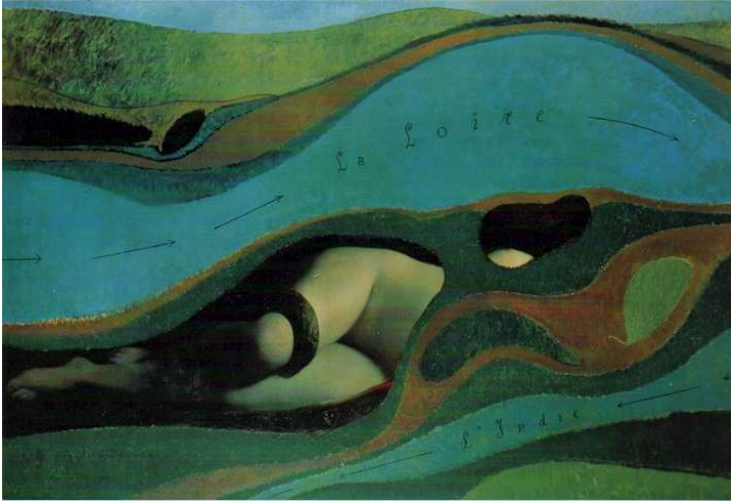
Henri Laurens, *Ondines*

In di Chirico's *Portrait prémonitoire de Guillaume Apollinaire*, painted in 1914, originally titled *L'homme-cible*³⁶, the androgynous head of the Greek statue hides its eyes behind dark glasses, an unusual object which, through a process of deconstruction, generates a dream image producing a feeling of unease later attributed by di Chirico to the magical power of premonition.³⁷ The task of looking for and finding traces of the legacy of the German Romantics in the portrayal of woman of stone or woman of water is endless.

³⁵ *Ondines* by Henri Laurens. Illustrations III and IV.

³⁶ Apollinaire died in 1918 from a wound to his temple ; in *l'Homme cible*, the figure silhouetted in the background has a white hole in his temple.

³⁷ Process of denial of the real object which René Magritte was to develop as an art in itself.



Max Ernst, *Le jardin de la France*, exhibition catalogue *Max Ernst*, Beaubourg / Centre Pompidou, 1992

In conclusion, we should like to propose a tentative approach to Max Ernst's 1940 painting *La Toilette de la mariée* (also titled *L'Habillement de l'épousée*),³⁸ an approach or rather a hypothesis originating in a close reading of Arnim's *Contes bizarres*, which both Breton and Ernst (born in Brühl near the Rhine) thought much of and, perhaps, considered as a source of inspiration. The painting represents a tall female figure, half marble statue and half covered by a crimson cape of richly woven feathers which seems to flow down to the ground. An owl with a fixed stare masks the face, a naked servant with red hair spread out like a wing, is dressing the bride; the scene is set in a Renaissance house, with a black-and-white checkered floor, a rich velvet curtain and a mirror on the stone wall in the background.

³⁸ Emmanuelle Lequeux, 'L'inquiétante étrangeté de *La toilette de la mariée*', *Le Monde*, 12 août 2019. The title of the painting is a reference to Marcel Duchamp's work, *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires même* (1912), reworked in 1923 under the title *Le Grand verre*.



Max Ernst, *La Toilette de la mariée*, catalogue *Max Ernst* exhibition, Beaubourg / Centre Pompidou, 1992

In this setting recalling the account of the young Fortunio in Eichendorff's *Marble Statue*, a few intriguing elements endow the central figure with an enigmatic aura: at her feet is a little green creature, a bisexual gnome, a sort of root abandoned on the floor; behind it a tall black bird holds a lance pointing towards the bride's sexual organs. Another strange detail is the mirror on the wall reflecting the bride not from the back as in reality but from the front. These unusual elements, painted in a naturalistic style but disconnected from reality, can also be found in Arnim's *Isabella von Ägypten*, a story admired by Breton and known by Ernst: Isabelle is to marry the future Charles V to produce a child who will save the people, she is the bride being prepared for the wedding and her 'toilet' is described in detail in Arnim's story. We know the mandrake root which will help willy nilly if not the marriage at least the union of the two young persons: the gnome described as a little monster has two eyes in his neck that Isabelle has planted there, he therefore sees everything, back and front, past and future, like the reflection in the mirror in Ernst's painting. Finally, the black bird with the long neck which seems to be on the point of mutilating the bride has the features of Bella Golem, Isabelle's diabolical double, created by the gnome, turned away to prevent the union with the prince. However, despite these echoes, it would be wrong to see in Ernst's painting a sort of visualisation or simple illustration of Arnim's story. If it shows the importance of the legacy of the German

Romantics in surrealist art, Ernst's painting deconstructs Arnim's narrative, operating a meta-morphosis in the literal sense of the term,³⁹ making it tip into a surreal represented in the strange mirror by doubling the image of the woman seen from the front, but alone in a mineral landscape between sky and earth, where her huge cape is transformed into a split open rock, revealing part of the naked body, with skin like marble, of the woman who is a prisoner of the coat of feathers turned to stone as in *La Forêt pétrifiée* of 1927. Here again, thanks to its special technique,⁴⁰ the painting and its petrified reflection in the mirror actualises what Schlegel had dreamed of, the coming of universal poetry. And perhaps, given the date of the painting, which was started in 1939 and finished in 1940, when Ernst, who had been interned in a camp at Largillière, fled Europe for New York, we might understand the metamorphosis of the bride in the petrified landscape of the mirror as a message from the artist to the books of his childhood which had just been tossed on the bonfire, and a farewell to a Europe abandoned to the savage horde of barbarians?⁴¹



Max Ernst, *L'Europe après la pluie*, catalogue, *Max Ernst* exhibition, Beaubourg / Centre Pompidou, 1992

³⁹ 'Meta-, en philosophie, sciences humaines, logique, prend le sens de 'au-delà de' pour désigner le concept qui subsume l'autre concept', in *Dictionnaire culturel de la langue française*, ed. Alain Rey Le Robert, 2005.

⁴⁰ Max Ernst petrifies the coat using the technique of decalcomania which he had recently discovered and which is applied to oil paint.

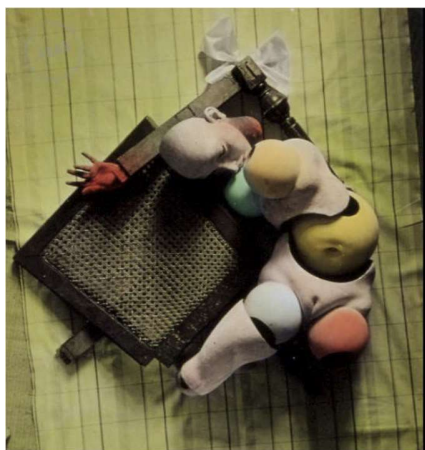
⁴¹ In January 1933 the Bücherverbrennung or book-burning took place in Berlin. Cf. Max Ernst's painting *Barbares marchant vers l'Ouest* (1935) and *L'Europe après la pluie II* (1940-42)

Romanticism and Surrealism. Notes on soulmates

Silke SCHAUDER

INTRODUCTION

Fascination with madness, dream, chance... The marvelous, the unconscious, social critique... Dolls, spiritism, the Unheimlich... the themes that Romanticism and Surrealism seem to share are numerous. An invisible bridge seems to link Olympia, E.T.A. Hoffmann's automaton¹, and Hans Bellmer's dolls²; interconnections are woven between the search for modified states of consciousness, drug-taking in the quest for inspiration, and automatic writing. In his article 'Aux sources romantiques allemandes du Surréalisme' (2018),³ Georges Bloess foregrounded the major contribution of Albert Béguin who, in 1937, published his study of 'L'Âme romantique et le rêve'⁴ on Lichtenberg, Moritz, Herder, Carus, J.-P. Novalis, Tieck, Achim von Arnim, Brentano, Hoffmann and Kleist. Béguin showed how the philosophers of Nature and writers oriented the meaning of the unconscious and dreams before Freud. Later, in the 1970s, studies were devoted to the interrelations between German Romanticism and French Surrealism.⁵



Hans Bellmer, *Poupée*, coloured photo, DR

¹ Cf. Schauder S. (1991), 'Consentir à l'amour par un "Ach" à propos de l'automate Olympia dans "L'Homme au Sable" d'E.T.A. Hoffmann', *Psychologie médicale, Expression et signe*, 23,4, p.403- 405.

² Masson, C. (2000). *La Fabrique de la poupée chez Hans Bellmer*, L'Harmattan, Paris.

³ Bloess, G. (2018). 'Aux sources romantiques allemandes du Surréalisme', *Mélusine*, <http://melusine-surrealisme.fr>.

⁴ Béguin, A. (1937). *L'Âme romantique et le rêve*, Paris, Paris, José Corti 1991.

⁵ Schuller et Isabel Fischer stress in *Der Surrealismus in Deutschland /Le surréalisme en Allemagne* (2017) that Germanophone Surrealism in particular requires further study.

More recently, in *Surrealismus und Wahnsinn* (2009, p.13), Thomas Röske and Ingrid von Beyme pointed to four creative processes that the Surrealists borrowed from the 'art of the insane' (Réja 1907, Prinzhorn 1922): automatic drawing, combining heterogeneous elements, critical paranoia⁶, and the technique of amalgamating figures. All these methods were already deployed, in an as-yet embryonic state, in the works of the Romantics.

Where do Germanophone studies stand today on the question of the specific links between Romanticism and Surrealism ? How does one undertake systematic in-depth comparisons where the risk of anachronism or arbitrary rapprochement is ever-present ? How does one solve the methodological issues raised by linear causality and the search for direct influence which, so often, is hard to prove ?

In this article we seek to look at the recent contributions of German research published in *Romantismus und Surrealismus. Eine Wahlverwandtschaft ?* (Romanticism and Surrealism. An elective affinity ? 2018). These are the collected papers, edited by Sebastian Lübck and Johann Thun, of the young scholars international conference of the CIERA (Centre Interdisciplinaire d'Etudes et de Recherches sur l'Allemagne) held at the Université de Lyon II on 18/19 March 2016⁷. The focus of the conference was a detailed study of the 'links between German-language Romanticism and French-language Surrealism, links frequently confirmed by researchers, yet to date never studied systematically. The aim of the conference was not merely to recognize and effect a meeting of the points of encounter, the filiations and analogies between these two movements, but more specifically to look into the systematic programme of elective ties and make it available for comparative research'.

In their Introduction to the methodological and epistemological issues, titled 'Zur Einleitung: Methodische und wissenschaftstheoretische Überlegungen zur Wahlverwandtschaft zwischen Romantik und Surrealismus' (Introduction: methodological and epistemological reflections on the elective affinity between Romanticism and Surrealism), Lübck and Thun refer to the contribution of the social and cultural philosophy of Michael Löwy on elective affinity in grounding their innovative research methodology⁸. Breaking free of traditional influence models and those based on the notion of historical causality, they

⁶ Developed by Dali and implying multiple visual determinants in the make-up of his puzzle drawings for example.

⁷ The papers by Elisabeth Heyne (*Poetisierte Steine: Romantische und (post-)surrealistische Mythologisierung der Geologie*) et Agathe Mareuge (*De l'analogie romantique au hasard dada et au collage surréaliste : enjeux, modalités et divergences de la redescription poétique du monde*) appear in the programme and review of the conference, but not in the published proceedings.

⁸ Cf. his article on the concept of elective affinity in Max Weber, in 'Les Archives de sciences sociales et des religions', 127, July – Sept. 2004, 'Max Weber, la religion et la construction du social', <https://journals.openedition.org/assr/1055>.

propose instead to seek analogies in order to allow two different spatio-temporal contexts to coexist synchronically. Their methodology, freed from the search for causal ties, encourages instead the comparative investigation of shared forms, proceeding by analogy, and moving critically beyond current historical contradictions and gaps.

Part I of their book examines '*Einbildungskraft, Inspiration und Traum*' (Imaginative power, inspiration and dream) in the two literary movements which, by definition, are opposed to any simplifying rationalism and give the oneiric pride of place. In this light, recourse to dream, madness or drug and alcohol-driven modified states of consciousness are evidence not merely of a rejection of the established order or a simple literary motif, but of a subversive and productive drive inherent in artistic practice. As Florian Nickel shows in *Parallelen der Imagination zwischen E.T.A. Hoffmann und André Breton* (Parallels in imagination between E.T.A. Hoffmann and André Breton), imagination has an analogous role in both. He argues that Breton is seeking to generate in the reader a poetic illusion that will free the imagination, one totally opposed to the realist novel where everything is much more restrictive, because foreseeable. The same textual strategy of sharing an oneiric world with one's reader is to be found in Hoffmann's *Der Einsiedler Serapion* (1819), from his well-known cycle *Die Serapionsbrüder*. Are we witnessing here the start of a real dialogue from one unconscious to the other ?

In the paper 'Poetologie der Einbildungskraft : Eine semantische Isotopie produktionsästhetischer Reflexionen bei Schelling, Novalis, Aragon und Breton' (Poetology of the imagination : a semantic isotopy in a reflection on aesthetics in Schelling, Novalis, Aragon and Breton), Hendrick Heimböckel sees the imagination as being at the heart of their poetics. For these authors, imagination becomes a means of understanding the absolute and could bring together, on a poetic level, the real and the ideal. World view and the vision of the work thus converge under the auspices of the power of the artist's imagination, opposing its utopian project to the straitjacket of convention and social alienation.

Karina Schuller, for her part, offers an article titled ' "Eine Art Somnambulismus, in dem ich die geheimen Beziehungen erkannte"⁹ – Von Mesmerismus und Spiritismus zur écriture automatique : E.T.A. Hoffmann und die literarische Ekstase der Inspiration' ('A Kind of somnambulism in which I perceive secret relations' – From mesmerism and spiritism to automatic writing: E.T.A. Hoffmann and the literary extasy of inspiration). Her analysis centres on the latter's marked interest in spiritist experiences and the study of mesmerism. As with the automatic writing of the Surrealists, the author becomes for Hoffmann a vessel, a

⁹ Quoted from E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Don Juan*, in *Gesammelte Schriften, Phantasiestücke in Callot's Manier* (1827), vol.7, p.97.

medium who, in the throes of creative inspiration, undergoes a form of somnambulism. This experience, lived in passive mode, de-subjectivises them by leading them outside the self, while simultaneously allowing entry to the various manifestations of the unconscious. Do we have here, *avant la lettre*, an illustration of Freud's well-known line : 'The ego is not even master in its own house' ?

In '*Der Traum im Surrealismus: ein romantisches Erbe ?*' (Dreams in Surrealism: a Romantic heritage?) Isabella Ferron investigates the debt that the surrealist dream may have had vis-à-vis Romanticism. She argues that the difference between them lies in the fact that the Romantic dream is a subjective and poetic experience, whereas in Surrealism it becomes a collective myth loaded with political potential. In 2018 Georges Bloess had already stressed their 'foi en la puissance du rêve, nullement réductible à un fantasme, mais langage d'un Inconscient authentiquement créateur. [...] C'est en quoi André Breton s'oppose résolument à Freud, en développant [...] sa propre conception du rêve et en lui attribuant une capacité de 'mise en mouvement'¹⁰.

In Part II of the collection, 'Subjekt- und Lebensentwürfe' (Subject and life projects), Joris Löschburg is defining both romantic and surrealist writing when he talks of a 'technology of the self'. Here, when seeking liberation from social conventions, a subject now invents itself. In his paper, '*An den Grenzen des Selbst. Transgressive Subjektivität in Romantik und Surrealismus*' (At the frontiers of the self. Transgressive subjectivity in Romanticism and Surrealism), Löschburg argues that transgression is inherent in the act of writing. Writing looks towards the authentic, unconscious kernel of the self. In abolishing the frontiers between life and art, he argues, both Romanticism and Surrealism generate a 'counter-discursive' knowledge vis-à-vis the self that is deeply subversive.

Sebastian Lübcke, co-organiser of the conference and co-editor of the collection, proposes a chapter entitled "'Eingebungen der Göttin far niente"¹¹. Frühromantische und surrealistische Subjektmodelle der Offenheit zwischen Entpragmatisierung, Zufall und Anarchie' ('Inspirations of the goddess far niente'. Open models of the subject in early Romanticism and Surrealism, between de-pragmatisation, chance and anarchy). He posits that the early Romantics and Surrealists resorted to chance as a means of subversive action when countering bourgeois capitalist concepts and their utilitarianism. Consequently, chance has the power to make the marvelous possible. In Lübcke's reading it is primarily Aragon who, through his concept of anarchy, free love and life, takes up a transhistorical romantic concept which rejected pre-packaged ways of living, acting and thinking. Utopia here is thus a radical opening-up of the mind and willingness to

¹⁰ *Op.cit.*, p. 15.

¹¹ Quoted from a letter from Friedrich von Hardenberg (20.8.1793) to his friend Friedrich Schlegel.

be led by chance and the unconscious. These allow one to escape the deterministic straitjacket of causal links. One should introduce a nuance in this rather naïve view, however, since Freud's theorising of the unconscious established a strict and critical causal link in the notion of chance which will be the default position until such time as a fuller explanatory model becomes available.

Sandra Markiewicz, for her part, focuses her paper on 'Ein Streifzug durch surrealistische und romantische Topografien. Die Ergründung des Wunderbaren als eine Bewegung ad fontes' (Surrealist and Romantic topographical excursions. The exploration of the marvelous as a return to roots). She seeks to analyse the interrelations between the spiritual and physical dimensions, especially in the sections on Novalis, Breton and Aragon, by showing how liminal spaces – cave, frontier, threshold – are features of a topography of the marvelous. Since they share characteristics like the in-between, the transitional, the indeterminate, such spaces are especially prone to representing romantic and surrealist wanderings.

In Part III, focusing on 'Mythologie und Politik', Johann Thun, co-organiser of the conference and co-editor of the collection, argues that myth ties Surrealism to Romanticism. In "Ein [...] feste[r] Halt für Euer Wirken".¹² *Neue Mythologie und mythe nouveau in Romantik und Surrealismus* ('Strong support for your actions'. New mythology and new myth in Romanticism and Surrealism), he underlines the federating function of the 'new mythology' in moments of historical crisis which demand powerful narratives capable of giving them meaning. Starting with Georges Bataille's myth of the Acephale, Thun reconstructs in particular the political concept of the sacred. In taking up the bases of the Acephale secret society for which Bataille had formulated an esoteric project, Thun argues that it would have been interesting to engage in a more detailed discussion of where Romanticism and Surrealism diverge, in particular concerning the role of sexuality, the orgiastic and the group.

Marc Emmerich, for his part, turns his attention to 'Das Unvernehmen in Romantik und Surrealismus' (Disagreement in romantic and surrealist literature) and investigates the links between the political and the literary. He finds in Rancière's theory of 'mésentente' or disagreement a fruitful basis for the poetologies of both Romanticism and Surrealism, even though the notion of political Romanticism is a controversial topic in German studies. He argues that the notions of romantic irony and automatic writing both constitute 'an aesthetic break with the customary allocation of social places and functions'. The question thus raised is whether this is the source of their subversive power, the side-stepping that introduces, on the margins, an alternative form of freedom of the eminently political subject ?

¹² Quoted from F. Schegel, who has Ludovico voice it in 'Rede über den Mythos' (in *Gespräch über die Poesie*, 1800).

In the fourth and final section, 'Entgrenzte Epistemologien' (Epistemologies beyond frontiers), Sara Bangert tackles the issue of "Unähnliche Ähnlichkeit" in Romantik und Surrealismus' (Similarity and dissimilarity in Romanticism and Surrealism). She considers the elective affinity between them and the mimetic tradition of 'ressemblance'. She argues that even when the latter is not always in evidence one can uncover analogies or ties between the two movements, hence her oxymoron 'ressemblance dissemblance'. In a detailed search for the modes of 'ressemblance' Bangert proposes to widen the debate in order to include theories of both analogy¹³ and metaphor.

In his article (in French) on 'Le rapport aux substances modificatrices de conscience comme affinité élective entre romantisme et surréalisme', Eric Gondard explores the role of re-enchantment that Romanticism and Surrealism attributed to drugs. But in increasing the threshold of perception and exacerbating sensory experience, they could lead to either creative inspiration or severe block. Gondard goes on to propose the extension of the methodology of elective affinity via a sociological perspective. To this end he turns to the work of Max Weber whose contribution has been partly side-lined by the positivist current in sociology. Gondard then offers a critique of the notion of objectivity that must necessarily take into account the subjectivity of the researcher. In his view 'history is no longer understood as a necessary chain of cause and effect, but as a succession of specific moments which can be assembled in [...] a qualitative relationship'.

Among the elective affinities between Romanticism and Surrealism, Susanna Werger explores (in French) 'De l'extase à l'illumination profane : Drogues et création littéraire du romantisme au surréalisme', and discerns the process of idealisation of delirium under the influence of drugs. As we saw, these were used to access states of modified consciousness, to assist artistic inspiration. To this end Werger uncovers the various discourses on drugs up until the early 20th century. As examples, she cites Novalis' *Hymnen an die Nacht*, Théophile Gautier's *Le Club es Hachichins*, Walter Benjamin's *Haschich à Marseille*, and René Crevel's *La Mort difficile*. Among authors who have aestheticised the effects of drugs or alcohol we find E.T.A. Hoffmann, Baudelaire, Ernst Jünger and Henri Michaux. While in Romanticism drugs have a mysterious and quasi-sacred status, Surrealism adopted a secular and anthropological attitude. This explains why in *Le Surréalisme* (1929)¹⁴ Walter Benjamin was able to apply the term 'secular' (*profane*) to the illumination achieved solely through drugs and without recourse to any notion of the divine.

¹³ Cf. the work of Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander (2013), *Analogie, coeur de la pensée*. Odile Jacob, Paris.

¹⁴ Benjamin, W. (1929), 'Le Surréalisme', in *Œuvres II*, Folio 2000, p.113-134.

CONCLUSION

The multiple approaches and perspectives adopted in this collection throw a subtle light on the links between Romanticism and Surrealism. Dream, chance, myth, politics are considered in turn to allow the two soul sisters of literature to meet. Here is the conclusion of the conference : 'The elective affinity method has shown itself to be extremely productive in its heuristic approach to different ways of thinking. It encourages the discovery of similarities within historical dissimilarity. Furthermore, it gives rise to critical debate with positivist and deterministic accounts of history, replaced in elective affinity by a qualitative assessment of the links. The use of this method in a conference on Romanticism and Surrealism seemed especially appropriate since the confrontation of apparent divergences is an integral part of the epistemological and aesthetic canon of the two movements'¹⁵. We would support this position, while introducing a number of, we hope, constructive criticisms. For instance, it would have been instructive to show how Freud was perhaps influenced by the romantic conception of the dream and the unconscious, and how his meeting with the Surrealists was – inevitably – a failure. Similarly, since the recourse to drugs was not limited to the Romantics and Surrealists, a more extensive analysis would have been helpful¹⁶. And finally, a more detailed treatment of the notion of madness would have been enlightening, confronting in particular the sufferings of the subject.

¹⁵ Cf. conference review: http://www.ciera.fr/sites/default/files/document_joint/compte_rendu_du_colloque.pdf

¹⁶ Cf. T. Dardis (1989). *The Thirsty Muse: Alcohol and the American Writer*, Abacus.

How Léona Delcourt crossed André Breton's path and how Nadja was born from this encounter

Rita BISCHOF

In her second-last letter to the founder of Surrealism, the young woman who called herself Nadja acknowledged, in a lucid and resigned tone, that since their encounter was an unthinkable event it would be better not to insist. At the end of February 1927 she wrote : 'Il est sage de ne pas s'appesantir sur l'impossible', adding this enigmatic sentence: 'Mais il faut surpasser. André, malgré tout je suis une partie de toi.' The dilemma into which this encounter had plunged her could scarcely have been expressed more clearly. However, if the event is seen from Breton's point of view, the aim of the book is less a poetics of the impossible than a poetics of the marvelous, as stated in the first *Manifesto of Surrealism*. Breton was on the constant look-out for the sudden incarnation of the marvelous or its presence in real objects in which it crystallised as part of a material poetics. Not only does he locate surrealist aesthetics under the sign of the marvelous within the real, but also in his chance encounter with a woman who would become the heroine of his first novel, or rather his antinovel.

In *Nadja*,¹ whose literary genre remains unspecified, Breton draws up an inventory of chance events linked to the marvelous. The text is composed of three parts. In the first section, the preamble, the author explains to the reader the foundations of surrealist philosophy. He relates the events preceding his chance meeting with Nadja in a Paris street. But he also mentions the Manoir d'Ango in Varengeville-sur-Mer, his summer retreat of 1927 when writing the book. From the start, a new temporality emerges in the account of what precedes the meeting with Nadja: the present of the writer, the time of writing. The Manoir d'Ango was not the final part of the book, as it was originally designed to be. A third section, the epilogue, which was written later, recounts a new encounter which might seem to be off the subject. The first and last sections act as a frame for the story of Nadja in the short interval separating preamble and epilogue, or to put it more precisely, at the start of this period of time.

¹ Unfortunately I was unable to take into consideration the new edition of Breton's *Nadja: Fac-simile du manuscrit*, edited by Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron and Olivier Wagner, published after the submission of the present text.

I LOVE STORIES...²

On several occasions Breton claimed that what mattered to him more than anything was to live poetry and to convert 'l'imaginé au vécu ou plus exactement au devoir-vivre'.³ That was the aim of a surrealist life, and the theory of the event, as presented in the introduction to *Nadja*, responded thereto. But a life guided by objective chance and its arbitrary demands is like a dream and should be deciphered as one, according to Breton's premise. He shared with Freud the ideal of detailed documentation. And yet in *Nadja* he does not record what appeared to him indifferent or non-essential, and he uses the method of contraction and not free association. Events are presented in an extremely condensed manner, with the greatest clarity, expressed in an image where the emotion evoked is still vibrant, but in a transfigured form.

The life that Breton wanted to seize in its immediacy could be seen as linked to the practice of automatic writing insofar as it is not totally controlled by the subject. A life like that demanded a new form of representation because its normal course, continually disrupted, turned to novelty, the unexpected, the unforeseen, and everything beyond the frame; knowing that in the best of cases it follows the movement – just as in the image of the window in the first *Manifesto*, which presupposes recourse to the technique of collage. Instead of following long causal chains and drawing logical conclusions from them, one brings together the surprising moments of a life through their associations with the past or with chance. But even that remains uncertain. The events Breton referred to appear rather as a break or a hiatus in the course of life; such a problem of representation can be expressed in various ways, through the novella or the anecdote, since these two forms of expression are suited to the emergence of a new type of subject.

A person wishing to represent life surrendered to the whims of the moment would be unable to use a form of writing as a continuous flow, developing in a straight line. Here the notion of anecdote is relevant, something Breton claimed to be very keen on: 'J'aime éperdument l'anecdote', he admitted in a letter sent from the Manoir d'Ango to his wife Simone. He explained its importance for him, as the opposite of the established order: 'elle est ce qui échappe à la loi'.⁴ In other words, at the antipodes of History as conceived by Walter Benjamin, who compared historical constructions to 'military orders' that 'brutalise and regiment real life'.⁵ He defined the anecdote as what brings its subject close to us to the point of invading our lives. Inspired by Surrealism, Benjamin used the expression of 'the anecdote as street demo'. This metaphor of insurrection, used in his *Passagenwerk*, had already appeared in his discussion on corporeal

² André Breton, letter to Simone, 27 septembre 1927, O. C., I, p. 1524.

³ *Les Vases communicants*, O. C., II, p. 104.

⁴ André Breton, *Lettres à Simone Kahn*, Édition Jean-Michel Goutier, Paris 2016. Letter of 9 August 1927.

⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagenwerk, Gesammelte Schriften, VI/2*, Frankfurt, Rolf Tiedemann, 1982, p. 677.

and image space (Leibraum und Bildraum) in a 1929 essay, 'Surrealism, the last snapshot of the European intelligentsia'. What Benjamin had to say about jokes, insults or misunderstandings can also be applied to the anecdote: 'The image space opens in all cases where an action displays and forms its own image, absorbing and consuming it, in all cases where proximity sees itself through its own eyes.'⁶

Friedrich Schlegel had already observed that every anecdote carries within it the seed of a literary novella. It is in this sense that the subject-matter of *Nadja* corresponds to the formal criteria of the novella. Breton writes about an *extraordinary event* constituting a dramatic conflict, independently of the account preceding or following it. While Goethe insisted that the novella should arouse astonishment without devastating the heart and reason,⁷ Breton structures his account so as to provoke an initial state of shock and then encourage the reader to recover in order to turn to a rational approach. The novella's subject-matter – the Nadja episode – thus tends to be dissolved in the anecdote. Hence reflecting a discontinuous, alert and agile form of thought. The anecdote corresponds to Breton's formal experimentation insofar as the structure reflects that of the event. It abandons any form of explanation or motivation and rejects the kind of formal ornaments and descriptions that Breton dismissed out of hand. Since the anecdote simplifies representation thanks to its austerity, its concision and acuteness, it is capable of introducing new points of view and revealing hitherto obscure relations. The surrealist character of the work lies in this totally new literary form. The anecdote does not act on the reader's empathy, but on their presence of mind, which is why Breton, following Kleist, distinguishes the anecdote from the fait divers.

CALL HUNTING

The introduction to *Nadja* ends on an image evoking a woman in the form of a 'double reflection' able to reveal to Breton both the other and himself: 'Enfin voici que la tour du Manoir d'Ango saute, et que toute une neige de plumes, qui tombe de ses colombes, fond en touchant le sol de la grande cour naguère empierrée de débris de tuiles et maintenant couverte de vrai sang.'⁸ The story of Nadja opens on a hunting image which is then developed through a series of anecdotes, an idea probably suggested by Léona in her letters. She did not refer to Breton as a hunter but, on several occasions, as a 'bête de proie aux aguets', even as a 'monstre', and she referred to herself as a victim asking for mercy. Breton seized on the image, having himself seen wounded doves fall into the courtyard of the Manor during his stay in Varangeville. The

⁶ Walter Benjamin, *Der Surrealismus, Die letzte Momentaufnahme der europäischen Intelligenz*, Francfort, Rolf Tiedemann & Hermann Schweppenhäuser, 1977, II/1, p. 309.

⁷ Johann Wolfgang v. Goethe, *Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*, O. C., Zurich, Ernst Bleuler, 1949, IX, p. 296 sq.

⁸ O. C., I, p. 682.

image is nevertheless a variation of the theme suggested by Léona. In her letter to Breton of 30 January 1927 she wrote 'Je suis comme une colombe blessée par le plomb qu'elle porte en elle ... Tout mouvement réveille la douleur et, si je lève les yeux, le ciel pleure ma peine pendant que la pluie sillonne les lys.'

In the first mention of the Manoir d'Ango, in the introduction, the motif of hunting is alluded to by Breton via a 'cahute masquée artificiellement de broussailles' where he had been invited to stay and write without being disturbed. What might appear to be vague in the text – 'à la lisière d'un bois, et d'où je pourrais, tout en m'occupant par ailleurs à mon gré, chasser au grand-duc'⁹ – is made clear in a letter to Simone written on 5 August 1926: 'Le patron offrait de me prêter son fusil pour faire avec un grand-duc, et sans quitter la table où je lirais, où j'écrivais, la chasse aux oiseaux de proie.'¹⁰ Breton uses the word 'duc' in a sense which is today rare, largely forgotten, but which was listed in the Larousse dictionary of 1929: the word 'signifie aussi un oiseau qu'on utilise comme appelant à la chasse.'¹¹ Referring to a 'grand-duc' Breton, playing on the ambiguity of the word, is not only referring to the aristocratic title, but also to the majestic forest night bird. One cannot say whether Nadja is a decoy or a prey, or both. Breton himself suggests a link between woman and this hunting image when he observes in an aside: 'Était-il possible qu'il en fût autrement, dès lors que je voulais écrire Nadja?'¹² This image clearly illustrates his ambivalence towards the young woman, presenting himself both as a hunter watching his prey and as a writer working on living matter. As a writer he can't help but turn the situation to his advantage. To our great surprise he maintains the association between hunting and writing, especially in the passage on the explosion of the dovecote. In this analogy, the hunter kills his prey whilst the writer takes on the task of dissecting it.

THE 'NADJA' CASE

The story of Nadja could be interpreted as recounted by Breton as a psychological study or a psychiatric report, a form of expression which he admitted inspired him. And yet the book lacks the qualities of a medical report. The writer is implicated in his narrative and his attitude towards what could be called the Nadja affair is ambivalent, to the extent that he never keeps the necessary distance. This personalizes the form used, insofar as we find neither diagnosis, anamnesis nor psychological analysis in the strict sense of the word. Breton recounts apparently banal anecdotes, which correspond, however, to surrealist life as he understood it, thus outlining a non-clinical perspective.

⁹ O. C., I, p. 653.

¹⁰ *Lettres à Simone Kahn*.

¹¹ Bonnet, in Breton, O. C., I, p. 1529.

¹² O. C., I, p. 653.

Let us imagine for a moment that the Dora case in Freud's 'Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria' is the text of a writer, a hypothesis which is far from absurd since many critics have credited Freud's case studies with literary qualities. The founder of psychoanalysis himself wondered about the difference between his text and a novella. As he saw it, everything that contradicts the 'fine poetic conflict' should concern 'poetic censorship'.¹³ Although he does not explain this term, a rather limited conception of literature results from this distinction, a bourgeois vision concerned above all with the content of the work and the psychology of the hero.

If we examine the relationship between psychoanalysis and avant-garde literature, we note that the Dora case, the revelation of sexual harassment which at the time was less a crime than a peccadillo, is written in a classical style typical of the nineteenth century, the opposite of an experimental work. Its principal characteristic is the presence of the *author as narrator*, directing the course of events, giving stage directions and explanations, an author who, at decisive moments, intervenes in the story to correct it. Such a higher authority is no longer apparent in *Nadja*. As a doctor, Sigmund Freud always sought to keep a distance from his female patients, although in the case of Dora he confesses he was not always successful. Breton, on the other hand, is not a neutral observer, the 'Nadja case' becomes above all his own, he is its instigator and its motionless driving force, whence the ambiguity of the text.

NADJA'S LETTERS

If we had only Breton's text *Nadja* would have remained a fictional character. But we also have access to the letters she wrote to him. When we read them we are aware that the living matter resists the literary form which constrains it, to the point of shattering it. The woman glimpsed turns her gaze to the person looking, asking whose story it is. Breton tells us that *Nadja* wrote him a series of letters between October 1926 and March 1927, a fact confirmed in the first volume of the complete works in the Pléiade edition, published in 1988. The editor, Marguerite Bonnet, the first and for a long time only person to have access to Breton's private archives, quoted a few extracts from Léona's letters in her notes, seeking above all to refute Anna Balakian's claim that these sentences were Breton's invention.¹⁴ For those who doubted the book had a factual basis, she writes: '*Nadja* est incontestablement un récit autobiographique où tout s'efforce non seulement à la vérité, mais à l'exactitude, malgré la place essentielle qu'y tient le non-dit, les rétractions de l'écriture, le halo des silences dont, néanmoins, la réverbération secrète projette sur le texte une sorte de

¹³ Sigmund Freud, *Bruchstück einer Hysterieanalyse*, O. C., V, Francfort, Fischer, 1942/68, p. 220.

¹⁴ Anna Balakian, *Surrealism, The Road to the Absolute*, New York, Noonday Press, 1959.

lumière incertaine.¹⁵ Marguerite Bonnet, who had written a major study on early Surrealism,¹⁶ knew exactly who Nadja was, her name and where she came from. But in order to protect her privacy, she referred to her by the initial of her surname. The rare references to the family, origin and existence of Léona Camille Ghislaine Delcourt sketched out the outlines of her life without revealing more. Subsequent critics all took account of that research. When in 2002 documents from Paul Destribats' collection were displayed at the exhibition *La Révolution Surréaliste* at the Centre Pompidou – unknown drawings by Nadja, a hotel bill in her real name and the fragment of a handwritten sentence – the heroine's real identity was confirmed. The same year, the Pierre Leroy collection, sold at Sotheby's, included five drafts of letters, five drawings and a poem by Nadja which had been published in the London exhibition *Surrealism Unbound*,¹⁷ as well as another poem from the Henry-Louis Mermod collection.¹⁸ When in 2003 the totality of Breton's collection was dispersed, Nadja's desperate letters were made public for the first time, rekindling interest in her.

In her book, *Léona, héroïne du surréalisme* (2010), Hester Albach provides a mass of biographical details on Léona and her family,¹⁹ the circumstances of her internment and the years she spent in a psychiatric institution.²⁰ These details clarify the claims regarding the existence of Nadja, without calling into question the framework established by Marguerite Bonnet. If Nadja's portrait appears more alive, it is above all because of her letters religiously kept by Breton along with the proofs for his book. In an ochre-coloured folder marked with the name NADJA in capital letters in the 2003 sale, there were twenty-seven letters not classified in chronological order, although the addressee had noted the date of postage. Breton had dedicated to René Char²¹ two drawings, including her very first one, today in the Paul Destribats collection, as well as a letter. According to Bonnet, only part of the letters has been dispersed, as a result of Breton's generosity; his gift to Char was not the only one, as we will see below.

MAD LOVE

In his book *André Breton, l'amour-folie* (2004), Georges Sebbag reproduces a postcard published for the first time in Sotheby's sales catalogue *Continental Books and Manuscripts* (3 December 1998). It was in an envelope dated 10 November 1926 along with a second postcard. The two postcards were added to the

¹⁵ Marguerite Bonnet, in André Breton, O. C., I, Paris, 1988, p. 1486.

¹⁶ Marguerite Bonnet, *André Breton, Naissance de l'aventure surréaliste*, José Corti, Paris, 1988.

¹⁷ *Surrealism Unbound*, Tate Modern, London (Novembre 2001 – January 2002).

¹⁸ Her de Vries has followed the trace of the text of *Nadja* in auctions and has published two brochures AUTO-EDITION. Cf. notes 23 et 34.

¹⁹ The facts in question concern her past and the years that followed their encounter, in particular the family of her daughter who she claimed was 'well' married and had 7 children.

²⁰ Hester Albach, *Léona, héroïne du surréalisme*, Arles, Actes Sud, 2009.

²¹ O.C., I, p.1545.

manuscript of *Nadja* that Breton gave Henri-Louis Mermod in December 1928, along with other documents including a poem by Nadja written on the back of a sheet of headed paper from the Brasserie Lamberty, boulevard des Batignolles: 'Tu es mon maître / Je ne suis qu'un petit atome qui respire / dans le coin de tes lèvres ou qui expire ! / Je veux toucher la sérénité d'un doigt/mouillé de (mes) larmes.' Breton inserted the poem, slightly modified,²² in his text along with other treasures: a letter dated 16 January 1927 with the drawing of a cat and the caption: 'Minet est patient / Mais le petit rat !!?'; two other drawings by Nadja, the first version of *La Fleur des amants* and a flowering lily branch. He added several documents designed to illustrate his text, including 8 photographs representing familiar landmarks shot from an unusual angle, none of which were used in the published work. The gift to Mermod was a form of potlatch, expressed by Breton in these terms: 'Je suis profondément honoré de l'accueil que vous avez fait à mon livre et rien ne m'est plus agréable que de penser que le manuscrit vous appartiendra.'²³

Let us return now to Nadja's letters. Some are written on pages torn from a notebook, others on headed paper from various cafés and restaurants, including those in Place Clichy, a useful detail showing where Nadja would go when she was short of money. This square, known nowadays for its seafood restaurants, was at that time close to the prostitutes' quarter. From 1922 to his death Breton lived close by. When Nadja was short of money she tried her luck in carefully chosen places, as Breton confirms. When she asked him for money to pay her hotel bill on 7 October 1926, she did not hide from him the means she would use 'pour se procurer de l'argent, quoiqu'elle n'ait même plus la somme nécessaire pour se faire coiffer et se rendre au Claridge, où, fatalement...'²⁴ It is quite possible she would meet one or other of her benefactors at Claridge's. There is also headed paper from the Café de la Régence²⁵ where, in the same month, Breton had arranged to meet her, and from the Café Terminus at the Gare Saint Lazare, famous for its public concourse or 'salle des pas perdus'. This shows that Nadja would write to Breton from places close to his home or which he himself frequented. Her choice of hotel was also dictated by its proximity, since it could never be too far from rue Fontaine.

Nadja's handwriting is quite delicate and neat, with decorative capital letters; it is quite legible even if it sometimes reflects her changes of mood. The contradictory feelings troubling her at those moments might explain the frequent spelling mistakes. Some of the letters are quite practical, fixing a meeting, asking for money, settling a debt or looking for a job or a room. They show her struggling for her material survival,

²² Breton simply leaves out the personal pronoun. Cf. O.C., I, p. 719.

²³ Her de Vries, ' "J'ai bien des choses à vous dire... " ', *Les lettres de Nadja à André Breton*, Paris, Labyrint, 2010, p. 6.

²⁴ O. C. I, p. 702.

²⁵ This café was frequented by chess players in Diderot's time and is referred to in his *Neveu de Rameau*.

looking for a decent job or lodgings, like everyone else. Breton gives some examples, writing that she had tried several jobs on her arrival in Paris, including shop assistant in a baker's and a pork butcher's.²⁶ These attempts had failed, the wages were too low or the employers too insistent.²⁷ In a letter written end of January, Nadja asked Breton to recommend her to one of his acquaintances as a domestic employee: 'Placez-moi chez un de vos amis. Qu'importe, je ferai ce qu'il y a à faire, n'importe quoi, vous pourriez bien vous occuper de moi, vous, vous avez des relations, je serai discrète, soyez-en sûr.'

What Breton does not mention is that Nadja had tried her luck in the theatre and the music-hall as a wardrobe assistant, an extra or a dancer, since her name appears on artists' lists handled by Paris agencies. This is probably why she used the pseudonym of a popular American dancer.²⁸ In the letter quoted above she refers to one of her unsuccessful attempts. Related in a somewhat clumsy dramatic tone, the anecdote recalls a scene from an Erich von Stroheim film:

De l'autre côté, 11 rue Moncey, on m'a envoyé une convocation, mais il paraît que c'était des sortes de danseuses entraîneuses pour le champagne qu'on avait besoin à 20 frs la soirée. C'était trop drôle, tellement drôle qu'on emmène celles qui se laissent prendre sans leur dire où elles vont. Si j'ai pu savoir cela, c'est à force de ruses. On me causait toujours de ce que je fais à Paris et non de ce que j'allais faire, ni pourquoi on m'a appelé. Je trouvais cela très drôle et je ne leur cachais pas. [...] On me disait ne vous en faites pas, vous êtes payée, habillée, logée, nourrie – et après ? Après – Ah vous aimez les colliers Mademoiselle ? Oui, je ne vois pas ? Il est joli votre collier ! / Il pensait peut-être me prendre par là la vache. / À Mort les vaches ! / À bas la police, Nadja.

Nadja would joke at times and would even appear lively, especially at moments when hope was rekindled. But her moods constantly shifted, at times within the same letter. Apart from occasional obsessive moments, melancholy was the dominant, with occasional bouts of despair. The contents of the letter quoted above predict her imminent collapse: 'Il pleut encore / Ma chambre est sombre / Le cœur dans un abîme / Ma raison se meurt'. These letters are clearly not literary masterpieces. However, as Alain Etienne and Jean Bernier observed, the constant shifts between a conventional style and original elements are breathtaking. They are worth reading if only because they extend Breton's own account. Nadja started to write to him at irregular intervals after he had moved away from her, probably thinking it would do her good. Her letters also deal with events from another more recent period, including her visit to the Galerie Surréaliste. They now confirm that the story, as recounted by Breton, was generally faithful to reality, and can thus be said to authenticate the text. In the poem written on the back of the drawing *La Fleur des amants*, Nadja is

²⁶ 'Jobs which ensured our well-being'.

²⁷ O. C., I, p. 688.

²⁸ Nadia was the stage name of the popular American dancer Beatrice Wanger, who performed at the *Théâtre ésotérique*.

addressing Breton: 'Je vous ai déjà dit que le Temps est taquin', referring to a sentence repeated several times in her letter of 11 October. She adds: 'parce qu'il faut que toute chose arrive à son heure.'²⁹ Not only do the letters complete Breton's account, they also modify his portrait of Nadja, presenting a point of view missing 'til then, her own, and giving the impression that the character is emerging from the novel to cast a critical eye on the author. Whence their importance for the interpretation of Breton's text.

The ideal would be to create a dialogue between Nadja's words and Breton's presentation of them, but this seems scarcely possible, because of the difference of levels of language between the two texts. Nadja's letters do not suppress the asymmetrical relation between the author and the living material she is writing about. The book transcends a factual account or an autobiographical narrative, nonobstant Breton's own denial and that of some of his critics. It is above all a literary text where Breton develops for the first time a theory of the moment and a theory of the encounter at the heart of surrealist aesthetics. The central episode of *Nadja* gives him that opportunity, however it may have affected the character, laid bare by the author, and denied as subject.

DATING THE ENCOUNTER

Following the publication of Nadja's letters and drawings, some doubt persists as to the date of her first encounter with Breton. He gave the date as Monday 4 October, the day he met the young woman in the street among workers and employees going home from work. However, on one of the drawings published around 2000,³⁰ Nadja has noted the date of 3 October. Or, to be more precise, she has written two dates which are clearly important for her in relation to their meeting, firstly 7 October 1926 then, written above that date, 3 October. Since the date of 7 October was the day when she was expecting a sum of money Breton had promised her, their first meeting must have preceded it; one might surmise that, impatient to receive the money, she made a drawing reflecting her state of mind. It contains 4 symbols: a purse, a heart, a star and a mask which can be linked to the idea of money, love, hope and spirit as noted in the right-hand margin. Two of them are easy to decipher, the star probably signifying hope and the mask referring to the spirit. A fifth element, a hook, links the other elements, perhaps meaning hope that the composition will hold up. The star would then be linked to the spirit while the mask would remain the enigmatic element as understood by Nadja. The fact remains that the day following their encounter, while Nadja was waiting for Breton in vain at the Café de la Régence, she sketched the same motif. According to Breton, the first

²⁹ O.C., I, p. 710.

³⁰ This drawing, now in the Bibliothèque Paul Destribats, was reproduced for the first time in the exhibition catalogue *La Révolution surréaliste*, Centre Pompidou, 2002.

drawing, reproduced in his book, dated from 8 October. It is slightly different from the other one in that it has no dates or other additions.

The two drawings were in Breton's possession in 1928, as indicated in two notes from the auctioned archives. They are annotated with the words 'découpages' and 'mise en page', probably as printing instructions for *Nadja*. Most of the other drawings were reproduced. For the original mock-up, unlike the published text, Breton had chosen the drawing dated 7 October, leaving out the dates. Did he avoid making one of the dates public because it bothered him? The question arises in particular for the date of 3 October. For Georges Sebbag, who believes the dated drawing corresponds to the first version, the different date was a simple mistake.³¹ Based on this, the four symbols drawn by Nadja would correspond to the four days spent with Breton. Subtracting 4 from 7, she would have chosen the date of 3 October without taking account of the interval rules.³² A rather sophisticated motivation with which to clarify a doubt which also confronts the original manuscript of *Nadja*. Breton himself had originally written '3 October', then replaced the 3 by a 4.³³ In the original manuscript, bought by Pierre Bergé in 1998 and today in the BNF collections, the change of date is among the very few corrections.

How would things stand if, instead of embarking on calculations like that, Nadja had simply trusted her memory? This would imply a difference which would slightly change the scenario, especially given that another element leads in the same direction, one of the letters concerning not only the change of dates but also the change of their meeting place. Breton, walking towards the Opéra, mentions rue La Fayette, adding: 'devant une église'³⁴ which, according to Bonnet, would be Saint-Vincent-de-Paul. In her letter of 20 January 1927, Nadja evokes 'la puissante image de notre rencontre – près du métro Saint Georges', not far from another church, Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, a few hundred metres from Breton's home.

The story's beginning comes in two versions. According to Nadja their encounter took place on a Sunday. The conversation on workers and their lukewarm attitude towards revolution probably did not take place as related in the text, even if Breton, who was then thinking of joining the Communist Party, tended towards a political solution to social and aesthetic problems. Nadja was perhaps coming out of a church ceremony and might have struck Breton by her untidy appearance in the midst of the parishioners in their Sunday best that he disliked so strongly. He could not even imagine anything happening outside a church that could possibly concern him. And yet, Nadja's origins and education lead one to suppose that she was

³¹ Georges Sebbag, op. cit. p. 56.

³² Op. cit., p. 57.

³³ Her de Vries, *Ce n'est pas les images qui me manquent... Les dessins de Nadja*, Paris, Labyrint 2012, p. 10. He asks the question: 'Breton aurait-il pu commettre la même erreur de calcul ? Cela est peu vraisemblable.'

³⁴ O. C., I, p. 683.

coming out of a religious service, all the more likely since she used the following image: 'Je te vois marcher vers moi avec ce rayon de douce grandeur accroché à tes boucles – et ce regard de Dieu.'

This scene, as evoked by Nadja, inevitably recalls the tragedy of Gretchen in Goethe's *Faust*. Even if Nadja was not as naive as Goethe's heroine, since she was in fact 'une fille perdue', one could well imagine that Breton, outside the church, appeared to her in the light of *Faust*. He himself refers several times to the innocence and purity of his heroine. Nadja was passionately in love with Breton, she adored him, and her letters contain several instances of a kind of syncretic religiosity. Was Breton aware that their meeting outside a church had a Faustian element to it? Did he predate the day they met in order to ward off this impression? He was to indulge in a similar mystification in 1931, when he predated the day of his birth by a day, to 18 instead of 19 February 1896. Thanks to this change, which he maintained throughout his life,³⁵ he would have been born on Shrove Tuesday and not on Ash Wednesday. Mere artist's whim, or a sign of his anticlericalism?

Breton's account of his meeting with Nadja coincided with the adoption of new political beliefs, and it reveals his desire for a radical change in all fields. It is quite possible that the theme of workers in his conversation with Nadja was only introduced the next day, when he saw her again on rue La Fayette, and that on that famous Sunday they had merely agreed when to meet again. Whatever the case, he did speak to her, as we read in a letter from Nadja dated end of January 1927: 'La vie est bête, disais-tu, lors de notre première rencontre.' While this sentence was not taken up as such in the text, another obscure or enigmatic sentence was added by Breton just before his text was printed, as shown in the proofs: 'La vie est autre chose que ce qu'on écrit.' Breton is giving us a lead: in the opening pages he had put limits on the principle of an existence 'de verre', with this warning: 'Peu importe que, de-ci de-là, une erreur ou une omission minime, voire quelque confusion ou un oubli sincère jette une ombre sur ce que je raconte, sur ce qui, dans son ensemble, ne saurait être sujet à caution.'³⁶ This changes nothing in the story of Nadja.

³⁵ These events took place at a time when the Surrealist group was embarking on an anti-religion campaign, at a time when the frontier between dreaming and waking was becoming porous, as recounted in the second part of *Les Vases communicants*. On the change of dates, see Georges Sebbag, *L'imprononçable jour de ma naissance André Breton*, Paris, Jean-Michel Place, 1997.

³⁶ O.C., I, p.653.

'Learning to differentiate' : Julien Gracq's encounter with Germany

M. MESIERZ

Julien Gracq travelled very little. Whether on the road or in books his interest lay in what was nearby rather than far away : French localities rather than the Mexico of Breton or Pieyre de Mandiargues ; works in his mother tongue rather than world literature. This statement needs to be qualified, however : Germany was always present, from childhood until 2007. This was the only country to be covered in a separate section in *En lisant en écrivant* ; German was his first language in the translations he undertook ; from Jünger to Bernhard Boie, his intellectual world was shaped by authors linked to Germanophone culture.

Such factors explain why Gracq is listed among 'ceux qu'on peut appeler les Français/Allemands¹.' To which, with his well-known tendency to keep his distance, Gracq would immediately add

Oui, l'Allemagne m'attire – mais cette immense recharge disponible au centre de l'Europe, cette puissante possibilité à la recherche d'une forme, je me demande ce qu'elle peut apporter à un écrivain français – sinon peut-être quelque chose comme cet état de rumeur, cette vague dilatation de nos frontières, que l'on éprouve à vivre au bord de la mer.

To what extent was this the case ? How are Surrealism and the German cultural world linked in his works ?

'GERMANY IS ATTRACTIVE' : THE SHAPE OF AN ENCOUNTER

1 His initial encounter with the Germanophone cultural world involved piecemeal questioning, acknowledged as such, and partly accidental. Gracq discovered *Parsifal* at the age of 18 at the Palais Garnier. Wagner was a revelation regarding the power of opera and the 'ébranlement affectif maximum'² it can have. From that point, Gracq would be fascinated by the composer or, more precisely, by a number of his works. Indeed, this is true in both music and literature : 'l'auteur est tenu pour le commun dénominateur de tous ses livres, et à cette pression d'une idée reçue nous cédon sans même nous en apercevoir³.' Among Wagner's works Gracq singled out *Parsifal*, *Lohengrin*, certain passages of *Tristan und Isolde*. Gracq also came across the work of Jünger by chance, but in circumstances coloured by Surrealism : a

¹ Julien Gracq, *Lettrines*, in *Œuvres complètes II*, ed. Bernhard Boie, Paris, Gallimard Pléiade, 1995, p. 200.

² Gracq, *Entretiens*, in *Œuvres complètes II*, p. 1219.

³ Gracq, *En lisant en écrivant*, in *Œuvres complètes II*, p. 675.

railway station, hours to while away, a title 'émet [...] des signaux de reconnaissance assez mystérieux [...] and the direct experience of the 'libre communication entre les esprits'⁴. However, the emotional upheaval linked to *On the Marble Cliffs* would not happen again, whether with *Heliopolis* or *Subtle Hunts*.⁵

The choices made in relation to the works of Wagner or Jünger are signs of critical distance. But there were other discoveries which seem to be more circumscribed, straightforward, and repeated with pleasure. For instance, Gracq recalled 'les deux épais volumes de dessins des peintres romantiques allemands que je feuillette longuement chaque été à Sion'⁶. Bernhild Boie's edition notes that this was *Deutsche Romantik. Handzeichnungen* (Munich, Rogner and Bernhard, 1974). These volumes, in which analysis is restricted to the postface, present an alphabetical list of authors, their works accompanied by a brief biography and citation from the author. Gracq leafed through texts : he often resorted to the phrase when referring to the way he read. It suggests a hedonistic, surface approach to texts which seeks accrual in something already familiar rather than the search for something new. This approach, on the one hand, is close to surrealist reading practices – via the taste for the known, the restricted collection; and on the other hand far removed – via the rejection of any systematic intellectual activity.

Alongside critical reading and reading for pleasure Gracq had a further category : the 'livre de formation'⁷. Spengler's oft-discussed *Decline of the West* (Munich, Beck, 1922) was one such text. This category presupposes no total agreement. On the contrary, Gracq distanced himself from an author who 'triche plus d'une fois avec les faits'⁸. Unusually, this text was put to a poetic, rather than ideological, use and Gracq was receptive to 'la mise en écho généralisé de l'histoire'.

And Gracq was confronted directly by History.

2 This primarily bookish encounter with Germany was followed by the direct experience of war. Gracq was involved in WW1, called up and taken prisoner in 1940. His ties with Germanophone culture must therefore be seen in the political context of the period. A fragment published forty years later reveals how deeply shaken Gracq was at the time : a few lines by Hitler, quoted in a book by the historian Joachim Fest, was enough to reawaken Gracq's 'ancien cauchemar'. He saw in History a 'dark poet' more important than

⁴ Gracq, 'Sur Ernst Jünger', *Préférences*, in *Œuvres complètes II*, p. 1158.

⁵ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 715 and *Carnets du grand chemin*, in *Œuvres complètes II*, p. 967.

⁶ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 596.

⁷ *Entretiens*, p. 1195.

⁸ *Entretiens*, p. 1215.

'tant de souvenirs de lecture actifs'⁹. Later, in an interview he granted me at Saint-Florent-le-Vieil¹⁰, he talked of watching Olivier Hirschbiegel's *Der Untergang* (2004), the scenario of which was based on another of Joachim Fest's works.

And yet that personal experience did not lead to a hostile position vis-a-vis Germany and Germanophone culture – unlike that of some other intellectuals. There was no trace of nationalism in Gracq, for whom the historian's approach provided the necessary distance : after 1918 'Kultur gauloise'¹¹ captivated France, as did Bismarck's Germany. Gracq, we might add, shared Bismarck's opposition to Napoléon III¹². Other historical figures and episodes are also recalled, resituating current events within a longer time-frame : the 'Soldier King' Friedrich Wilhelm I¹³ ; Friedrich II of Prussia¹⁴ and his knowledge of French ; the Franco-German diplomatic crisis of 1840 and Musset's patriotic involvement¹⁵ ; Marx's analyses of the French 19th century¹⁶.

In this way Gracq was led to analyse the connections, at the outset at least, linking intellectual output and the historical context in which it appeared. The belatedness of German unification, for instance, could perhaps have led to treating certain individuals as embodiments of various aspects of the country's culture : 'Ô Pédagogue des Allemands ! [...] rien n'arrête un instant Goethe – maître Jacques de la culture allemande en gestation – sur le chemin scabreux qui va de l'artiste ultra-sensible de Werther à la pesanteur du dernier Meister, en passant par la froide épure des *Affinités électives*.'

A 20th century Germanophile has necessarily to look at Germanophone culture in relation to contemporary Germany. Gracq raised these issues and settled them relatively quickly. His critical stance vis-a-vis creative output in the service of an ideology – which would distance him from Surrealism – is particularly sharp when the ideology is aggressive : 'On a le droit de penser que le patriote prussien, en Kleist, n'a pas servi l'auteur dramatique sans mécomptes'¹⁷. *Beyond Good and Evil* is described as 'plus

⁹ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 710. See the analysis by Dominique Perrin (*De Louis Poirier à Julien Gracq*, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2009) on the influence of the historical context on Gracq's intellectual development. She uses this fragment as the starting-point for her study.

¹⁰ Author's interview with Julien Gracq, Saint-Florent-le-Vieil, 30 January 2006.

¹¹ *En lisant en écrivant*, pp. 767-68.

¹² *Lettrines*, p. 174.

¹³ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 760.

¹⁴ *Carnets du grand chemin*, p. 1070.

¹⁵ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 695.

¹⁶ *Lettrines*, p. 170.

¹⁷ *Préférences*, p. 970.

clairement prénazi qu'il n'est permis de l'être¹⁸. By way of contrast, Gracq stressed that Jünger's nationalism was coloured by the marked distance adopted vis-à-vis the Nazi regime¹⁹.

With this overview of the links between historical context and intellectual output in mind, we can now see that in Gracq's texts the Germanic element is infinitely richer than the issues of the 1930s and 1940s. Germany was, first and foremost, a landscape of ideas : 'L'Allemagne itinérante du romantisme, à chaque instant, reporte ses positions artistiques et intellectuelles sur la carte géographique²⁰.' This landscape was formed before the apparition of modern nation states : Gracq recalls the battle of Teutoburg, where Germanic forces countered Rome's legions²¹ and he dreams about the ancient forests in which it took place. And it was this primordial nature that he believed he could find even in the 20th century: 'L'Allemagne [...], des morceaux de sol taraudés, bourdonnants, sertis dans des pans de nature brute, comme des termitières au milieu de la savane²².'

Between the Germany of 1940 and this atemporal territory other references occasionally crop up, helping us to outline the Germanophone element in Gracq's imaginary : Bach²³, Ludvig II of Bavière²⁴ or even, more unexpectedly, certain major chess-players – Gracq himself was a competent amateur player – and it is through this lens that the Germany of the 19th century was recreated²⁵.

Thus the idea of a Mitteleuropa that is both poetic and intellectual was developed, stretching beyond Germany's frontiers and the 20th century's conflicts. Germanophone culture emerges everywhere and, in so doing, relinquished any exclusive link to the land in which it began. Lohengrin, Hagen, Tristan²⁶, figures who reappear on the banks of the river Evre, a tiny affluent of the Loire on which Gracq sails in *Les Eaux étroites*. Faced with a mountain stream in the French Alps it was the words of Novalis that came to mind²⁷. In Ploumanac'h, 'le paysage dévoile partout la nudité corrosive des sculptures d'Arp et des peintures de Tanguy²⁸.'

¹⁸ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 761.

¹⁹ *Préférences*, p. 976.

²⁰ *Carnets du grand chemin*, p. 1094.

²¹ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 709.

²² *Lettrines*, p. 203.

²³ *Carnets du grand chemin*, p. 954.

²⁴ *Carnets du grand chemin*, p. 944.

²⁵ On Steinitz and Lasker see *Carnets du grand chemin*, p. 1066.

²⁶ *Les Eaux étroites*, in *Œuvres complètes II*, pp. 529, 535 and 546.

²⁷ *Lettrines*, p. 162.

²⁸ *Lettrines*, p. 231.

Given the dynamic at their centre, Germanophone culture and Surrealism were both destined to expand internationally²⁹ and belong to Everyman. But mediators were needed so that they could meet, and Gracq had a part in this.

FROM SURREALISM to GERMAN ROMANTICISM : LITERARY HISTORY IN REVERSE

1 Gracq wrote a literary history in which he is one of the characters, and whose subjective dimension he openly acknowledged. Hence, while seeking to construct a coherent intellectual discourse, he also resorted to affect as a means of finding one's path in literature's past : 'le sentiment aveugle, débordant, du consentement confiant et de l'accord, d'où jaillit vraiment la mélodie de la vie, et qui sourdent pour moi inépuisablement de l'œuvre de Novalis ou de Hölderlin³⁰.' Gracq later noted that he found this 'mélodie' in Surrealism.

The incomplete nature of the intellectual references that Gracq called upon when constructing his literary history is yet another sign of its subjectivity. For many years Gracq openly stood apart from academic learning. Consequently, he did not seek to do something similar, and avoided recourse to any systematic bibliographical enquiry. Where German Romanticism is concerned two documents are involved : *Les Romantiques allemands* by the historian Ricarda Huch (Paris, Grasset, 1933) and Albert Béguin's *L'Âme romantique et le rêve* (Marseille, Cahiers du Sud, 1937)³¹.

Lastly, we note that the author's personality emerges in the sundry aspects of literary history that attracted his attention, forming something approaching an intellectual autobiography. His anticlerical bent, for instance (which did not exclude recourse to christianity as a cultural entity), seems to have led him to enjoy the 'impunité [...] dont a joui en Allemagne la dédaigneuse hostilité de Goethe pour le christianisme³²'. Similarly, it was Gracq's dislike of Classicism that led to his preference for German Romanticism, seen as the expression of the irrational which had long been censored. Finally, his intrinsic spirit of independence led to the rejection of any exclusive categorisation : 'De même que le "Je ne suis pas marxiste" de Marx nous est devenu à certains jours un souffle d'air frais sur le visage, de même on a pu

²⁹ Michel Murat, *Le Surréalisme*, Paris, Le Livre de poche, 2013, p. 271.

³⁰ *Préférences*, pp. 879-80.

³¹ For the influence of these two texts on Gracq and the link to German Romanticism, see Susanne Dettmar-Wrana's thesis : *Julien Gracq et la réception du romantisme allemand*, dir. Michel Murat, Université Paris IV, 2000.

³² *Carnets du grand chemin*, p. 1082.

souhaiter dans ces dernières années qu'à bon entendeur Breton rappelât parfois plus expressément, plus énergiquement qu'il n'était pas "surréaliste"³³ ”.

Well aware of the centrality of subjectivity in his writings on literature, Gracq was also conscious of his place in the field of literature. In grounding the links between German Romanticism and Surrealism he was making a movement legitimate and highlighting its contribution, especially when it slipped into a phase of relative decline after 1945 and was attacked by the tenors of Existentialism.

2 Gracq offers us a retrospective history of the links between Surrealism and Germanophone culture. As was often the case, he resorted to a certain distance vis-a-vis a practice he used himself : 'Littératures comparées. On se sent estime et sympathie vraie, à l'heure de l'Europe unie, pour ces perceurs de frontières, qui jettent des ponts entre des rives qui séculairement s'ignorent – même si c'est parfois plutôt pour la perspective que pour la circulation³⁴.' Gracq nevertheless established comparisons between French and German cultures, while adding a historical awareness. It should be noted that this was not a matter of a causal history in which each author or movement generates their successor. On the contrary, it is by going back in time that links can be established. Among the range of possibles offered by a work some appeared, retrospectively, thanks to an approach made possible by a later work. A reverse literary history of this kind is the fruit of an aesthetic choice as much as of an existential strategy within the literary field : in Gracq's opinion, it is via the intuition of possible communication between the individual and the world that

le surréalisme se guide pour satisfaire le "besoin d'ancêtres" qu'il a ressenti, malgré ses dénégations, autant que tout autre mouvement de pensée. C'est là ce qui l'apparente au romantisme allemand, tourmenté de la volonté forcenée de réconcilier l'homme et le monde.³⁵

It follows that with such a selective view of the past not all periods were credited with the same intensity. An intermittent history appeared in which the 'literary centuries'³⁶ do not follow a chronological order and do not last a century. The irrational, for instance, links Surrealism and German Romanticism and, further afield, a variety of cultural products. Murnau's *Nosferatu*, much praised by the Surrealist group, was linked in Gracq's mind to the *Château des Carpathes* by Jules Verne, Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* and the 18th century Gothic novel³⁷. And this, in turn, was associated with Lautréamont with whom a wide range of figures are linked – Luther or Kurt Weill, for example – all brought together under the umbrella of rebellion and an

³³ André Breton. *Quelques aspects de l'écrivain*, in *Œuvres complètes I*, Paris, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1989, p. 512.

³⁴ *Lettrines*, p. 213.

³⁵ André Breton, p. 458-59.

³⁶ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 747.

³⁷ 'Préface à "Nosferatu", de Michel Bouvier et Jean-Louis Leutrat', in *Œuvres complètes II*, p. 1145.

interest in the irrational³⁸. The Surrealism-German Romanticism axis thus generated branches which stretch back to medieval literature or 'les primitifs de tous âges³⁹'. One should note, nevertheless, that this anachronistic history did not exclude moments in which the succession of artists seemed to be part of 'un mode de transmission cumulatif⁴⁰', as was the case for Gracq from Beethoven to Wagner.

In Gracq's texts Surrealism is linked more to 19th century Germanophone culture than to contemporary Germany or France : Breton's links are clearer with Hegel than with Freud⁴¹. And, beyond these periods, '[il] y a sans doute, ainsi qu'on l'a dit, un surréalisme sans âge dont le romantisme allemand a signifié un siècle et demi à l'avance la plupart des formules clés⁴²'.

While taking shape as a coherent and reliable discourse, a fictional history⁴³ was also being introduced, with its heroes and anti-heroes : 'Kleist is an anti-Goethe⁴⁴.' Gracq, resorting explicitly to the vocabulary of Nietzsche, preferred Kleist, seeing in him a Dionysiac artist and an explorer of the unconscious in the line of Sade, Masoch and Freud. This genealogy was shared by a number of surrealist authors. But this history also contained problematic duos in which the most extreme emotions circulate : Wagner and Nietzsche. Gracq's novelistic quest for intense action led him to deplore episodes in literary life deemed too lukewarm : 'Le romantisme allemand est une révolution sans révolte aucune⁴⁵'. The taste for the polemical, shared with the Surrealists, led Gracq to envisage a fictional literary history, and 'il enrage [...] [du] legs empesé et indigeste' left by Wilhelm Meister, imagining instead 'quel beau roman de littérature-fiction il y aurait à écrire : le jeune Goethe précocement attaqué de la poitrine et, au lieu du congélateur de Weimar, s'aiguillant directement sur l'Italie ! Et [...] toute l'œuvre du Père Fondateur des lettres allemandes débarrassée par là d'un coup de son arrière-goût de veau froid mayonnaise⁴⁶'.

We see the makings here of an account in which density is guaranteed by the sheer range of fictional characters available. Even in decline, German Romanticism is peopled by figures like Sophie von

³⁸ 'Lautréamont toujours ' in *Préférences*, pp. 882-901.

³⁹ *André Breton*, p. 459.

⁴⁰ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 749.

⁴¹ *André Breton*, p. 439.

⁴² *Plénièrement*, Saint-Clément-Whilee-Rivière, Fata Morgana, 2006, p. 7.

⁴³ For the romanesque, see Alain Schaffner, 'Le romanesque, mode d'emploi', in *Un Retour des normes romanesques dans la littérature française contemporaine*, eds Wolfgang Asholt, Marc Dambre, Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2010, pp. 51-65 ; Jean-Marie Schaeffer, 'La catégorie du romanesque', in *Le Romanesque*, eds Gilles Declercq, Michel Murat, Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2004.

⁴⁴ 'Le Printemps de Mars', in *Préférences*, p. 972.

⁴⁵ 'Novalis et Henri d'Offerdingen', in *Préférences*, p. 995.

⁴⁶ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 717.

Kühn (called le 'le petit Gries'⁴⁷), a translator and one of the last members of the Jena circle. Or like Clemens Brentano who, towards the end of his life, transcribed the visions of a nun and an alternative model characterised by the fusion of world and spirit, in contrast with which even Surrealism would seem somehow incomplete : 'non seulement, ce que le surréalisme sans doute n'a pu faire, il désigne du doigt l'âge d'or, mais aux meilleurs moments de Novalis il semble vraiment l'évoquer et presque l'avoir vécu.'

A subjective yet precise discourse around Surrealism and its links to Germanophone culture thus developed, freeing itself from the chronological, while foregrounding History's rôle : a novelistic and serious discourse offering both author and reader the opportunity to learn.

GERMAN CULTURE and SHAPING CRITICAL JUDGEMENT

The encounter with Germanophone culture was for Gracq an opportunity to define his own aesthetic principles, and this encounter was linked to his entry into the world of creation : he links *Au Château d'Argol* – a novel praised, somewhat unexpectedly⁴⁸, by Breton – to *Parsifa*⁴⁹. One should nevertheless note the ambiguity with which this literature was appropriated, between fascination and parodic distancing. Ambiguity is also present in his assessment of Romanticism : 'la quête romantique solitaire, dont le terme est la fusion brumeuse, nocturne, la dissolution cosmique dans une nature sans contours et sans rivages (laquelle s'affirme [...] depuis les brouillards d'Ossian jusqu'au nirvana de Tristan)⁵⁰.' And yet, the theme of world/individual fusion was to recur throughout the author's output. Key figures are treated like movements : Goethe, Wagner (because of the mise en scène of his own genius and his relation to money) are frequently praised yet also subjected to reiterated reservations which can be summarised in a formula applicable to many of Gracq's comments : 'On ne peut aimer aujourd'hui Wagner que malgré⁵¹'. Gracq's interest in Germanophone culture was clearly sincere, yet constantly subject to reservations that allowed him to assert his own aesthetic principles while remaining independent vis-à-vis the object he was dealing with.

Furthermore, the encounter with this culture was an opportunity for Gracq to define aesthetic principles directly tied to his own writing practice. Thus, like Wagner who seems to give priority to the orchestra over the actors, Gracq in his novels gives the world priority over the characters⁵². In the same

⁴⁷ 'Novalis et Henri d'Offerdingen', p. 999.

⁴⁸ 'Novalis et Henri d'Offerdingen', p. 995.

⁴⁹ *Au Château d'Argol*, in *Œuvres complètes I*, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Preface, *La beauté convulsive*, in *Œuvres complètes II*, p. 1151.

⁵¹ *Lettrines*, p. 223.

⁵² *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 640.

vein he criticised in Goethe 'la qualité abstraite du tissu du récit, qui traite presque toujours le monde extérieur comme une épure.'⁵³ However, these aesthetic principles were also formulated through opposition : 'Idées et roman : un tel alliage, la littérature allemande semble avoir plus de peine qu'une autre à l'opérer'.⁵⁴ At times this opposition was brought about by resorting to something of a generalisation. When discussing the rhythm of the action in novels Gracq writes : 'tout se passe un peu comme si le don d'une oreille naturellement musicale était compensé chez les Allemands par le retrait d'un autre : celui de l'oreille'⁵⁵.

Critical discourse was also involved in this contact with Germanophone culture. For instance, Gracq highlighted in Schlegel one of the criteria we encounter in his own discourse : 'Remarquable [...] la critique de Frédéric Schlegel selon laquelle la poésie de Goethe "n'a pas de point central"⁵⁶. In fact, in comparing it with Goethe, Gracq foregrounded 'l'œuvre plus centrée et plus étroite de Jünger'⁵⁷. Elsewhere he invented his own critical category when imagining which artists seem marked by 'tongues of fire'⁵⁸. He points to the fact that some (including Novalis) can be included, while others (Wagner) belong exclusively to that category.

Lastly, contact with the output of the Germanophone world contributed to Gracq's relations with the other arts. He contrasts Romanticism, in which music, theatre or poetry are dominant, to Surrealism, characterised by its interest in the visual arts.⁵⁹ Where these are concerned, as with other topics, Gracq's critical discourse was focused and did not seek to be exhaustive. In the case of the history of cinema, he focused in particular on the 1920s and 30s (Pabst, Galeen) and, especially, on German Expressionism (Murnau, Wiene⁶⁰), appreciated for the choice – in certain films – of shooting in the studio with non-realistic sets, thus bringing the entire image under the director's control. Gracq preferred Murnau's *Nosferatu* to Herzog's⁶¹. In doing this he remained faithful to things dating from his discovery of Surrealism. The same is true of painting. Max Ernst's *La Femme 100 têtes*, alongside two or three texts of Breton, provided for Gracq a decisive access to Surrealism in the 1930s. Sixty years later Gracq referred to Ernst when linking

⁵³ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 713.

⁵⁴ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 712.

⁵⁵ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 715.

⁵⁶ *Carnets du grand chemin*, p. 1096.

⁵⁷ 'Sur Ernst Jünger', p. 1161.

⁵⁸ *Lettrines*, p. 184.

⁵⁹ Préface à *La beauté convulsive*, p. 1152.

⁶⁰ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 719.

⁶¹ Préface à *Nosferatu*, p. 1146.

his *Jardin gobe-avions* and the tales of Pieyre de Mandiargues⁶². It was this adherence to the surrealist spirit that led Gracq to stand outside the established cultural icons; a position especially obvious in his writings on music where he voices his opposition to the 'idolatry' of the admirers of Mozart, Bach and Beethoven⁶³.

We can see that, beyond French culture, a stock of references nourished Gracq's critical project ; and we should note that this Germanophone source replaced another – Greco-Roman antiquity – that Gracq rejected, as did a number of Surrealist writers. The choice was deliberate, 'fonds de culture sur lequel poussent et se nourrissent les œuvres⁶⁴'. And it was in Germany that Gracq, while imprisoned in a camp where he joined others in playing the desert island game, became aware 'for the first time'⁶⁵ of the fading of antique cultural roots as a reference shared by intellectuals. Just like ancient culture, Germanophone culture in Gracq's hands stands out in its ability to create relations between works well beyond the cultural zone in which they originated. Thus Gracq could write, when discussing the links between France, Germany, the 19th century and the avant-gardes : 'Dans l'aversion (admirative) que j'éprouve pour Van Gogh se combinent l'éloignement que j'ai pour Beethoven, et l'éloignement que je ressens pour Artaud⁶⁶. »

As we saw, the Germanophone sources were part of a critical choice by Gracq, and not part of some encyclopaedic endeavour, an approach linked to a certain modesty : 'Wagner, lui, est sans doute plus propre qu'un autre musicien à provoquer une fixation exclusive, surtout chez quelqu'un qui n'a, comme moi, qu'une culture musicale tout à fait sommaire⁶⁷.' But Gracq put such weaknesses to good use : since his German was limited he undertook a 'free translation'⁶⁸ of Kleist's *Penthesilea*, somewhere between the dramatist's vision and his own. He also liked German to appear in the epigraph to *Un balcon en forêt* (taken from *Parsifal*), in his narrative ('ein feste Burg⁶⁹') and his poetic writing ('Vergiss mein nicht⁷⁰'). Gracq was both modest and competent, and it is this which makes the systematic acquisition of knowledge otiose while providing the basis for his assessment.

⁶² *Carnets du grand chemin*, p. 1074.

⁶³ *En lisant en écrivant*, pp. 747-48.

⁶⁴ 'Pourquoi la littérature respire mal', in *Préférences*, p. 864.

⁶⁵ 'Pourquoi la littérature respire mal', p. 865.

⁶⁶ *Carnets du grand chemin*, p. 1102.

⁶⁷ *Entretiens*, p. 1220.

⁶⁸ 'Entretien sur 'Penthesilée' par H. von Kleist', in *Œuvres complètes II*, p. 1120.

⁶⁹ *Les Terres du couchant*, Paris, Corti, 2014, p. 118.

⁷⁰ 'Vergiss mein nicht.', in *Liberté grande*, in *Œuvres complètes I*, p. 280.

Clearly, through critical work and the application of aesthetic choices, a vision of literature is developed, linking Surrealism and Germanophone sources, leading to the articulation of an ethics of creative practice. In keeping with the surrealist spirit, the issue was to valorize life as lived rather than textual output. Gracq could thus say of Goethe's life that 'il nous manque un peu, justement, le sentiment qu'elle a passé l'épreuve du feu⁷¹.' Jünger, and even more Breton, were for Gracq emblematic of another relationship between life and literature. Among his companions Breton induced 'fascination' and, even, a form of 'belief'⁷². His gaze was that of the armoured figure in Dürer's *Knigt, Death and the Devil*⁷³ ; and he was an example of 'vie très pleine, décantée par un siècle impitoyable de la naïveté printanière, de l'optimisme trop vulnérable des romantiques allemands⁷⁴.'

The dream of an efficacious art is visible in such portraits, an art in which the work would stand aside in favour of life. Thus Wagner and Buñuel (whose films include the German composer's music) can be linked then relinquished on entering an unhoped-for pastoral world :

Oui, même oubliée la salle où l'on projetait *l'Âge d'Or*, il pourrait être spécialement agréable, terminée la représentation de quelque *Vaisseau Fantôme*, de poser sur le perron de l'Opéra un pied distrait [...], d'écouter percer derrière les orages marins du théâtre la cloche d'une vraie vache, et de ne s'étonner que vaguement [d'] une galopade rustique⁷⁵.

To illustrate this Gracq foregrounded *risqué* texts - which had a decisive hold on the reader – of Germanophone or Germanophile authors : Benjamin Constant ; Kafka⁷⁶ ; Hans Bellmer and Nora Mitrani (for their collaboration on 'Rose au cœur violet'⁷⁷). Gracq often referred to Nietzsche, appreciating his concept of self-affirmation through aesthetic judgement. Contrasting them with Breton, Gracq denounced the theoreticians of literature and the 'monde préalablement vidé de sa sève et qu'ils ont commencé par dessécher sur pied, justiciables par là du mot de Nietzsche : "Le désert s'accroît. Malheur à celui qui porte en lui des déserts"⁷⁸.' This was not an escape into the world of art, however, criticized by Gracq in the case of French Romanticism, to which he preferred 'la conception unitive qui me semble être celle de Novalis : le monde est un, tout est en lui ; de la vie banale au sommet de l'art, il n'y a pas rupture, mais épanouissement magique⁷⁹.' There is an ethics of creativity in the making here : a search for and

⁷¹ 'Sur Ernst Jünger', p. 1161.

⁷² *André Breton*, p. 423-24.

⁷³ *André Breton*, p. 514.

⁷⁴ *Plénièrement*, pp. 15-16.

⁷⁵ 'Pour galvaniser l'urbanisme', *Liberté grande*, pp. 267-268.

⁷⁶ *André Breton*, p. 511.

⁷⁷ 'Préface à "Rose au cœur violet" de Nora Mitrani', in *Œuvres complètes II*, p. 1149.

⁷⁸ *En lisant en écrivant*, p. 732.

⁷⁹ *Entretiens*, p. 1250.

appropriation of the continuity between word and world (and critical writings are fully works in their own right), between the world and art, between culture inherited and the avant-garde.

To conclude, two pathways met in Gracq's œuvre. The first led the young Louis Poirier to discover Germany in books, through armed conflict, then through travel and intellectual and artistic friendships. These experiences enabled him to build a varied stock of references in which the Romantic period is dominant. The second was Gracq's encounter with Surrealism from the 1930s, adhered to and defended in his writings until the end. His critical œuvre, his writings on literary history and part of his fictional and poetic output were marked by this movement. In locating the interaction between the Germanophone sources and Surrealism, in resorting to these cultural sources in educating his critical judgement, he succeeded in bringing together personal and collective experience, writing on and producing literature. He also found his voice, between confidence, modesty and authority : 'Qui s'annonce ici avec une telle solennité ?'⁸⁰.

⁸⁰ *Un beau ténébreux*, in *Œuvres complètes I*, p. 100 : from the incipit of the story, written by Gracq in an officers' POW camp in Germany.

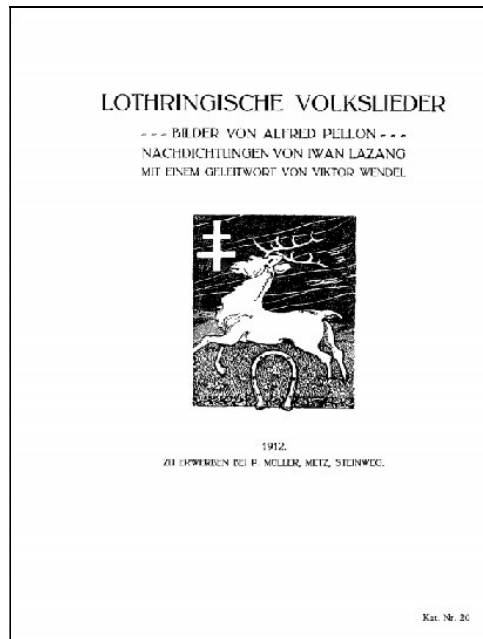
Citizen of the Dream : traces of Romanticism in Yvan Goll

Andreas KRAMER

Literary history has situated Yvan Goll within the complex moments of literary modernity and the twentieth-century European avant-garde. As a consequence, his œuvre, written in both German and French, has been examined in terms of the cultural exchanges between the two countries, and as a multilingual, even translingual, poetics. A significant period in Yvan Goll's poetic output in the second decade of the 20th century is considered linked to Expressionism, whereas in the 1920s his poetry and poetics evolved in the direction of Cubism and Surrealism. It is therefore not surprising that the issue of his links to earlier literary traditions should have attracted less interest. And yet, in what is resolutely modern poetry, Goll resorts to themes and motifs drawn from literary tradition and, in particular, certain myths and legends from antiquity which he then incorporates, to highly contrastive effect, in contemporary technological civilisation. If his work is approached from the angle of its links to literary Romanticism and across the various phases of his creative output, one is led to consider his re-use of Romantic motifs and forms and the traces of Romantic poetics (manifest in particular in traditional popular song, the associative literary image, the tendency to invoke nature as magic) and forms of thought (the links between reality and dream, or poetry as memory, for instance) through the different phases of his creative output. To do so I will examine four important moments in Goll's œuvre in which we see both a confrontation with literary Romanticism and the aim of developing a poetics and a practice of modern poetry. Goll aimed to confront, among other issues, the problem of the subject's alienation in contemporary civilisation, often by imagining ways to overcome this alienation by valorising one's experience of nature and by the dissolution of the frontier between dream and reality.

Goll's first autonomous literary publication was the short collection *Lothringische Volkslieder, Nachdichtungen*, published in 1912 under the name Ivan Lazang. This collection of ten poems was accompanied by illustrations by Alfred Pellon, with clear Jugendstil features, along with a short text by Victor Wendel, who appreciated in these 'popular songs' their ability to take one back to 'our dear Lorraine of the old days', a positive world in open opposition to the contemporary industrial region; a region of 'bare barracks and bunkers, forts and fortresses, steelworks and mineshafts'. A return of this kind to regional popular song was an opportunity to create a nostalgic landscape far removed from industrial and military modernity : popular song harked back to a pre-industrial world, a world that also preceded the period of

conflict between nations. To the Romantic motif of poetry as memory is added a critique of the contemporary world. However, Goll's refusal to engage with the society of his day was short-lived : it is said that in 1914 he presented a doctoral thesis on the working conditions of domestic staff in Lorraine.



The ten poems of the collection belong to the revised tradition of popular songs, as do a significant number of the early poems published elsewhere. These popular songs – sometimes simple ‘rewritings’, whether reworked versions from specific sources, like *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1806-1808) by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, or original pieces – belong to the Romantic tradition of popular song or the so-called ‘artistic’ popular song, characterised by a resolutely impersonal tone. Various versions of the genre came into play during the Romantic period, in the wake of Herder’s concept of the cosmopolitical which argued that there is a ‘popular poetry’ in search of the language of origins, an original tongue common to all peoples. One of the versions treated popular poetry from a poetological angle, with ties to a ‘poetry of nature’ – in other words, a poetry which, like Romantic poetry, articulates nature’s secret language. The other version credited it with a politico-cultural role and saw in it the memory of a time of community and universal experience, still unaffected by hierarchical power, despite reducing it to the narrowly ‘German’ framework implied by such an approach. In the early stages of Goll’s œuvre the connection between the people and art was explicitly grounded in the culture of Lorraine and a potentially progressive and regionalist discourse, limited to Germanophone literature at the turn of the 20th century.

Goll's reworkings were nevertheless scarcely innovatory in literary terms. They take up elements of the Rococo and the aestheticism of the end of the 19th century, as shown in the numerous pastoral motifs and the luxury accessories (fine fabrics, exquisite jewelry). There is a marked virtuosity in his versification even if, overall, it tended to be ornamental. Furthermore, Goll strove to develop the stanza form, pushing it beyond the stereotyped verse of popular song : he composed short verses with three or four stresses and introduced the repetition of certain structural lines of the stanza.

During this early phase of his work universal Romantic elements like friendship, love and death were linked to landscapes and motifs found in nature. Goll often gave the female voice pride of place. Eight of the popular songs in the 1912 collection focus on young girls, and in these songs motifs that are largely psychological are integrated with themes like nostalgia, seduction and punishment. Although the popular songs published in this collection do not make up a cycle, one perceives nevertheless an order based on the seasons and their implicit symbolism : the final poem deals with autumn, following the grape harvest, and has a deeply elegiac tone :

Wir werden nicht mehr in die Vigne geh'n,
Die süßen Trauben alle sind geschnitten,
Oktoberwinde weh'n...
Wir werden nicht den alten Tanz mehr dreh'n
Und unsere Winzer auf den Dorfplatz bitten.

Wir werden nicht mehr in die Vigne geh'n.

Die goldnen Träume und das goldne Laub,
Auf allen Wegen werden sie zertreten,
Und Wolken tranken aus das Himmelsblau.
Wir werden nicht mehr nach den Sternen seh'n,
Nach den geliebten Augen hinter'm Beete ...

Wir werden nicht mehr in die Vigne geh'n.

The cycle of working in and with nature ends with the last poem of the collection. The knowledge that it is time to leave produces an elegiac mood by juxtaposing outer and inner forms of farewell and, finally, the feeling of an ending : with the end of the grape harvest comes the end of the natural year, of love and nostalgia; the end of 'golden dreams'.

On the other hand, in the early poems that Goll published elsewhere, the motifs tied to nature and popular traditions evoked less the pastoral pre-modernity that Wendel referred to in his text of 1912 than the individual in specific contexts. With its three verses composed of parallel quatrains, *Lothringisches Lied*

has the traditional flavour of popular song. In both its content and the rhetoric of affect and feeling it is somehow closer to Romantic poetry : the sound of rain produces a feeling in the soul of the speaker because he perceives something close to prayer ; the song is close to the question contained in a prayer : the ego expresses yearning for communication and compassion for another person's solitude. The poem's closing lines hark back briefly to the Romantics' cult of the dead :

Kleiner Regen,
 Kleiner Regen,
 Bist du es, den ich beten höre
 Die Litaneien unserer Misere?
 Kleiner Bruder,
 Kleiner Bruder,
 Bist du es, der weint
 Am anderen Ende der Welt – allein?
 Kleiner Tod,
 Kleiner Tod,
 Bist du es, der schlummert
 In meinem Herzen, schwer von Kummer?

In this part-innovatory and part-conventional confrontation with the popular song tradition in the early 20th century Goll recalled and quoted a number of poetic and cultural forms drawn from literary Romanticism. However, as suggested by the term 'reworking', that confrontation was retrospective and was not in itself a constructive poetics capable of responding to modernity. Goll's early poems took up the tradition with great skill, endowing it with an impersonal resonance and exposing us to states of affect and consciousness which evoke a timeless Romanticism and the suffering of the individual confronted by the state of the world. The reference here is overt, and the Romanticism derives from an imaginary transposition : in the escape from today's modernity into a pre-modern past. Whereas, from Herder to its high-point in Romanticism, the discovery of the tradition of popular song had highlighted the spontaneous and founding essence of poetry, this objective was linked, via history as mediator – as expressed in Wendel's introduction and Goll's skilful use of tone and verse forms – much more to simulating the spontaneous and original character thereof. It had to be acknowledged : make poetic voices and forms available within literary modernity, because for modern poetry there can be no solid poetics based solely on tradition.

A new phase began when Goll integrated motifs like the city and technical civilisation and resorted to free poetic form. And yet, both during this phase and after, traces of Romanticism remain. Poems like *Erkenntnis* (1912) or *Die Reise* (circa 1911) constitute a transitional phase. In *Erkenntnis* the poetic self is a solitary youth who addresses the moon as both friend and hope. He feels nostalgia for the 'weiten

Rosenauen' and the 'Gesang der jungen Frauen'. On a formal level, the conventional nostalgia for a way out beyond solitude is articulated via a stanza from Romantic popular song. And yet, with his desire for a 'wilde[s] Leben', Goll was borrowing a key formula from Expressionism which had recently become aware of, and drawn attention to, the anti-life tendencies within modernity. *Die Reise* no longer represents the Romantic departure of a self heading into nature. On the contrary, it describes the entry into modernity, despite its conventional language. The line 'Wie balde gings ans Reisen' (How prompt we were to start the journey) that frames the poem expresses a complex temporality, between past and future. Quitting the rural home is followed by a sequence of images of desire and nostalgia like 'Eine Dame kommt hergerannt / Und ferne Wasser gleißen'. Yet the poem establishes a close link between subjective situation (deep sadness, pain of departure, the uncertain, but also looking towards future experiences) and modern forms of transport, the railway journey among them :

Ein Wechsel in den Gleisen:
Da zittert das schwebende Land.
Und gleiches Schluchzen, das sich mir entwand,
Erschüttert unter mir Schienen, Räder und Eisen...
Wie balde gings ans Reisen!

The poem *Der Kanal*, published in 1913 in the Expressionist magazine *Die Aktion*, also dealt with how nature is experienced in an age of technical modernity. In this poem of multiple roles, using the same schema of stanzas and rhymes as *Le Voyage*, the canal acts like a poetic self. While shaped by man the waterway is described like a traveller progressing 'von Tal zu Tal' (from valley to valley), alternating between town and solitude in a nature epitomised by the maple trees, remaining 'stumm und ewig fahl'. Functioning as the 'artificial' subject of the poem, the canal is no longer receptive to the language of nature, thus negating conventional Romantic notions.

Mein Wasser rauscht nicht und es schmeckt so schal.
Mein Spiegel wechselt nicht mit allen Zeiten.
Metallen birgt er nur die Dunkelheiten,
Die zu mir flüchten in nächtiger Qual
Auf meinem langen Weg von Tal zu Tal.

Poems dedicated to nature in a conventional manner, like *Wald [Forest]* (from the collection *Der Torso*, 1918) and *Wassersturz [Waterfall]* (from the *Alpenpassion* cycle in *Dithyramben*, 1918), collected in Kurt Pinthus' influential anthology *Menschheitsdämmerung [Dawn of Humanity]*, are unlike Romanticism in one respect : there is no reference to the union of self and nature, or any evocation of a magical power of any kind in nature. On the contrary, having now become problematic in transitional poems like *Le Voyage* and

Le Canal, the link between poetry and nature shows that what is now difficult is not just the notion of the reunion of self and nature, but even the simple evocation of any nostalgia for such a reunion and, beyond, for humanity's redemption in such a reunion.

The poem on a religion of nature refers to a 'staubigen Wanderer' and a 'heiligen Knecht der Erde' who thinks he sees in the crepuscular light the figure of a patriarch, of a god even, in a woman ; the traveller's nostalgia to be united with feminine nature through a look, a kiss and an ecstatic cry is a miserable failure, and the poem closes on an image of loss of self, perceiving itself as a creature of the forest increasingly disincarnate and finally dissolving into the sacred symbolic space of nature :

'O dein Geschöpf zu sein
Nichts als ein Ton der Erde [...]
Wie heilig Erde war,
Und ich ergab mich dir,
Ging groß in Trieb und Düften auf.

This phase also produced poems in free verse which reflect the influence of Walt Whitman and which, in the Expressionist outpourings filled with humanism and universal fraternisation, resort to typically Romantic motifs. In *Weltbürgers Wanderlied* the lyrical self is presented as 'errant' yet, as 'Bruder' 'aller / Menschen der Welt', he knows that he can go beyond the self through the ideal of fraternity that links all humans within something universal. Moreover, the self is here perceived as part of nature and thus becomes the saviour bringing universal redemption that sweeps aside social and national frontiers : 'Aber ich segle mit Purpurwolken / Da und dorten. / Überall sind Menschen, / Die meiner warten'.

The two versions of *Der Panama-Kanal* (*The Panama Canal*, 1914 et 1918, cf. *Der Kanal* above) allow us to identify the way in which the Expressionist experience of fraternisation and human liberation gave way to disillusion. The first version is a hymn of praise to technical achievement, grounded in the long verses of Whitman's poem, and ending in a utopic vision in which the construction of the canal is turned into a symbol of the liberation and union of humankind :

Ach, die Augen aller trinken Bruderschaft
Aus der Weltliebe unendlich tiefer Schale:
Denn hier liegt verschleißt und verschwistert alle Erdenkraft,
Hier im Kanale.

The second version is more neutral, more sceptical ; Expressionist hope in global regeneration based on the union of all humans, gives way to permanent conflict in exploitation of the worker and pillage of natural resources. Despite this, a universal perspective is maintained because the construction of the canal is identified with the struggle of humankind against the 'alten Erde' : 'Am nächsten Tag war wieder Elend

und Haß. Neue Chefs schrien zu neuer Arbeit an, Neue Sklaven verdamnten ihr tiefes Schicksal. / Am andern Tag rang die Menschheit mit der alten Erde wieder. 'Such scepticism vis-a-vis Expressionism's hope of renewal and redemption derived mainly from the experience of World war I (when Goll was living in Switzerland), then from the Revolution. Goll remained personally attached to a universalist vision nevertheless – as we see in his antimilitarist and pacifist *Elégies internationales* (1915) and *Requiem* (1917). The symbolic value of the colour blue, the expression of a nostalgia within the individual that could be rendered objective, functions in Goll as an expressionist politicisation of a vitalist drive ; hence, the line 'das Wort Barrikade ist ultramarinblau und gefällt mir sehr.'

And yet the typically Expressionist parataxic composition, the free-form and the audacity of the imagery in the contemporaneous poem *Karawane der Sehnsucht* [*Caravan of Longing*] – one of Goll's best-known poems since it figures in *Menschheitsdämmerung* – reveals all the alienation of the subject and his dissatisfaction vis-à-vis the conditions of modern life : 'feu' and 'cri' are now absent, and the Romantic dream of fusion of self and world is now lost.

Traces of natural motifs are scattered across the Expressionist poems on the urban metropolis that Goll included in the collections *Films* (1914), *Dithyramben* (1918) and *Die Unterwelt* (*The Underworld*) (1919). In *Die Automammuts* (1914), the town, with the heavy traffic of its streets and the prison-like buildings rented out to the labour force, is presented like a primitive world, a prehistoric nature of cosmic dimensions ; it has become a source of terror for today's humans : 'Und eine Sekunde / Zittert die Großstadt / Vor dieser Urwelt'. Goll did not offer a mythical vision of the collapse of the modern city, as Georg Heym or Jakob van Hoddis were to do. He preferred to outline the way in which, starting from the confrontation between humans and modern technology and new urban planning, the beginnings of a mythical experience take shape. Looked at in this light, nature no longer appears as a world opposed to modernity but, on the contrary, as intimately linked to the experience of temporal de-synchronisation at the heart of modernity. The poem *Alexanderplatz (Berlin)* (1914) seems at first to be based on images of nature as expressions of protest against a modernity that reduces everything to the status of object – taking the shape here of flowers offered to clients (in Goll's typical spirit of the feminisation of nature) : 'Doch meine Sehnsucht ist viel goldener / Als diese Anemonen im Korb der kleinen Frau'. But the constellations of images seep into each other ; the post-Romantic poem on the city tends to dissolve the frontiers between dream and reality, subject and object : 'die roten Autos meines Übermuts' are propelled by the 'Fieber dieser Stadt', towards the 'Glutgebirge des Asphalts' and a 'Boulevardpass' which melts the 'Sonnenherz zu lauter kleinen Münzen'. The dissolution of the frontier between dream and reality, subjective and

objective worlds, closes on an audacious image in which self and nature merge : 'Da schwenkt ein Traum die grünen Fahnen / meines Tals.'

In the open forms adopted for rime, line and stanza, in their increased confidence and more daring metaphors, these poems conjure up traces of nature within urban and technological modernity. When examined in the light of the evolution of Goll's œuvre, one can discern in these traces of post-romantic motifs in a resolutely modern poetry something like a counterweight to his own beginnings under the auspices of artistic regionalist popular song. His Expressionist poetry on nature and the city does outline relations between nature and subjectivity, indeed with humankind itself, that are very unconventional. It looks, potentially, to experiences that contradict the unnatural and rigidified ways promoted by modern civilisation. It does not, however, overcome in a lasting way the alienation experienced by individuals. In his manifesto *Der Expressionismus stirbt (Expressionism Is Dying)* (1921), Goll concludes that the Expressionist artist's incantations in favour of fraternity and humanity are out-of-date : 'Der "gute Mensch" mit seiner verzweifelten Verbeugung begibt sich in die Kulisse. Das Leben, die Maschine, die Natur behalten recht: jenseits von Gut und Böse.'

Goll's move to Paris in late 1919 heralded a radical new phase in which he sought to promote an autonomous poetics, dialoguing with modern and avant-garde currents, freeing himself from a subjective imitative poetry filled with a now-defunct humanist rhetoric. Abandoning Expressionism, he embraced avant-garde techniques, in particular by reducing and condensing both language and images, allied to a poetics based on a constructive vision in keeping with technological modernity. This was what he termed 'literary Cubism' at the end of the 1910s and the early 1920s, when he was closest to Guillaume Apollinaire and a number of other contemporary poets like Cendrars, Reverdy, Max Jacob, prior to defining them temporarily as 'Surrealists'. The modern poet, like Cubist painters, had to abandon mimesis and unified perspective, and deconstruct the object in order to uncover its essence. From this collection of 'elementary material' made up of words and phrases he had to give birth to images valorised in relation to their 'Schnelligkeit der Assoziation zwischen dem ersten Eindruck und dem letzten Ausdruck'. Just as modern poetry had been doing since Romanticism, Goll also prioritised the image, justifying it however by the fact that poetry was confronted by new ways of seeing and competition from radically new information techniques :

Bis zu Beginn des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts entschied das Ohr über die Qualität eines Gedichts: Rhythmus, Klang, Kadenz, Stabreim, Vers: alles für das Ohr. Seit zwanzig Jahren triumphiert das Auge. Wir sind im Jahrhundert des Films. Mehr und mehr machen wir uns durch visuelle Zeichen verständlich. Schnelligkeit bestimmt heute die Qualität.

These processes were at work in the photographic and cinematographic techniques of perception and the image, the objective being a form of 'cinema-language' and 'radiogramme-poetry'. Goll's efforts to promote literary Cubism, indeed 'Surrealism', brought to the fore other traces of Romanticism in his poetry and poetics in both form and language. In combining audacious poetic metaphors the modern poet has to put before us a new vision of reality, a 'sur-reality' as Goll calls it, referencing Apollinaire. The Romantic objective of systematically blurring the frontier between dream and reality was enriched, in part, by a poetics of the imaginary and the marvelous; and in part by the notion of romanticising the world. In Goll's poetics too, formulated under the influence of the literary avant-garde and the new living conditions imposed by the techno-industrial world of the 20th century, the surreal was not without an artificial and constructivist dimension. And this, consequently, makes the motifs of nature still found in his poetry rather ambivalent. However, unlike Romanticism, Goll is targeting the search in his 'sur-realist' poetry – at least in his theatre, with *Methusalem oder Der ewige Bürger* (1922) and *Der Stall des Augias* (1924) – for a moral objective, seeking to unmask the ideological bases of modern society: 'Die Wirklichkeit des Scheins wird entlarvt zugunsten einer Wahrheit des Seins.'

The two versions of a long urban poem - *Paris brennt* and *Paris brûle* (*Paris is Burning*, 1921) - and the collection *Der Eiffelturm* (*The Eiffel Tower*) (1924) provide a number of convincing examples of the new direction Goll was taking and the radical shift of his language and images in seeking to recompose the real. The poem on Paris mixes brief urban views, based on a radical technique of fleeting visual impressions, slogans, quotes, foregrounding simultaneity and the intermingling of inner and outer worlds, town and nature, occasionally of emotions. The poem also ventures into the language and imagery of the end of the world, the Apocalypse and death, and in so doing reveals the profoundly pessimistic view of civilisation. Goll's simultaneism 'kritisiert und affirmiert die "neue" Welt ebenso gleichzeitig und radikal wie es der "alten" Welt nachtrauert und sie dabei dennoch verwirft'¹; in this way, that 'world of yesterday' covers traces of nature and Romantic images, and the 'new world' the town, technology, mobility and homelessness.

That dual ambivalence towards both nature and modernity is revealed in other poems of the same period. In *Kölner Dom* (*Cologne Cathedral*), Goll resorted to Romantic motifs (nature, water) and commonplaces of nature in Romanticism (religion, the promise of redemption). In keeping with the principle of spatio-temporal simultaneity the poem hints at universal coincidence in a world suspended between decline and revival. The poetic self is no longer located in a natural environment, as was the case in *Der*

¹ Johannes Ullmaier, *Yvan Golls Gedicht "Paris brennt": Zur Bedeutung von Collage, Montage und Simultanismus als gestaltungsverfahren der Avantgarde* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995), p. 208.

Wald, but in the centre of a city with international connections between east and west, now symbolised by the mainline station standing alongside an ancient symbol, the cathedral. In the ecological image of the dirty waters of the Rhine we encounter consciousness of a biological and mythological Nature in its death throes. The grotesque image of a locomotive kneeling before the altar of the cathedral is an ironic replacement for a past spirituality founded on natural religion and individual redemption : the self nowadays is caught up in modern means of transport while the real and mythical dawn has now merged with the colour of a train ticket:

Rheinkohle statt Gold
 Die Fische und die Nymphen
 Sterben im romantischen Wasser aus
 Über die Brücke fahren nur Trauerzüge
 In Särgen wird das letzte Gold geschmuggelt
 Der Osten exportiert seine Frühsonne
 Aurora ist kein Frauenname mehr
 Doch passt er gut für eine Aktiengesellschaft

Wir kamen von Frankreich
 Über den Bahnhof hinaus fuhr unser Zug in den Kölner Dom
 Die Lokomotive hielt vor dem Allerheiligsten
 Und kniete sanft
 Zehn Tote kamen direkt ins Paradies
 Petrus „English spoken“ auf dem Ärmel, bekam ein gutes Trunkgeld
 Die glasgemalten Engel telefonierten
 Und flogen hinüber zur Cox-Bank
 Rosa Dollarschecks einzulösen

Gegen Mittag wurde ein neuer Zug gegen Warschau gebildet.

While it is still possible in *Kölner Dom* to identify a relatively coherent post-Romantic mental and visual world, other poems are further removed from coherent images ; the structure of both syntax and line of poetry are reduced ; the frontier between word and image is dissolved. In *Der letzte Romantiker* [*The Last of the Romantics*], the poetic self is waiting anxiously, caught up in pointless movement ; the wait, perhaps the nostalgia for a sign from nature (spring, a skylark, the moon, violets) fades in the infinity of the movement, while Goll's metaphors build links between subjective emotion and technical mobility, as they did in *Die Reise* : 'Die Lokomotive der Sehnsucht hält an keiner Station mehr'; 'In welches Herz, in welches Herz / Die neuen Veilchen stecken? // Trostlos irre ich so durch Europa / Eine tote Schwalbe in meiner Rocktasche'. The simultaneous mixing of urban and natural worlds, life and death, evokes an infinitely mobile and homeless subject. A different option, also based on the principle of spatio-temporal simultaneity

and the constructivist technique of the image, is at play in *Der Eiffelturm* : this symbol of modern Paris is referred to as 'eiserne Flöte des Engels' and the city is transformed into a modern pastoral landscape which, at least in the poetic vision of the 'angel', opens up the possibility of freeing us from alienation and isolation. That pastoral image is also a technical image, however : the language of the angels, even their music, is man-made, since the Eiffel Tower, symbol of technical progress, was used at that time as a radio transmitter/receiver. One should add that Goll's global perspective is further extended insofar as he is calling – as in the poem on Paris which quotes poems by Cendrars and Huidobro on the Eiffel Tower – for fraternity between humans through poetic and technical communication. Another poem, *Electric*, also outlines a techno-pastoral world : electric lighting, highlighting the Eiffel Tower as emblem of the city, transforming the City of Lights into a natural modern landscape of cosmic dimensions and female undertones, thus giving rise to a desire for union : 'Kupferne Ströme rauschen die Berge herab / Rhone / Montblanc / Mars / Elektrische Wellen fließen durch blonde Nacht / Disken über uns / Das Lachen der Bahnhöfe / Das Perlenhalsband der Boulevards / Und still an eine Parklinde gelehnt / Mademoiselle Nature / Meine Braut.'

During his search for a 'constructive poetics' after 1919, condensed with respect to both language and images, Goll was open to the poetry of other cultures, starting with his discovery of the poetry of eastern Europe following the political evolution of the post-war years, and continuing during the period of wide dissemination of cultures beyond Europe and what was termed their popular poetry. Goll defined the latter as 'Urpoesie' and promoted it as a model for European poetry that was fading into endless stylistic innovations. In *Hai-Kai* (1926), he criticised the language of poetry as out of step with the modern world because it had no impact on the reader used to the rhythm of modern life : 'der Singsang des schönen Verses erweckt Langeweile'. He argued for its replacement by a poetic language which, even at a formal level, would correspond to the rhythm of modern life, even to the 'speed' thereof, and to the 'innere Denkweise des modernen Menschen'. Like the Japanese haiku, it should be able to evoke 'in möglichst wenigen Worten ein möglichst intensives Bild und weites Gefühl.'

In his drive to launch an Expressionist poetry – maximum intensity of the image with a minimum of verbal means – and through recourse to examples taken from the ancient and modern poetry of foreign peoples, Goll overcame his references to regional poetry. He savoured in popular non-European poetry the more spontaneous and 'pure' language and form which, he believed, should be the model for a more contemporary, more condensed and denser language. It should be noted here that Goll's aim of launching a global artform belongs to the Romantic quest for a universal poetry. It is true, however, that this ambition

was not locked in pure abstraction : on the contrary, it was translated into concrete poetic forms and language. In this respect Goll was fully involved in the Primitivism of the avant-garde of the day which saw in the pure and naïve 'language of origins' of supposedly primitive cultures a way to transcend the decadent art and civilisation of western cultures. For Goll, it was not enough to seek to reconcile nature and culture (city-technology-modernity), as Expressionist poetics had done ; his aim was to get beyond the geo-cultural difference and temporal disparity between spontaneity and progress, Europe and the rest of the world. We encounter yet again here an aim shared with Romantic thought, even if the question of how to live 'nature' in the modern world remained imprecise. In the conclusion of his surrealist manifesto Goll declared : 'Unser Surrealismus findet die Natur wieder, das Urgefühl des Menschen und sucht – mit Hilfe eines völlig neuen künstlerischen Materials – aufzubauen.' That 'original feeling', seen as the equivalent of nature, required a 'new, primitive language' that would not be the product of a retrospective and mimetic feeling, but that could derive only from a constructivist process applied to both language and the image, corresponding at the same time to the 'gewaltigen Geschwindigkeit des Lebens, die durch die Technik hervorgerufen und durch Expreß, Telephon, Luftschiff verwirklicht ist'. Along the lines of Romantic art with its 'stimulation of feeling' and its dynamic imagery, Goll's modernist poetics sought, via the constructivist character of its language, to express or at least to simulate an 'original feeling'.

It is not solely in his poetry and the accompanying poetics that Goll highlighted the demands made on individuals by a technological civilisation. Spiritual difficulties were also articulated in the novels he published in the late 1920s which form a series without specific organic links between them. In their formal and stylistic hybridity they focus less on characters and the resolution of narrative conflicts than on world views and issues of cultural criticism. The narratives are mixed with dialogues and passages of reflection, and they can thus be read as responses to the exhaustion of modern and post-Romantic programmes propagated by Goll and the avant-gardes. The confrontation with Romanticism continues in these novels from the central perspective of internationalism, even if superficially it seems to be a critical confrontation with the Americano-European culture of the 'West'. Post-war Europe is marked by ruins, not just literally (battlefields and destruction) but metaphorically : 'Plötzlich, nach Jahren der Verzweiflung, kommt eine letzte Anwendung von Romantik über die Menschheit, eine Art Traumzustand, die notwendige Narkose für den harten, chirurgischen Eingriff des amerikanischen Weltsystems'. The narrator describes the drug-like state of the Romantic world view confronted by the profound changes occurring in European society that Goll's novels located primarily in the cities of Paris and Berlin. In *Berlin Sodome*, post-war Berlin is a city of decadence and death for which the German cultural tradition is partly responsible : 'die Blauen Blumen' are

now producing 'stickende Gase in ihren Stempeln'. Odemar, the protagonist, has a student friend named Wilhelm Wander, and at the start of the novel they walk the Romantic landscapes of the Rhine near Bonn. Goll reads their enthusiasm for poetry and Romantic thought as a protest against capitalism and the war that is looming. He thus personifies the Romantic cult of nature as a naïve escape from society. In the course of the novel the two characters show themselves to be incapable of understanding the current European crisis and the mind's weakness in the face of modern life. Consequently, they are forced into playing a series of frustrating, contradictory and ineffectual roles and, at the end of the novel – parodying the classical Bildungsroman – each is described as: 'naiver Student, mittelalterlicher Mystiker, überzeugter Krieger, wütender Revolutionär, Inflationsspekulant, Romantiker auf der Suche nach der Blauen Blume, Gauner, der in Spielhöllen ein- und ausging, leidenschaftlicher Liebhaber.'

These figures and images of homeless existences also shaped the form and content of the poems Goll wrote in the 1930s and 40s and, especially, his *Jean Sans Terre* cycle (1936-39). In these poems the self is frequently far removed from social reality. The symbolism of the seasons, which in the collection of popular artistic songs of 1912 still provided the semblance of a context, appears henceforth only as memory. Hence a poem like *Jean Sans Terre face au printemps de la mort* resorts to short lines and stanzas with audacious literary images drawn from nature, in order to deconstruct the symbolism of a life's trajectory and the idea of evolution on which it is based. *Jean Sans Terre hante le boulevard* returns to the issue of the temporality of the city, at first via negative images of darkness, the labyrinth, night, solitude and death, before introducing nature seen through sensorial and poetic memory: 'De l'ultime zone/ Un tout petit vent/ Né dans un nid à d'autres/ Soufflé allègrement// Et voici l'aurore/ Renaissant des eaux/ Qui se remémore/ La voix des oiseaux.' This post-Romantic memory of the theatre of nature's return in modernity found an echo in the poetics of dream. Goll raised *Jean Sans Terre* to the status of 'citoyen du rêve' whose 'bleu palais' could become the stage for a liberating metamorphosis: 'Et je me libère/ Et je deviens Jean/ Tout à fait Sans Terre/ Ange du Dedans.' Goll's late lyricism constantly linked individual and nature, yet nostalgia for union was hidden deep within the subject, on the stage of the subjective imagination, where the self plays out the ambiguous role of citizen of dreams. In so doing it makes us aware of the scope of Goll's confrontation with Romanticism's forms, motifs and intellectual conceptions. Traces thereof remained in each creative phase of this last of the Romantics and had an active role in the evolution of his poetry and his poetics. In each phase, these traces direct us towards the answer to his key question: how, and through what means, can poetry become the voice of a dis-alienated self in a technological and increasingly globalised world?

The Power of dreams.

Paul Klee and the French Surrealists

Georges BLOESS

It seems paradoxical to bring together Paul Klee and the French Surrealists. History had initially given him a separate role, on the margins of Expressionism, before integrating him into the Bauhaus, invited by Kandinsky in the early 1920s. For an artist who had prided himself in his isolation (his presence among the members of the Blaue Reiter group could not be read as a commitment), this was a major turning-point. He was given a teaching post. Teaching involved not only sharing one's personal experience as an artist, but also fitting into a specific framework, a project aimed at spreading the principles of Constructivism across Germany – an art movement that was shaking European art to its very foundations, calling into question the very practice of painting. Their watchword: Down with easel painting ! For the Constructivists easel painting was a decorative art, the survival of a moribund culture. For centuries painters had promoted individualism, which had led to the break-up of social cohesion and, indirectly, to the defeat of a great nation. After the collapse of Germany in November 1918, every German artist had to make amends and publish his 'confession'.¹ The Bauhaus was the outcome of this vast movement of doubt and contrition; in a rather muddled mix of religiosity and blind confidence in technique, its declared ambition was to 'build the cathedral of the future'. Its purpose seems to be inscribed in its very name: 'the House of Building'. Hence the disciplines it promoted – both craft and artistic – had to obey the single objective of usefulness in society. Although in Weimar, where the movement was first based, architecture was not taught as a separate discipline, it was in fact the ultimate *raison d'être* of this state institution.

And here we find Paul Klee, surrounded by artists of the stature of Kandinsky or Johannes Itten, teaching his students basic forms and their relation to primary colours; or studying the basics of physics such as weight, balance of forces, etc.; and noting down all this in his many notebooks,² titled *Voies de*

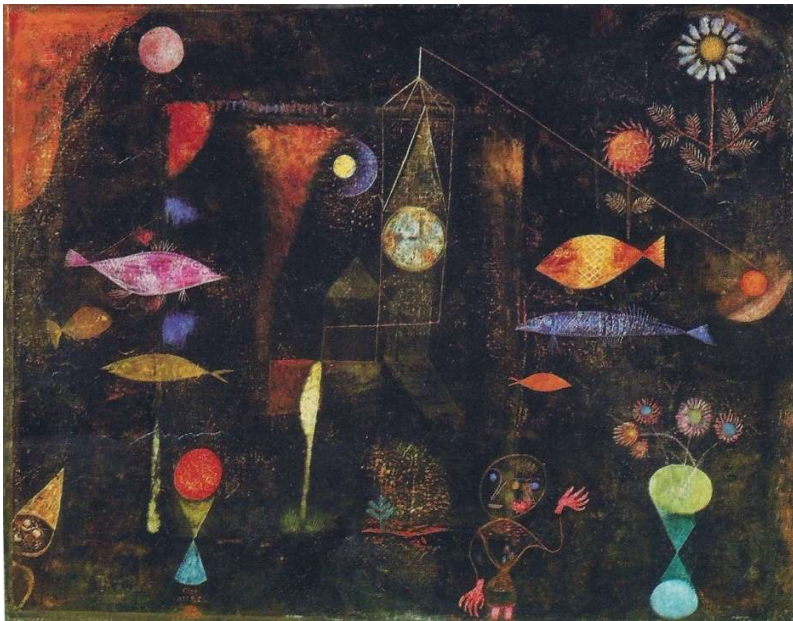
¹ Cf. Georges Bloess, Bruno Taut : "l'architecture allemande entre faute et rachat", in : *Urbi IV*, 1984.

² See, among his numerous pedagogical and theoretical texts : *Contributions à la science des formes créatrices* (1923), *La pensée créatrice* (édit. Posthume 1971), *Esquisses pédagogiques* (1925), *Tentatives exactes dans le domaine de l'art* (1928).

l'étude de la Nature. What could be more contrary to the dominant spirit in Paris than this submission to scientific laws and order ?³ His path was diametrically opposed to that of Surrealism.

And yet, surprising as it might seem, from 1925 Klee was the object of the most laudatory comments on the part of the Surrealists; René Crevel and Antonin Artaud wrote enthusiastic articles about him; and his name regularly appeared on André Breton's list of artists, from *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (1928) to *L'Art magique* (1957), until long after his death in 1940.

Are we dealing with a contradiction or a misunderstanding, or an ambiguity cleverly exploited by our multi-faceted artist? To solve this paradox, let us turn our attention to a work painted in the years 1924-25. Were these critical years for Klee? Whatever the case, the painting, titled *Fischzauber* (Fish Magic), appears to be far from realistic; its format (77 x 89 cm) reflects the artist's preference for average-size canvases, making it easier for him to combine materials and support (in this case, fibre on cardboard) and to use both oil and watercolour.



Paul Klee, *Fischzauber 2*, 1925, Philadelphia Museum of Art, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/paul-klee/fish-magic-1925>

³ The paths of History are unforeseeable, nevertheless, ignoring as they do the borders between the arts. Thus Ré Soupault (1901-1996), née Erna Niemeyer in eastern Prussia, protégée of Kurt Schwitters and Viking Eggeling, temporary spouse of Hans Richter, was to become Kandinsky's student at the Bauhaus in Weimar. She left Germany when the Institute was moved to Dessau; settled in Paris where she became a stylist, journalist and photographer. She met Philippe Soupault in the early 30s and remained close thereafter. We should add also that there was shared interest between Constructivism and Dada : Van Doesburg invited Tzara, Arp and Ernst to a congress in Weimar in 1922 (Cf. Michel Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, J.J.Pauvert 1965, p.369).

By its very simplicity, the title *Fischzauber* sends a message to the young Surrealist poets, while constituting a challenge at a time still recovering from its wounds and divisions, a brutal and cynical time dominated by cold tactics and little inclined to dream, let alone to marvel. Almost a century later and in a general climate quite similar to that of the 1920s, does Klee's work deserve more than an aesthetic response ? That is the question the painting seems to be asking.

A dream space

It is obvious that the artist is taking liberties with the recommendations of the Bauhaus. While mural painting and instantaneous global perception were recommended, *Fischzauber* on the contrary is a very complex composition resisting any easy interpretation. A host of aquatic creatures, fish and plants, seem to stand out against a uniformly black ground, a first impression soon corrected : some of these plants and blossoms can't survive underwater; while the circular forms, of which the Bauhaus authorities would approve, look more like balls, planets or stars. One of them, situated where the diagonals linking the other circles intersect, is particularly disconcerting. Klee has turned it into a clock-face, while the hands are clearly visible, they do not indicate a precise time. We might well read it as approaching midnight if the tip of the big hand is touching number 9. This would explain the little yellow circle, surrounded by a luminous blue halo, placed not far from the clock. What the eye first perceives as a uniform black ground is in fact full of nuances, and one gradually discovers unfathomable depths where myriads of lights are moving about. René Crevel was right to identify them as 'milky ways',⁴ for even if he did not mention *Fischzauber* specifically in his text on Klee, he was probably referring to that painting. We are indeed looking at the image of a starry night. From the early days of his *Tagebuch* or journal, started in late adolescence, Klee often celebrated the night as a friend protecting and inspiring his art. In the painting it displays all its magic, setting off the rich colours of the fish as if they were shining with an inner light. What element are they moving in ? Has the artist discretely introduced us into a perfectly homogeneous universe, where high and low, air and water tend to be fused ? René Crevel was fascinated by the ascending and descending movements transforming the fish into birds through a miracle of weightlessness, designated by the poet as an 'incendie de poissons volants'.⁵ He was also fascinated by the brief but decisive allusion to the obsolescence of the chronological concept of time. For the clock displayed at the centre of the painting is not floating in a void; it is on a clock-tower whose ultra-fine contours are scarcely visible. If we look more

⁴ René Crevel, *Paul Klee*, Paris, Fata Morgana 2011, p.25. Crevel wrote another text on Klee for an exhibition at the Flechtheim gallery in Berlin, in March 1928.

⁵ Ibid.

closely at the tower we can distinguish in the background other roofs and buildings formed by almost ghostlike triangles and squares. Is a mythical Atlantis engulfed in these depths ? Historical time is experienced here in reverse – prefiguring the *Angelus Novus* painting so dear to Walter Benjamin – and drowned in infinite cosmic time: what an act of defiance against modernity, of which the Bauhaus claims to be the avant-garde ! In a period which reveres technical prowess and worships hypothetical linear progress, Klee offered the viewer an abyss lit up by an unreal light. The painting is far from representing a children's story. Here too fascination can be mixed with fear, the marvelous can hide a shiver of terror, Beauty being, as Rilke warned us, 'the beginning of the Terrifying', or a brief respite after terror overcome.

Klee's world deprives us of reference points or limits, evoking the magic of nothingness. What is human time, a derisory time (which the two gnomes round the edges of the painting seem to mock) when confronted with those movements which, according to the view-point adopted, can be considered minute – justified by the reduced format of the painting – or gigantic ? The same is true of the flowers arranged in vases in the form of hourglasses. Elsewhere flowers in full bloom – René Crevel saw 'partout que des éclosions surprenantes'⁶ – evoke a windvane turning with the wind (a work dated 1923 painted in a range of reds represents a windvane,⁷ its title *Rotation* based on a play on words, rot/ red). But this surface animation takes on an unsuspected dimension when one notices the long thread which stretches from the tip of the clock-tower to a small platform fixed to its end, transformed into a swinging pendulum : the cone-shaped roof suggests a roundabout; in a pendular movement the balloon not only moves from right to left but describes a circular movement, the painting inviting us to imagine it in three dimensions.

How can one describe a movement that abolished space and time, englobing in a single gesture the vast and the tiny, transforming in the eye of the dumbfounded poet 'des grouillants poissons' into 'bouquets d'astres' ?⁸ If Surrealism involved wanting to change the world through the force of dream, then Klee was a close ally: 'L'œuvre de Klee est un musée complet du rêve',⁹ wrote René Crevel.

A space of conservation or of holding back a force? Is this force capable of changing life, as the Surrealists hoped, or is it simply a metaphor for change ? Shortly before his posting to the Bauhaus, Klee set out his philosophy in *Schöpferische Konfession*: 'Kunst verhält sich zur Schöpfung gleichnisartig'. And yet the term 'Gleichnis' used here could also refer to a parabola. If we consider the mathematical use of the word, a parabola exerts no influence on a neighbouring line. Can it be otherwise in the case of artistic

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Note that this work followed Soupault's poetry collection *La Rose des vents* (1922).

⁸ René Crevel, *O.C.*, p.30.

⁹ Ibid., p.24.

reason or life itself ? Klee and the Surrealists have opposing views here, and an exploration of their views will allow us to identify their respective positions and to assess the importance of the power of dreams.

Who is dreaming ? Personal dream, impersonal dream, cosmic dream

If *Fischzauber* represents dream space, is it necessarily the account of an actual dream ? Are we not confusing dreaming and daydreaming ? We know that Klee had installed an aquarium in his Bauhaus apartment and he enjoyed contemplating the fish swimming around. He would sometimes share his impressions with students he invited to his home. This calm activity was probably conducive to dreaming : by its very perfection, *Fischzauber* evokes an ideal dream, or the ideal of dreams – that ‘parfait musée du rêve’ that fascinated the Surrealist poet. The artist preferred to use the term ‘magic’, however. Klee remained a spectator, introducing a slight distance, thus refusing to be overwhelmed by emotions (by way of contrast, consider the ‘Umgriff’ or ‘circling’ he would paint in the mid-1930s, knowing he was stricken by a merciless illness !). This hold on the individual, represented for example by Wilhelm Füssli in *Nightmare*, is a sudden intrusion, a forced entry; Klee was well acquainted with the violence of the dream visions his contemporaries depicted : whether Max Klinger’s surgical precision in marking the destruction of the bourgeois world through the sudden irruption of a tragic event; or the hideous and monstrous distortion of everyday reality in the work of his friend Alfred Kubin; or again the anxious presence of a slumbering marine monster in the monumental canvases of Franz von Stuck, whose pupil he had been in Munich for a short time. Klee was quite familiar with this extremely rich oneiric vein which the public seemed to be avid for, until the nightmare became a reality in 1914.

From Füssli to Kubin, dreams are symbolised by a closed space, preferably a bedroom, a bourgeois dwelling or a cave suddenly filled with a foreign material presence. The psyche is an intimate space, a strictly private property where the drama unfolds, summarised in the laconic expression. ‘I am dreaming’. Is this so obvious ? There are variants to the expression: in German for example, the passivity of the dreamer can be emphasized by an intransitive expression frequently used by Romantic poets. Heinrich Heine for example sighs: ‘mir träumte...’, thus suggesting that a dream ‘came to him’. However, an impersonal expression such as ‘it is raining’ or ‘it is snowing’ is excluded, since it seems to be taken for granted that dreaming is an essentially individual adventure.

Klee’s originality consists in the invention (or the reinvention ?) of an external dream, distinct from the human psyche. ‘Die Araberstadt. Materie und Traum zu gleicher Zeit’,¹⁰ he noted in his journal in April

¹⁰ 7 April 1914, *Tagebuch* [Munich 1915], Gert Hatje Verlag, Stuttgart 1988, p.340.

1914 after a night-time walk through the streets of Tunis. Such observations are frequent, suggesting an 'objective' dream of which he was merely a witness.

This invention, far from being the outcome of a sudden intuition, evolved over time. Klee had to experience his own dreams before becoming a spectator of himself and paying as much attention to himself as he did to his aquarium, albeit devoid of fascination. Did he develop a sudden interest in psychology, an increasingly popular discipline at the end of the 19th century ? His journal scarcely mentions it, and in his self-examination he probably expresses himself as an autodidact. The main source of his tendency to observe himself seems to be a disturbed adolescence, during which his crises can be partly explained by oppressive and contradictory parental models (witness the caricatures of his father he produced as an adult !). The voluminous *Tagebuch*, started in 1896, is first and foremost the account of his intimate conflicts and frustrations, his clumsy efforts to communicate with others and his first unsuccessful love affairs. Well aware of the risk of a breakdown, he would pull himself together by an authoritarian: 'Falle nicht, Ich!' ('Don't fall, Me !')¹¹ – in a doubling of the personality, in which the authoritarian inner voice reins in the psyche gone adrift. Was this the beginning of the distancing that would gradually take over ? At the turn of the century his main concern was to resolve the question of choice of artistic expression – violin ? drawing ? poetry ? – giving rise to a debate as agonizing as the preceding one and an equally violent tension, as expressed here:

die Musik ist für mich wie eine verscherzte Geliebte.
Ruhm als Maler ? Schriftsteller, moderner Dichter?
Schlechter Witz. So bin ich beruflos und bummle.¹²

One can imagine the suffering he underwent in this drifting state. However, he was out of danger, the conflict having been displaced. The 'I' was in the process of being constructed and could be approached with the distance provided by humour:

Mein Ich ist nämlich
ein ganz dramatisches Ensemble.¹³

A fragmented identity, torn between contrary impulses ? While that is the case at the beginning of adulthood, the image of a multiple self was being formed, a self rich in possibilities and plural voices that Klee then had to harmonise. In this orchestra, dreams became an instrument or, better still, his sound box; they played a role in his project, as Klee acknowledged in his journal in a note dated July 1925 – about the time he painted *Fischzauber* – about an attempt at writing poetry:

¹¹ *Tagebuch*.

¹² O.C., p.33.

¹³ O.C., p.59.

Die Verse zu diesen Reimen waren zu erdacht, zu gereimt und zu wenig geträumt, obwohl sie bei heller Nachtstunde entstanden.

Dreams that Klee could nurture, enriching his palette or the players of his private orchestra, thus gradually giving shape to his aesthetic project. A fundamental invariable base remained: creation was essentially a matter of subjective maturing, it could not do without individual expression. Whereas, on all sides, the avant-gardes demanded that psychology be excluded, that the creative subject be banned, and went as far as celebrating the disappearance of the slightest trace of manual intervention – a leitmotiv of all abstract movements including Dada – Klee was among the few to stay faithful to the 'self' as origin of the work. In periods of crisis he resorted to taking refuge in what he called his 'cell', his most intimate roots. It is therefore no coincidence that the French Surrealists should identify with him: he was the only thread linking them to the previous generation.

Even if the method of composition of *Les Champs magnétiques* was radically different from that of Klee, the first text of the Surrealist movement, composed of two voices, was based on a similar idea, that of a plural creative self. Similarly, the exquisite corpses produced a few years later were collective improvisations recalling the principle of the 'psychic improvisations' developed by Klee in the years 1908-1912. The Surrealists distanced themselves from him only when they decided to share their dream accounts during their long evenings together, when the idea of a collective dream, a collective creation as the product of the unconscious, became a theory and a militant act. The unconscious was to be shared since 'le surréalisme est à la portée de tous les inconscients', and a radical change of life seemed to be within reach, since 'le Surréalisme est le communisme du génie'. Producing collective works was understood as a revolutionary activity, insofar as conscious and unconscious, reason and imagination, and above all action and pleasure, ceased to be contradictory. What would posterity do with this visionary dream? The path opened by the Surrealists would be followed by others, such as Otto Mühl and certain German and Austrian anarchist communities, where dream-accounts become a dogma; thanks to Günther Brus and the Viennese Actionists the search for a collective creative body became the main objective of many of their performances.

These are some of the authoritarian aberrations in which dreams become an imperative, and their possible exhaustion an object of suspicion. When transparency is declared a duty and the individual is ordered to submit his intimate secrets to the collective, we are a step closer to a state of terror, recalling the obsession of avant-garde movements, tracking down the slightest sign of originality, eradicating the very notion of the individual. Such extremes are evidently very far from surrealist practices and Klee. And yet, there is a fragile balance between accepting a common rule and unconditional freedom, even at the risk of

remaining misunderstood. Witness Klee's career : for a long time he had little success and was often rejected, before being recognized and appreciated quite late, and finally granted a teaching post.

How could this double pitfall be avoided: a solitary career on the one hand and adherence to the spirit of the times and avant-garde dogmatism on the other ? It needed the virtue of humour, which again brings together Klee and the Surrealists. Humour can be found in several details of *Fischzauber* : in the conjunction of disparate elements, as well as in the presence of the comical figures along the edges of the painting. What is the meaning of these sniggering gnomes, one of them wearing a pointed bonnet, the other squinting, a third eye on his forehead : to introduce a distance, sufficient space between us and the 'magic' of a dream scene?

Let's not be overhasty, however. It is true that the Surrealists' games and dreams had the same source as Klee's. Between them they established a science of the unconscious centred on the 'subject' which changed their approach to this new continent of the mind. From their reading of Freud's early texts they drew the idea of a personal, instinctive unconscious, an individual victim of his frustrations and repressed desires. Social life and culture inflict a host of deprivations. The unconscious, according to Freud, far from being an original fact, is only a consequence, manifesting itself in our words and Freudian slips and the sudden freeing of our inhibitions. Seizing hold of this wealth as it seeped out, the Surrealists set out to overturn a civilisation founded on a lie.

Klee's approach to the unconscious was different. He did not discover it like a virgin continent, and although he listened to his 'self' from adolescence he soon became used to its fluctuations. It is the accelerated speed of this evolution which is striking when we read his journal at the turn of the century. He refers first to 'spasms' and 'confusion':

Viele Paradoxa, Nietzsche in der Luft. Verherrlichung des Selbst, und der Triebe. Sexualtrieb ohne Schranken.¹⁴

But he soon gave up identifying with the confusion of his sexual desires and started to look elsewhere for the substance of his being. On the way he came to consider the art of the portrait as a superficial minor genre:

über Porträtkunst. Mancher wird nicht die Wahrheit meines Spiegels erkennen (...). Ich bin nicht dazu da, die Oberfläche zu spiegeln (das kann die Photographie-Platte), sondern ins Innere dringen muss. Ich spiegele bis ins herz hinein. Ich schreibe Worte auf die Stirn und um die Mundwinkel.¹⁵

And he overcame the vanity of human desire in a burst of enthusiasm:

¹⁴ *Tagebuch, O.C.*, p.33/34, §207.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.60.

was jagen die Menschen dahin wie die Wellen vor dem Sturm? (...) der Wind ihrer Wünsche bläst sie an. Aber ihre Wünsche sind eitel (...) ich bin ein Schiffer über ihnen. Mein Schiff ist stark und bringt mich ans Ziel (...) der schönsten Insel zu (...) Ich muss die Insel gewinnen (...) ich habe erreicht die Insel, ich siegte über die Brandung, ohne sie zu löschen.¹⁶

In contrast to Aragon whose self in *Le Paysan de Paris*, gloats, 'nain à la voilure en lambeaux',¹⁷ Klee's self, as tamer of passions, resolved not to ignore but to confront them, and would gradually be fortified and elevated to a theory by the young artist. Most of the time he confided in his works and rarely in the persons close to him, unless exceptional circumstances demanded it. Thus, when his friend Franz Marc was fighting on the front in the Vosges and his wife Maria feared for his life, Klee met her during his leave. The conversation at one point turned to the question of the self. While Marc had lost himself in pure theory, according to Klee, he himself defended the idea of a self, distinguishing an 'egotistic' self from a 'divine' self.¹⁸ There was probably very little consolation for Maria Marc in such musings. Their strangeness is only clarified by referring to the thoughts Klee noted in his journal (shortly before their meeting):

Das Herz welches für diese Welt schlug ist in mir wie zu Tode/ getroffen. Als ob mich mit 'diesen' Dingen nur noch Erinnerungen verbänden. Ob nun der kristallinische Typ aus mir wird ? Mozart rettete sich/ (ohne sein Inferno zu übersehen!) im grossen ganzen in die freudige Hälfte hinüber. Wer das nicht ganz begreift, könnte ihn mit dem kristallinischen Typ verwechseln.¹⁹

He develops his reasoning for purely personal reasons:

Man verlässt die diesseitige Gegend und baut dafür hin/über in eine jenseitige, die ganz sein darf./ Abstraction.
Die kühle Romantik.²⁰

His idea of the 'crystalline self' which he claimed is 'immortal' ('Kann ich denn sterben, Ich-Kristall?')²¹ would give rise to works that are 'crystalline, against which the lava of pathos is defenceless'. The fate of this 'crystalline self' is 'ein beträchtliches Schicksal, Waage zu sein zwischen Hüben und/ Drüben, Waage auf der Grenze des Geistig-heutigen.'²²

It would be a mistake to think that Klee, like many of his contemporaries, had adopted the speculations of the theosophists and anthroposophists, widespread in his time (and geographically close to

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Quoted in Michael Riffaterre, 'La métaphore filée dans le surréalisme', *La Production du texte*, Paris, Seuil, 1979.

¹⁸ 'unterscheidend zwischen einem selbstsüchtigen und einem göttlichen Ich'. *Tagebuch*, p.370.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.365.

²⁰ Ibid., p.366.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p.368. The three-eyed gnome at the lower edge of *Fischzauber* is located on the margins of several worlds, the conscious and the unconscious, our world and the world beyond, the present and the past.

his childhood home, in the case of Rudolf Steiner's Goetheanum). Klee dismissed these theories. On the other hand he identified with Novalis, the father of Romanticism (even though his own father claimed to be 'kühl', free of passion) and in Novalis's 'übersinnlich' body, beyond the sensory body.

Some will see in this a mystical drift. This might be true, but Klee's is not an isolated case. Antonin Artaud, whom he seemed to have considered his spiritual son, gave up human passions at an early stage, along with political commitment and above all, 'cette révolution qui croit déjà connaître l'homme et le fait prisonnier de ses plus grossières nécessités'. He continues: 'L'art engagé se prostitue dans la plus vile propagande.' In 1925, the year he discovered Klee's works, he became much more demanding in his spiritual quest. After claiming that 'l'Esprit est un principe essentiellement irréductible et qui ne peut trouver à se fixer ni dans la vie, ni au-delà', he set out his personal conception of surrealist revolution:

L'idée d'une révolution surréaliste vise à la substance profonde et à l'ordre de la pensée. Elle ne peut être conçue qu'en fonction de son pouvoir de désagrégation de la vie. Elle vise à créer un mysticisme d'un nouveau genre et elle exige une désaffection absolue de ce qu'on a coutume d'appeler la vie.²³

The 'moi-cristal' is characterised by a combination of density, hardness and transparency. According to Novalis, its receptive cavity gives it resonance : 'What is a body? A space made harmonious'. Klee aspired above all to creating within himself a space of harmony, to be in unison with 'the inner space of the world', in Rilke's words.

The concept of the unconscious as he understood it, and which he shared with the German Romantics of the dawn of the 19th century, has little in common with the Surrealists (with the exception of Max Ernst, who shared this legacy). His concept of the unconscious was ancestral, even primordial, the hidden face of Nature. Only those who accede to it can call themselves artists. It would be folly to think that it could be the outcome of a Promethean act. Klee's maturing years as an artist were thus marked by attempts, patient explorations, hopes and disappointments. The *Tagebuch* carries traces in the half-realistic half-visionary descriptions of a solitary, waiting being whose sole companion is the night and for whom the only sign of human existence is the distant sound of a piano:

Tiefe Nacht jetzt, nicht für mich, sondern für die anderen. Ich kann aber nicht schlafen. Hie und da glüht es noch und flammt. Am Fenster etwas Kühlung suchend sehe ich, dass draussen alles verloschen. Nur fern leuchtet noch ein kleines Fenster. Wahrscheinlich sitzt dort ein Anderer ? Irgendwo muss ich doch nicht ganz einsam sein ? Und da klingen die Töne eines alten Klaviers herüber, das Stöhnen eines anderen Verwundeten.²⁴

²³ Antonin Artaud, *Bureau de recherches surréalistes*, 1925; quoted in *La Révolution surréaliste*, Paris, Edit. du Centre Pompidou 2002, p. 396.

²⁴ *Tagebuch*, July 1908.

He stands on the threshold of the beyond. Night – venerated by the Romantics, and later celebrated by Breton – is a propitious space, the crucible of a new work, thanks to the erasure of the senses. Thanks to the Night, Klee can participate in the Totality. The art of colours, whose secret Day refuses to yield, is granted to him by their very disappearance. Their richness is returned to him in the darkness, synonym of fusion, weightlessness and communion with the inner world. The unconscious in which Klee was enveloped in his Tunisian night experience was, as Artaud shrewdly perceived, a cosmic unconscious, thanks to which he could call himself a ‘painter’ at last. It was a sudden metamorphosis. Firstly, on 12 April:

Der Abend ist unbeschreiblich. Zum Überfluss geht noch der Vollmond auf (...). Ich weiss die Strecke von Meinem Versagen bis/ zur Natur (...). Ich bin gar nicht deprimiert deshalb. Es darf nicht eilen müssen (...). Der Abend ist tief in mir drin für immer./ Mancher blonde Mondaufgang des Nordens wird als gedämpftes/ Spiegelbild mich leise mahnen und immer wieder mahnen. Er wird meine Braut sein, mein andres Ich. Mich zu finden ein Anreiz. Ich selber aber/ ein Mondaufgang des Südens.²⁵

But, on the night of 17 April :

Ein Abend von ebenso zarter als bestimmter Farbigkeit (...). Ich lasse jetzt die Arbeit. Es dringt so tief in/ mich hinein, ich fühle das und werde so sicher, ohne Fleiss./ Die Farbe hat mich. Ich brauche nicht nach ihr zu haschen./ Sie hat mich für immer, ich weiss das. Das ist der glücklichen/ Stunde Sinn : ich und die Farbe sind eins. Ich bin Maler.²⁶

Did this night of mystical fusion favour passive activity or a form of active passivity ? In the first stage of production: collecting the material, the work is approached as in a waking dream. In a similar state, Jean Arp or Ernst collected on a beach fragments of wrecks, dried algae, pebbles abandoned by the tide or stones imprinted with fossil shells. And what of the landscapes of Yves Tanguy, where one feels that one is gazing at a beach after the sea has withdrawn ? A meeting of the unconscious of nature and of humans, brought together by dreams. While the Surrealists differed from Klee on the *origin* of the unconscious, they agreed with him unreservedly on the reception of what it *produced*. How should one consider the contents of their dreams, as simple objects or symbols ? Or would it be more precise to consider them as forces ?

The oceanic dream and fecund night. The dream universe, from content to container

Should objects and symbols be reduced to matter to be analysed? A common method consists in interpreting a surrealist painting or text as an inventory. A list is drawn up of its objects and words, which one attempts to make sense of according to the frequency of its details. Are we, when faced with such works [dealing with] objects, with words ? Obviously they don't correspond to the objects or words we use on a daily basis. Even in Magritte's works, where they are meticulously reproduced, words and objects are

²⁵ *Tagebuch*, 12 April 1914, p.344.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.350.

there precisely to contradict their normal usage, underlining the disparity with what we call the 'real'. They are there for their incongruous presence and their vague association with other elements. The fruit of dreams, they produce new visions for reader or viewer.

Could they be read as symbols ? From Klee to Dali and Breton the path of creation is littered with titles including the word 'dream'. Certain objects, to quote Breton, even have a 'fonctionnement symbolique'. An attractive notion which refers, however, to earlier meanings – even if these meanings have the advantage of being complex and of questioning mythological depths. The analysis in this case would proceed in the manner of an archaeologist : probing and isolating objects, removing them from their context in order to unveil their meanings. Do the veils covering the faces in many of Magritte's paintings demand to be unveiled ? Certainly not. Thus, by bringing the unknown back to the known, the work of the analyst is necessarily reductive, breaking up what aspired to unity. To describe this process German has a colourful term, 'zergliedern', meaning to dismember or disarticulate. Analysis and the creative act thus head in opposite directions.

There is a misunderstanding of principle between these two activities: a poem or painting does not consist in an assemblage of inert signs or components. Rather than gestures or the traces of gestures, they are fragments of beings and, in the case that concerns us here, hybrid beings moving between two worlds. These forms demand to be observed in their true state, as expressions of tension and desire, before forming an organism. Matisse, who could never be accused of surrealist leanings, expressed this directly: 'Il faut toujours suivre le désir de la ligne, le point où elle veut entrer ou mourir.'²⁷ Does the line espouse the inexpressible desire of the body ? André Masson was in no doubt about this:

Je dessine. Cette ligne n'enfermera pas, ne cernera pas le vide. Trace prolongée du sillage d'un corps, de sa respiration, ce sera un signe choisi entre mille, mais qui les supposera tous.²⁸

Let us imagine, however, that the line has an independent life, the hand following its 'mouvement propre', as suggested by Breton after studying Masson's automatic drawings:

La main du peintre s'allie véritablement avec lui [...] elle n'est plus celle qui calque les formes des objets, mais bien celle qui, éprise de son mouvement propre et de lui seul, décrit les figures involontaires dans lesquelles l'esprit montre que ces formes sont appelées à se réincorporer [...] sans intention préconçue, la plume qui court pour écrire ou le crayon qui court pour dessiner, file une substance infiniment précieuse.²⁹

The same was true of Klee. In his *Schöpferische Konfession* he lends the line 'expression, dynamism and psyche'. While the word 'desire' rarely appears in his text, every bit of his work is brimming with it, as

²⁷ Quoted by Jean-Luc Nancy, in : *Le plaisir au dessin*, Paris, Galilée 2009.

²⁸ *Le plaisir de peindre*, quoted by J.L. Nancy, O.C.

²⁹ *Genèse et perspectives artistiques du Surréalisme*, ibid.

manifested in the tensions within the forms, in each line aspiring to the status of sign, number or letter, in each line aspiring to be transformed into musical terms, every colour seeking its sound equivalent. Is this the 'inner sound' inherent in colour, according to Kandinsky ? But whereas the author of *On the Spiritual in Art* established fixed correspondences in a doctrinaire manner, tending to immobilise what is the result of a free process, Klee deployed them indefinitely, heralding the Surrealists' most audacious findings. Note in passing, however, that while Paul Eluard expressed the correspondence typical of surrealist thought: 'la terre est bleue comme une orange', he was preceded by Marcel Proust who evoked almost casually, in *Un Amour de Swann*, 'la teinte orangée d'une syllabe'.³⁰ And while in Klee's painting we think we are looking at fish conforming in all details to biological reality, a closer inspection quickly puts us right. First artistic licence: their contours are formed by two curved lines crossing at the level of the tail fin. Second artistic licence: on several fish both eyes are placed on the same side of the body, something that does not actually contradict biological reality since it is true of certain species. The anomaly starts when these two eyes, drawn in a single continuous line, take the shape of a double spiral. Did Klee want to evoke the violin's sound hole ['l'ouïe', also meaning gill] ? This form is found in several works, notably in *Das Vokaltuch der Kammersängerin Rosa S.*, where the encounter between several orders of perception and reading reached new heights.

Such games and allusions challenged the categories of space and time. Following Richard Wagner ('Here time becomes space', we hear in *Parsifal*), but totally unaware of Freud, Klee demonstrated through his examples that the unconscious, indifferent to notions of time and space, knows only permanence and the instantaneous presence of all things.

Dream Space, matrix of the work

It follows that space cannot be reduced to a neutral entity or a uniform ground. Subject to an ordered temporal rhythm, it is subjected to tensions, reflecting our inner life. It can, as in *Ad Marginem*, drive the creatures to the edges of the canvas, give the impression of lifting and expanding in the centre, probably under the effect of the heat produced by the red planet depicted there. Or it can present itself as master of a quiet period of time in *Teppich der Erinnerung*. In each case, space is a form of energy, sometimes restrained, at other times active or excessive.

³⁰ On Mme de Guermantes : 'une image [...] qui n'était pas de la même nature, n'était pas colorable à volonté comme celles qui se laissaient imbiber de la teinte orangée d'une syllabe.' Paris, Gallimard, Folio, p.288.



Vokatuch Rosa S, 1922

We can also understand the care taken by Klee in preparing what we call the 'support' or the 'ground'. The 'Grund' in German expresses the artist's thought more precisely: it is a 'soil', a living matter, a nourishing substance: Klee arranged his shapes on it like a gardener arranges his young shoots. In *Vokatuch Rosa S*, the ground is composed of a plaster base on which glue is used to fix a layer of gauze – operations which demand a period of stabilising before the colours are applied – this ground is particularly rich in meaning here. 'Vokatuch' recalls 'Schweisstuch', the shroud which enveloped Christ's body, retaining, according to Christian tradition, the traces of his martyrdom (there is also a possible allusion to the veil of Veronica). In the painting the cloth retains the sounds coming from the singer's throat, her human presence reduced to the initials of her name. The polysemy of the word 'Silber' refers to the colour silver, present in the painting; but it also evokes the texture of the voice, the 'Silberstimme', a source of fascination for any music-lover.

Each of Klee's paintings presents forms and signs circulating and germinating in all directions. The creative act involves birth and continuous gestation. It is made possible only thanks to an originary terrestrial or oceanic energy, the life-source of its creatures, the same energy where, in *Les Champs magnétiques* or in certain unbridled descriptions of medieval Paris, the images leap up from the inexhaustible flow of language. Indeed, for the author of *Le Paysan de Paris*: 'le vice appelé Surréalisme

est l'emploi déréglé et passionnel du stupéfiant image [...] et pour ce qu'elle entraîne dans le domaine de la représentation, de perturbations imprévisibles et de métamorphoses : car chaque image nous fait revisiter l'Univers.³¹ But he is attentive above all to the energy which carries or, more precisely, gives birth to these images, the deep sonority they are imbued with.

Whether reduced to an ornamental stream in the Buttes Chaumont or embracing the immensity of the sea, this flux or ocean carries a name. Deep in the contemplation of Tanguy's landscapes where he believes he can recognize beaches uncovered by the tide as far as the eye can see, while no horizon hints at the presence of the sky, Breton evokes a passage from *Faust*:

Les Mères ! on retrouve l'effroi de Faust, on est saisi comme lui [...] au seul bruit de ces syllabes qui échappent au temps et au lieu [...]. Les Mères : elles ne te verront pas, car elles ne voient que les êtres qui ne sont pas nés.³²

This terror is justified by the strain of looking towards the beyond, the obscure heart of creation, in order to 'retrouver le chemin qui mène aux Mères, à la plus profonde des profondeurs.'³³ It is linked, in moments of distress, to the path that Klee would follow to take refuge in his 'cell', a primordial shelter, in a metaphor for the imaginary mother. Breton's praise is directed at Tanguy, 'le premier à avoir pénétré visuellement dans le royaume des Mères [...]. Des Mères, c'est-à-dire des matrices et des moules',³⁴ that are scattered across the long beach once the tide has withdrawn. But we know that, long before Breton, his young companions had had the revelation of the maternal depths thanks to Klee's work.

However, while Tanguy is lost in the contemplation of this rich unconscious, Klee holds Ariadne's thread which allows him to come back to the light, to 'travel' – his *Schöpferische Konfession* is after all a 'petit voyage au pays de meilleure connaissance' – to 'float' between two worlds. It is not the light of day but the light of the moon that gently illuminates the magical universe of the fish. The moon fertilises the seeds, watches over future embryos and metamorphoses what could be a simple swamp (that is how the painter designates his psychological self, opposing it to the 'crystalline self' that he aspires to) into an unhoped-for encounter between darkness and light.

Finally, it is on these grounds that we can celebrate the encounter between Klee and the Surrealists. They have followed different paths – the first by his withdrawal from History, the others in the fierce and perilous confrontation between the individual and society – to reach that bright moment of illumination. Like Klee, Breton never ceased to search for the 'crystalline universe', that moment of

³¹ *Le Paysan de Paris* (1928), Paris, Gallimard, Folio 2005, p.82 sq.

³² *Le Surréalisme et la Peinture*, Paris 1928, Gallimard Folio Essais, 1965, p.231.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.232.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

metamorphosis where water becomes air and fish, birds: 'les bancs de poissons les haies des mésanges',³⁵ just as *Fischzauber* also possesses its antithesis or its complement in his *Vogelgarten*, painted the same year. Both are on the lookout for the attraction of opposites, for the convergence of things in a universal transparency, so that light should shine in us as in the mother-water – that 'Eau-Mere' celebrated by Julien Gracq : 'ce plasma poétique dont la pulsion irrigue le poème [...], le diamant mallarméen cédant la place à la perle des mers.'³⁶

It was more difficult than ever to reach this moment of illumination, at the time Breton was writing *Arcane 17*, after a barbaric power of as-yet unknown force took hold of mankind, burning the whole universe, reducing to dust the dream of utopias. And yet ! Breton did not abandon the desire for 'une résurrection possible en ces temps de tourmente'³⁷, for a new myth, a magical world in tune with the period, the desire to marvel, that make the word 'image' shimmer under the word 'magic'. He remained the seeker by the river, looking out for the passage of the gold nugget, concentrate of memories and the future, because 'dans ces perles se nacent tant d'aventures passées'³⁸ in the eyes of the individual who, 'né des embrassements fortuits des mondes délayés'³⁹, holds the power to recognize them.

³⁵ 'Sur la route de San Romano', in *Signe Ascendant*, Paris, Gallimard-poésie, p. 122.

³⁶ In *Spectre du Poisson Soluble*.

³⁷ Paris, J.J. Pauvert 1965, p.92.

³⁸ *Les Champs Magnétiques*, Paris, Poésie-Gallimard 1968, p.45.

³⁹ Ibid.

Unica Zürn : Extending the field of poetry

Nicole GABRIEL

Unica Zürn (1916-1970) was a German artist who is known above all as the partner, model and games companion of the Franco-German Surrealist Hans Bellmer, from 1953 until her tragic death in 1970.¹ Her life and work have been brought to light posthumously thanks to feminist and anti-psychiatric movements. She started writing from an early age, and continued to publish in journals throughout her life, including during the Nazi period. Her publications were her livelihood after her divorce in 1949.² She was rediscovered in France thanks to both Ruth Henry, who translated two of her texts into French³ and arranged for the publication of *Sombre Printemps*,⁴ and to Robert Valançay who had translated Hans Bellmer's major text *La Poupée*, published in the journal *Minotaure* in 1936. She wrote *L'Homme-Jasmin*, published by Gallimard, a book which made its mark in the cultural and artistic milieu when it first came out in 1971. Less known, however, is the fact that between 1949 and 1953 she was a member of the Berlin group Die Badewanne, a bohemian group with surrealist tendencies.

Biographical elements

Unica Zürn was a writer before deciding to turn her life into art – she wanted to be recognized as a writer rather than an artist. Her father, a career officer and great traveller, became a writer, albeit of a single text, as did her mother, in the field of popular literature. One of her texts, *Katrin*,⁵ published posthumously, tells the story of a father living with his daughter, who wanted to become a writer, with a sense of discipline that, in her opinion, her father did not adhere to sufficiently. Given this background she developed an early interest in writing and started publishing texts for young people, a readership encouraged by the Nazi regime. Her style is close to that of writers of adolescent fiction including Erich Kästner, the author of *Emil*

¹ She died on 19 October 1970 by jumping from the window of the top floor of the apartment that Bellmer's gallery owner, André-François Petit, had found for the couple in 1964, at 4 rue de la Plaine, Paris.

² Between 1949 and 1953 she published regularly short stories in various journals.

³ Ruth Henry, with Robert Valançay, translated into French *Sombre printemps* (Belfond, 1971) and *L'Homme-Jasmin* (Gallimard 1971).

⁴ *Dunkler Frühling* (Hamburg: Merlin Verlag, 1969). L-F. Céline and Jean Genet were published by the same publisher.

⁵ Published for the first time in the complete works: *Gesamtausgabe* vol 3 (Berlin: Brinkmann und Bose, 1991).

and *the Detectives*, a 1930's bestseller. She belongs to the generation of Astrid Lindgren, who created the character of Pippi Langstrump, better known as Fifi.

She was employed in UFA's department of advertising films. It was not simply a way of earning a living, however. This is how she described this activity in a 1950 article where she expressed her fascination for the fact that this minor cinematographic medium demanded so much work and involved such a range of cinematographic techniques and genres.⁶ She focused on the meticulous work involved in the script-writing, performance and production stages, tiring work that could take several weeks. This meticulous work would be found later in her anagrams. Except for the time taken to produce advertising shorts, which has been reduced today (since it is no longer counted in minutes but in seconds), all the rules she lists are applicable to anagrams, especially the punchline, the word game, the surprise, the unexpected or the astonishing element (die Pointe, der Witz, die Überraschung, das Unerwartete, das Verblüffende). She was fascinated by animation films that give life to objects as if by magic: 'In a disconcerting way, as if moved by the hands of a ghost, objects cross the field, doors and cupboards open by themselves...'. Advertising material has been shot by the greatest avant-garde filmmakers, such as Guido Seeber, Julius Pinschewer (*Kipho* 1925) and Walter Ruttmann, the pioneer of abstract cinema, who made the film *Der Aufstieg* in 1926 for an event in Dusseldorf commissioned by the Ministry of Health of the Weimar Republic.⁷ Just as Ruttmann's activities shifted after 1933 from abstract film to advertising then to advertising or Nazi propaganda, it is probable that Zürn's work followed the same path, minus the enthusiasm and the responsibility.⁸ She stopped working in 1942, the year she married Laupenmühlen, a shopkeeper. She had two children, Katrin and Christoph, but she was not granted custody of her children after her divorce.⁹

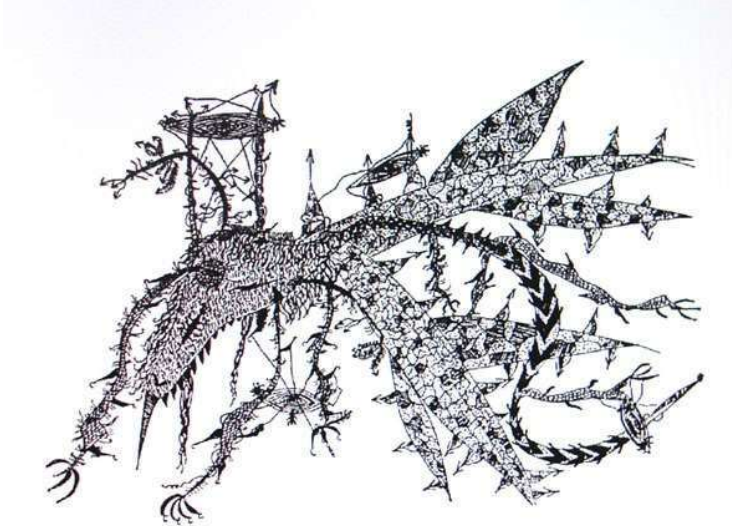
⁶ 'Die kleinste Form des Films', *Gesamtausgabe*, vol 2, pp. 367-71.

⁷ This concern for health, prophylactic and healing measures as a consequence of lesions and mutilations suffered during World War I can be seen in Nicholas Kaufmann and Wilhem Prager's film *Der Weg zur Kraft und Schönheit* (1925), produced in Weimar Germany.

⁸ Zürn's apolitical position was unlike that of Michaux, who always refused to be dependent on an ideology, and even less that of Bellmer and his anti-Nazi commitment. This period probably had an effect on her illness.

⁹ An extremely rare occurrence in Germany. She seems to have come to an agreement with her ex-husband who paid her compensation.

Die Badewanne



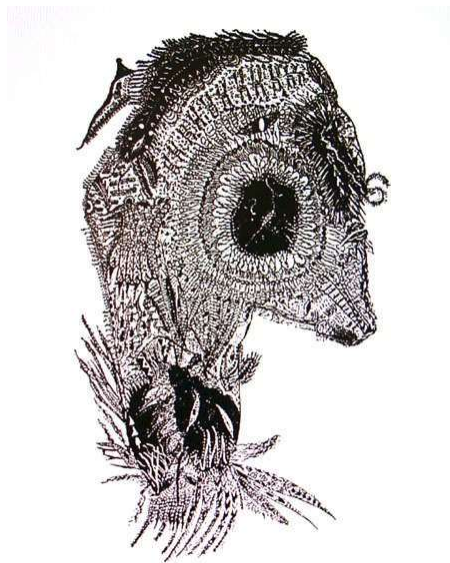
A drawing by Unica Zürn reproduced in 'Approche d'Unica Zürn', *Le Nouveau Commerce*, 1981

Zürn asserted her new social status by giving up her husband's name for her maiden name, which was uncommon in Germany after a divorce, adopting the very unusual first name Unica (at first with a 'k'), and working for a living, thereby abandoning her status as housewife. Her professional status as a writer was made official on her passport. She adopted Flaubert's advice to Mademoiselle de Chantepie : 'Voyagez, quittez tout, imitez les oiseaux'.¹⁰ Freed from the constraints of marriage and motherhood, she integrated the so-called margins, Berlin bohemian life, represented at the time in particular by a group of 22 artists based around the cabaret Die Badewanne in Charlottenburg (some of whom were to become famous, like the musician Hans-Werner Henze or the writer Wolf-Dietrich Schnurre, the translator Johannes Hübner, or the ballet master of the group, the dancer Michael Piel).

This was a collective of anti-Nazi painters, musicians and dancers, some of whom had returned from exile, wishing to reconnect with avant-garde art in all fields (painting, literature, music and dance) in particular by organising evenings in the style of the Dadaists at the Cabaret Voltaire and surrealist-style shows and action. While she was very close for a while to one of the leaders of the movement, Alexander Camara, she did not go as far as to perform on stage, like the expressionist dancers trained by Mary

¹⁰ Flaubert's advice became Breton's instructions when he wrote: Lâchez tout', 'Partez sur les routes', *Littérature* 2 (1 avril 1922). The injunction: 'Semez vos enfants au coin d'un bois', recalling Perrault's *Petit Poucet*, can be linked to Rousseau's decision to abandon his children to the welfare services. The same idea can be found in the cruel line in the film *L'Âge d'or*: 'Quelle joie, quelle joie d'avoir assassiné nos enfants!'

Wigman, the priestess of modern dance. Among the readings and staging of texts, as listed in the programmes published by Elisabeth Lenk,¹¹ are the names of Kafka, Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Apollinaire, Cocteau, Saint John Perse and Aimé Césaire, Breton, Éluard and Aragon, Guillevic and Michaux, translated by the performers themselves.¹² Lenk devotes a page and a half to Unica Zürn, illustrated with a photograph taken at the cabaret against a background of Indonesian puppets.



Drawing by Unica Zürn, in 'Approche d'Unica Zürn', *Le Nouveau Commerce* (1981)

Early artistic activities

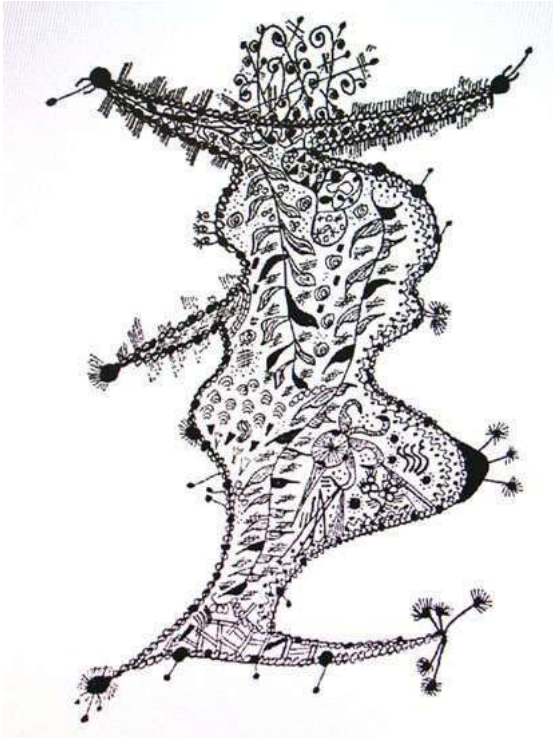
Unica Zürn held her first solo exhibition in 1954, a year after meeting Hans Bellmer, thanks to the latter's Berlin gallery-owner Rudolf Springer. After following Bellmer to Paris, she took part in the collective Surrealist exhibition *Eros* in 1959 at the galerie Daniel Cordier, a former Resistance fighter who had turned to art.

As much as, if not more than, her cathartic writings, which she described lucidly as 'récits d'une maladie mentale' – *Souvenirs de Maison Blanche*, *La Maison des maladies*, *Sombre printemps* and her most important text, *L'Homme-Jasmin* – it is her anagrams, drawings, gouaches and engravings that are

¹¹ Elisabeth Lenk, *Die Badewanne. Ein Künstlerkabarett der frühen Nachkriegszeit* (Berlin: Hentrich, 1991).

¹² Especially by Johannes Hübner. For example 'La Source', a poem by Apollinaire from *La Grande France* (1902), 'Le Corset mystère' (1919) by Breton from *Mont de Piété*, 'Rêve' (1937) by Éluard, and 'Totentanz' (1916) by Hugo Ball, attributed to Tzara.

linked to surrealist methods. Once settled in France in the rue Mouffetard, which was in the 'zone'¹³ at the time in the very heart of Paris, she totally changed her literary style, breaking up the sentence, the word and the order of letters, producing poems based on anagrams, as Duchamp had done with his esoteric spoonerisms, and as Bellmer was doing in his texts and, in a different way from 1934, with the dislocations and reassemblages of the body of the doll.¹⁴



Drawing by Unica Zürn reproduced in 'Approche d'Unica Zürn', *Le Nouveau Commerce*, 1981

Her work on anagrams, associated with the Kabbala, gave meaning to Dada phonetic poetry and coincided with the Lettrist experiments flourishing at that time – with an added esoteric element. The language games were extended to games with the body when she decided to break with the production of

¹³ The word 'zone' is to be understood in the Naturalist sense used by Apollinaire or the documentary filmmaker Georges Lacombe, who produced the short film *Zone* in 1929. On this subject Alain Chevrier refers to 'l'innommable taudis' of a room on the second floor at 86 rue Mouffetard, an area of old Paris which had its charm, 'bruisait de vie et offrait à ses riverains une profusion de cafés accueillants'. Unica Zürn, Hans Bellmer, *Lettres au docteur Ferdière* (Paris: Séguier, 2003), p.111.

¹⁴ In his Freudian study of Unica Zürn's anagrams, Jean-François Rabain notes: 'Le corps est comparable à une phrase qui nous inviterait à la désarticuler pour que se recomposent, à travers une série d'anagrammes sans fin, ses contenus véritables.' He argues that anagrams were for Zürn 'ce que *Die Puppe* fut pour Bellmer: un immense champ de permutations verbales aux variations infinies', in *Obliques, La Femme surréaliste* (Nyons, 1977), pp.261-64.

popular literature and children's literature of her early career. Thanks to these experiments with no predefined object she was now an artist in her own right, and not only the companion or muse of an established artist, older than her (Bellmer), who used her, unwillingly, as a model or a substitute for his doll.¹⁵ On the one hand she kept up bourgeois appearances, just as he did; on the other hand, she pushed to the extreme her bold, risky and provocative behaviour.¹⁶

Le Jeu de la poupée

Hans Bellmer, like Dora Maar and Man Ray, is one of those rare artists (also) known for his photographs. His photos are on the covers of the sixth issue of *Minotaure* and the fourth issue of *Le Surréalisme, même*. He contributed to major Surrealist exhibitions such as the International Surrealist Exhibition at the New Burlington Galleries in London or the Exhibition of Surrealist Objects at the galerie Charles Ratton in Paris. Informed amateurs and critics who discovered his photographic works before the war, were likely to be disconcerted by the mysterious caption beneath the illustration published in *Minotaure*: 'La Poupée, Hans Bellmer, Variations sur le montage d'une mineure articulée'. Today critics automatically link the photos taken by Bellmer himself of *La Poupée*, characterised by the uncanny, with the exhibitionist, sensationalist and transparent self-portraits of Pierre Molinier. There is nothing clear or explicit in Bellmer's images, in contrast to Molinier's self-centred (and retouched) *mise en scène*. He pushed close-ups and de-framing to the limits of abstraction. They could possibly be compared to photographs, until recently kept private, by Charles François Jeandel (1859-1942) exhibited in 2013 at the Musée d'Orsay in the exhibition *L'Ange du bizarre. Le Romantisme noir de Goya à Max Ernst*. The distorted body of the doll was to reappear twenty years later in the S/M simulacra where Zürn replaced, as it were, the puppet.¹⁷ While the manipulation of the female body and the details fixed on the photo of Zürn's body appear as the 'bondage mystérieux avant la lettre' of Charles Jeandel's cyanotypes, the Surrealist artist's approach goes beyond the private domestic leisure activity, that of the naughty photograph. It has remained subversive to this day.¹⁸

Anagrams

¹⁵ Cf. the photograph presenting her formless, disfigured, trussed up body, used for the cover of the journal *Le Surréalisme, même*, 4, Paris, 1958.

¹⁶ Cf. her wandering through the streets of Berlin and ending up at the police station, as recounted in *L'Homme-Jasmin*.

¹⁷ The photograph taken, in the mid-1960s, showing the artist in his studio, the painter-photographer with his two models, is revealing, according to Sylvie Rouquett: 'mais je pense aussi à cette terrible photographie d'Unica, vieillie, portant la poupée dans ses bras, tandis que Hans Bellmer se tient à l'arrière-plan, comme le maître d'œuvre manipulant ses deux créatures.', in 'Hans Bellmer, La Femme et la poupée', *Cahiers jungiens de psychanalyse*, 117, Paris, 2006, pp.17-24

¹⁸ It seems astonishing that feminists have not commented on this image of the woman presented by the artist.

A collection of anagrams written between 1953 and 1964 has been published by Brinkmann und Bose.¹⁹ Bellmer encouraged Zürn to develop this activity, which he considered poetic, linked to mental agility and the art of prosody. The first anagrams, dating from 1953-1954, are in the form of poems of different lengths and stanzas. Some of them are short like a haiku, others are much more elaborate. This first series prompted the Galerie Springer to exhibit her fine-lined geometric drawings alongside the anagrammatic poems under the title *Hexentexte*, a title which links them to magical, prophetic, incantatory – or performative – formulae.

These drawings have been classified as automatic, with reference to automatic writing, underlining their spontaneous aspect, with the free play of the pencil and ease of execution; and thus the opposite of the work on anagrams, which is laborious, lengthy and mathematical. Both texts and drawings are obscure or, to be more precise, polysemantic; and they can be appreciated whether read aloud like pure signifiers, or interpreted, deciphered. Hans Arp compared them to Merseburg's magic formulae, dating from medieval times, closely linked to ancient pagan beliefs. The aim of the anagram is not to create neologisms but to bring out a word hidden inside another of the same calibre. The source utterance is based either on everyday ready-made expressions, mottos and maxims, or on a line by Arp or Michaux.

From one language to the other

Starting from a line of poetry by Michaux, 'Dans l'attelage d'un autre âge', Zürn plays with two languages, her mother tongue German and French, whose grammar she did not fully master. Yet she exploits the sound, rhythmical and musical qualities of both languages. The line-theme is followed by variations, giving free rein to her inventions, so that the original line is decomposed and meaning is disrupted ('se dérègle', to use Rimbaud's term). In this example, meaning is not double but multiple. The statement 'dans l'attelage d'un autre âge', which is meaningful in German (Im Gespann eines anderen Zeitalters), gives rise to two original inventions: 'Augen, Tage, Tür, das alte Land' (eyes, days, door, the old country) and 'Adleraugen, tausend Jahre alt' (eagle eyes, a thousand years old). Zürn expands a line by Arp, 'Und scheret ihr Rosenbärtlein ab', into a range of meanings created by systematically combining all its letters, presenting no fewer than 44 possible variations or meanings, which she found at different times during the year 1957 – in the train taking her to the poet, in Meudon, Viry-Châtillon and Ermenonville.

For example, the line: 'Et ils coupent leur barbiche de rose', an absurd dada statement, becomes 'Brouillard notre voisin est berger' or 'Le corbeau fait un trou dans le nid, monsieur'. As well as everyday

¹⁹ Op.cit, vol. 1.

phrases or lines of poetry, she used more basic generators, such as a simple date or postal address. Anything could become material to be transformed, expanded, or even decomposed. Thus, to our knowledge, Zürn is the first poet producing texts composed exclusively of anagrams. She was recognised as a poet thanks to this method, close to that of crossword adepts or Oulipo enthusiasts, which can be considered as an artistic gesture, like her drawings of imaginary creatures or the handwritten texts in her travel journal 'Eisenbahnhefte'. It is clear that, whatever the choice of expression or language, the outcome is disconcerting.

Henri Michaux, *L'Homme-Jasmin*

Unica Zürn's best-known publication, *Der Mann im Jasmin*, translated into French as *L'Homme-Jasmin* by Ruth Henry and Robert Valançay, was first published by Gallimard in 1971, a year after her death, with a preface by André Pieyre de Mandiargues. Its subtitle is: 'Eindrücke einer Geisteskrankheit' (Impressions d'une maladie mentale). Several texts concerning her hospital stays have been added in the French edition: 'Notes concernant la dernière (?) crise', 'Les Jeux à deux', 'La Maison des maladies'. She favoured the use of the third person. The title should read 'L'homme dans le jasmin' to keep the metaphor in the German title. The text juxtaposed several genres: the tale, a Lewis Carroll-style narrative, inclusion of personal memories, descriptions of precise places in a realist style. The characters appear to be masked, faded, deliberately obscured.²⁰ Hallucinations, self-quotations and memories are woven together and, as if that wasn't enough, the author has integrated several anagrams into the main text, just as Joyce inserted musical scores, less in order to illustrate a particular subject than to give the text rhythm. According to Zürn,²¹ the book's hero is Henri Michaux, named by his initials HM.

Part of Zürn's account is true. Her sublimation of Michaux ended up annoying Bellmer whose letters to Michaux showed feelings of bitterness and jealousy.²² It was a fact, however fantastical it might appear. Zürn also greatly admired Arp, apparently for literary reasons. We cannot tell what Michaux thought of this sentimental triangle, since his letters have been lost, stolen or destroyed. Bellmer appealed to their friendship and played the role of his protégée's artistic and spiritual adviser, a role he would play again later in his letters to Dr Ferdière. He asked the poet several things, some of them seeming to be contradictory: to

²⁰ Bernard Noël has published a study on the secret drawings : *Du 'Grand verre' de Marcel Duchamp à la 'Poupée' de Hans Bellmer, L'enfer, dit-on...* (Herscher, 1983). Moreover, one of Henri Michaux's books is titled *Épreuves, exorcismes* (Paris: NRF Gallimard, 1945).

²¹ Cf. one of Zürn's last letters to Dr Ferdière (April 1970), where she wrote : 'le grand Malheur de ma vie – Amoureuse depuis 17 année [s] de H. Michaux '1 certain Plume'.' Op. cit. p.120.

²² Cf. letter of 27 September 1961, op. cit.

visit Unica at Sainte-Anne; then to respect the decision not to see her anymore; he also asked Michaux for a text for Zürn's exhibition at the Point Cardinal Gallery. It is known that Michaux had seen her at the hospital and had given her a copy of *Un certain Plume* and the famous Canson sketch book which he dedicated to her, inviting or inciting her to create – a notebook that Zürn had refused to entrust to the emissaries sent by Bellmer, on the pretext that she had not finished filling it. In another letter Bellmer wondered about the question of copyright of drawings executed by a sick person in hospital, in this case Unica's drawings in the sketch book. For reasons of paranoia or disregard for copyright in France, Bellmer seemed to fear the works would be confiscated by the institution or the doctors. It is a fact that, at this time, Sainte-Anne's collection of patients' drawings was expanding significantly.

Psychoanalysis and Surrealism

To the psychiatrist's interest in art can be added the artist's interest in psychological matters. Bellmer adopted a psychoanalytical vocabulary when he used the words 'ego' and 'superego' (sometimes written in capitals). Zürn referred to herself in the third person as if to distance herself from her character – whilst this seemed impossible to her in reality, her personality being inseparable from her character, the author coinciding with her 'double' insofar as what she related had effectively taken place and was described realistically. Bellmer was seeking to find out more about himself through her, as shown in his correspondence with Dr Ferdière.²³ Unfortunately we do not have the doctor's letters, if indeed he broke his professional silence. Zürn herself, of a taciturn nature, seems to have hesitated in confiding in others, at least in French, preferring gesture to speech.

Zürn's behaviour was excessive when she had her crises, whilst Bellmer was undemonstrative, carefully separating his life from his work. His psychoanalytical analysis of Zürn is a fine one. He talks about her without ever denigrating her, considering her immature, evoking her 'preadolescent' superego 'dans lequel se cristallisent non seulement son image tragique et douloureuse de princesse victime mais naturellement aussi les mythes des partenaires de l'impossible'.²⁴ His understanding of her was to evolve since, following Zürn's first internment in Berlin, he thought her behaviour had an element of simulation, the hospital being a refuge ('un endroit où trouver asile', to use Alain Chevrier's expression), in both an

²³ Dalí noted about Bellmer: 'C'était un artiste remarquable, notamment parce que ses obsessions érotiques n'étaient pas feintes ou opportunistes ; elles étaient absolument sincères et Bellmer les transcrivait avec la détermination et la froideur propre au puritanisme protestant d'Europe centrale dans laquelle il avait été élevé.' in *Dali, une histoire de la peinture* (Grimaldi Forum-Monaco/Editions Hazan, 2019), p. 159.

²⁴ *Lettres à Michaux*, op. cit., p. 25

economic and curative sense. Her stays at Sainte-Anne and in several other establishments made him change his mind.

Art Therapy

Zürn was hospitalised, either voluntarily or without being consulted, in several psychiatric institutions: in Wittenau (Berlin), between 1960 and 1961, Sainte-Anne (Paris) between 1961 and 1963, Fond (La Rochelle) in 1965, Maison Blanche (Paris suburbs) between 1966 and 1969, and the Château de Chailles (near Blois) in 1970. Her case was of interest, like other artists at that time, to a significant sector of French psychiatry that initiated research on the psychopathology of expression on the occasion of the first international congress of psychiatry at Sainte-Anne in 1950. Professor Jean Delay worked with Drs Robert Volmat, Jean Viart, Guy Rosolato and Gaston Ferdière, who as early as the 1930s was interested in Surrealism in general and Bellmer in particular. He was, as we know, Antonin Artaud's doctor in Rodez.²⁵ He set up his own collection of artworks before helping to set up the Sainte-Anne collection, held today in the hospital's Museum of Art and History. The psychiatrists closely followed artists treated with HP, such as Leonora Carrington, former companion of Max Ernst and author of *En bas* (1973), or Bernard Réquichot, one of Daniel Cordier's protégés who threw himself out of a window two days before the opening of this exhibition.

One can understand the reservations of an artist who knows about the role of Surrealism in the recognition of marginal art, popular expressions, tattoos, graffiti, wall-painting, naïf painting and art brut dear to Dubuffet.²⁶ And his fear of what the 1968 militants would call 'recuperation' by the institution. We should add that 'psychopathological' art exhibitions were originally limited to the works of interned mentally ill patients before they were extended to works by hospitalised professional artists, whether or not executed in situ. Bellmer's reticence was partly justified at a time when the Sainte-Anne collection was expanding. He imagined all sorts of stratagems to smuggle documents through or simply to get them signed by Zürn, since

²⁵ Our intention here is not to undertake a comparative study of Zürn's graphic works and those of Dr Ferdière's most famous patient. Let's say that Artaud produced portraits and self-portraits with a lead pencil, in sudden, feverish, convulsive, 'expressionist' strokes, like his comedian's behaviour. Zürn, with her 'clear line', constantly digressed or decorated to saturation her lace-like figures. She produced hybrid figures linking human and fantastic traits. Her technique was linked to automatic drawing. She mixed techniques, integrated colour, ink, watercolour, decalcomania and even oil paint. She sometimes combined drawing and writing. Her characters are 'headless' but not without eyes.

²⁶ 'C'est dans la mesure où il aura pris conscience de sa parenté d'esprit avec les fous, les enfants, les primitifs [que le surréalisme] portera sa curiosité vers les ethnies épargnées par la civilisation, vers une tradition ésotérique dont il ne reprend pas tous les propos à son compte mais qu'il exalte à proportion inverse de son occultation par la raison triomphante'. Henri Béhar and Michel Carassou (eds.), *Le Surréalisme* (Paris LGF, 1984, 1992), p.8.

he was conscious of infringing the hospital regulations. Having been a victim of the French authorities and interned in the Camp des Milles, he was justifiably suspicious of the bureaucratic machinery. He was conscious of the poetic and graphic talents of his companion and the auto-therapeutic function of her artistic activities. Zürn agreed with him. For her, Michaux's sketch book was a source of inspiration and the promise of recovery. Referring to herself as always in the third person, she wrote: 'comme si le dessin était le salut pour elle'.²⁷

Conclusion

Zürn's risk-filled behaviour is close to that of Romantic heroes fusing art and life, as well as to several Surrealist poets. We have examined her work and attempted an analysis of her stories, anagrams and graphic production, yet we have to admit that she remains difficult to understand. 'Le suicide est-il une solution?' was the question of a survey by Breton in 1925 in the second issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*. It was a solution for Zürn at least. She remained tragic to her death, a figure of black Romanticism, whose career was unusual, moving from the world of children's stories to avant-garde poetry, from a bohemian life in Berlin to Parisian life.

This trajectory itself warranted that we dwell on it. Her psycho-geographical wanderings – to take up a Situationist term – led her from a defeated totalitarian country to various attempts at escape: through marriage, communal life, first with a group of artists then with one person who encouraged her artistic expression. But Unica's legend and work transcend her status as just the last companion of Bellmer. *L'Homme-Jasmin*, dedicated to the person of Henri Michaux, remains her testament.

It seems to us that her creativity was liberated, quite paradoxically, within the constraints of the psychiatric hospital. Her play with words and letters in her anagrams is surrealist, as are her spidery drawings covered with faces and eyes executed in the same conditions as Antonin Artaud, although lacking Artaud's obscure quality, even expressing a euphoric vision. Oskar Pastior, another poet who was a virtuoso in words and anagrams, would one day refer to her anagrammatically as 'Azur in nuce'.

²⁷ Op. cit. p. 148.

Caligarism and Surrealism

Nicolas VILLODRE

Passé le pont, les fantômes vinrent à sa rencontre¹

INTRODUCTION

At the close of the Great War, *l'amour fou*², a choice theme of the Romantics, guided the steps and the poetic forays of the peasants, be they from Nantes or Paris, otherwise known as André Breton's companions. This theme, shared by German Expressionist cinema among others, led the poetic and artistic movement that replaced Cubism, Futurism, abstraction and Dada. These young adults, born 'at the same time as cinema'³ – itself an essentially surrealist art according to Ado Kyrrou – felt nostalgic about the silent cinema's episodic films, kept outside the inner sanctum of the fine arts. Breton and his friend Jacques Vaché were 'a good public', watching 'anything and everything'⁴ and going to the cinema as one would to any spectacle – as long as it was participative, festive, and had something of the banquet. Aragon loved among others 'German films with magnificent romantic scenes'⁵.

¹ Intertitle of *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922) by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau.

² This theme became the title of Breton's text *L'Amour fou*, Paris, Gallimard, 1937.

³ Cf. Henri Béhar, Michel Carassou, 'Le Surréalisme à l'âge du cinéma', *Le Surréalisme* [1984], Paris, LGF, 1992, pp. 447-57.

⁴ Nouredine Ghali, in *L'Avant-garde cinématographique en France dans les années vingt*, Paris, Paris Expérimental, 1995, p. 350.

⁵ Cf. his reply to a survey on the cinema by René Clair in 1923 : 'J'aime les films sans bêtise, dans lesquels on se tue et on fait l'amour. J'aime les films où les gens sont beaux, avec une peau magnifique, vous savez, qu'on peut voir de près. J'aime les Mack Sennet[t] – comédies avec des femmes en maillot, les films allemands avec de magnifiques scènes romantiques, les films de mon ami Delluc où il y a des gens qui se désirent pendant une heure, jusqu'à ce que les spectateurs fassent craquer leurs sièges. J'aime les films où il y a du sang. J'aime les films où il n'y a pas de morale, où le vice n'est pas puni, où il n'y a pas de Bretonne au pied d'un calvaire, où il n'y a pas de philosophie, ni de poésie. La poésie ne se cherche pas, elle se trouve'. René Clair, *Cinéma d'hier, Cinéma d'aujourd'hui*, Gallimard, 1970, p. 39.



Plaque, Rue Fontaine, Paris © Ph. Villodre

It is through German Expressionist cinema, and through Caligarisim in particular, that we will explore the links between Romanticism and Surrealism. To this end we will refer to the archeology of a genre in the process of becoming, defined by Rudolf Kurtz in *Expressionismus und Film*⁶, and to the outstanding historical study by Lotte H. Eisner, *L'Écran démoniaque*⁷. As for Surrealism, we will consider the handful of films displaying the spirit of *dépaysement* and the marvelous that Breton wrote about in 'Comme dans un bois', published by Ado Kyrou in his appropriately named periodical *L'Âge du cinéma*⁸.

CINENOVEL

The year of the Russian revolution could also be seen as the year Surrealism was born. Normally this event is dated 1924, the year in which the *Manifeste du Surréalisme* was published, shortly after the last glimmers of Dada during the Saint-Sylvestre festivities of 1923 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, with the 'instantaneist'⁹ performance *Ciné-Sketch*. Several historians give 1922 as the date, corresponding to

⁶ Rudolf Kurtz, *Expressionismus und Film*, Berlin, Verlag der Lichtbildbühne, 1926, reed. As *Expressionnisme et cinéma*, Grenoble, Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1987.

⁷ Lotte H. Eisner, *L'Écran démoniaque*, Paris, André Bonne, 1952.

⁸ *L'Âge du cinéma*, n° 4-5, août-novembre 1951, pp. 26-30.

⁹ Instantaneism was well named, an ephemeral movement thought up by Francis Picabia. He saw the ballet *Relâche* (1924) co-authored with Érik Satie for the music and Jean Börlin for the choreography and the *Entr'acte*, directed by René Clair following a brief script jotted down on a postcard by Picabia. The 'Soirée d'enterrement de l'an 24', which in our opinion was also that of Dada, was also celebrated at the Théâtre de Champs-Élysées, and its title, *Ciné-Sketch*, referred to the 7th Art. Man Ray described what, nowadays, we would probably call a happening: 'At one moment the theatre was suddenly blacked out and there were a number of streaks of lightning, lighting up what could be taken for a canvas by Grünewald, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. But it was in fact a tableau vivant: it was Duchamp, naked, wearing a beard, in the company of a very seductive Eve, also naked. It was a very beautiful young woman [it was Bronia Perlmutter, a mannequin with Poiret and the future wife of ... René Clair]. They were both standing in front of a canvas bearing a serpent wrapped around a tree trunk. It was, quite literally, a striptease. The spectator, captivated,

André Breton's move to 42 Rue Fontaine¹⁰. Others go back as far as 1919, the year of the first issue of the periodical *Littérature* and the joint composition of the *Champs magnétiques*¹¹. The profession of poet being prophetic, it was in 1917 that Guillaume Apollinaire applied the term surrealist (or sur-realist) to his play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and the ballet *Parade* by Cocteau-Satie-Massine-Picasso, thus heralding what was to come. At that time André Breton and Jacques Vaché, having time to kill, would '[faire] irruption dans une salle [de cinéma] où l'on donnait ce que l'on donnait, où l'on en était n'importe où', rushing out to head into another one, frequently without even knowing the film's title¹². Dada dandies, they brought chance into the everyday with a studied nonchalance and a spirit of relativity that would supposedly reshuffle the cards with respect to beauty.

The pre-Surrealists made much of momentary distractions, of a fairground art, ephemeral and seasonal, which settled down around 1908¹³, when the poet Ricciotto Canudo, a friend of Apollinaire, succeeded in turning what was a fairground attraction into something legitimate, baptising it the sixth then seventh art¹⁴. During the War the show had continued, in cinema's case with dramas and even multi-episode 'grand Paris dramas', across several periods, with melodramas, episodic films in the wake of *Fantômas*, 'charming' sentimental comedies, comic... comedies, newsreel covering 'the entire world', magazines, cine-novels and sundry literary adaptations, mystery stories, historical reconstitutions, 'aerial'

would have willingly spent more time on the scene – as I myself did, having photographed it during rehearsals.' Cf. Man Ray, *Autoportrait*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1964, p. 213.

¹⁰ The street, which dates from the Restoration period, was initially named 'rue Fontaine-Saint Georges'. It was renamed 'rue Pierre-Fontaine' in 2004, although it is still called 'rue Fontaine' locally. The plaque installed by the Ville de Paris uses André Breton's phrase: 'Je cherche l'or du temps', and states that he made '42 rue Fontaine le centre du mouvement surréaliste de 1922 à 1966', namely the date he moved in and the date of his death. The faux-naïf canvas painted by Max Ernst in 1922, *Au rendez-vous des amis*, depicts the early Surrealist group and includes: Louis Aragon, Jean Arp, André Breton, René Crevel, Robert Desnos, Gala Éluard, Paul Éluard, Max Ernst, Théodore Fraenkel, Max Morise, Benjamin Péret, Philippe Soupault. Given that the date of the building, by the modernist architect Georges-Henri Pingusson, is given as... 1930, one might be puzzled. In reality, before the birth of his daughter Aube in late 1935, Breton leased a studio in the previous building on the same spot. Specialists date the end of the movement not to 1966 but 1969, the year in which the movement was dissolved.

¹¹ This collection of texts by André Breton and Philippe Soupault was published the following year.

¹² 'En effet, tout se passe comme si André Breton et Jacques Vaché recherchaient une sorte de dépaysement profond, quelque chose qui s'apparente à la magie et qui est dû à l'apparition du "jour" sur la toile de l'écran lors de la "nuit" de la salle de projection', writes Noureddine Ghali in *L'Avant-garde cinématographique en France dans les années vingt*, Paris, Paris Expérimental, 1995, p. 345.

¹³ The date corresponds to the appearance of the Art film and is the date given by Jean-Jacques Meusy in *Cinéma de France 1894-1918, Une histoire en images*, Paris, Arcadia, 2009.

¹⁴ To the five arts defined by Hegel in terms of expressivity and materiality (architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry) theatre and associated arts (dance, mime, etc.) were later added; something that Canudo did not take into account initially when he published *La Naissance d'un sixième art, Essai sur le cinématographe* in 1911.

views, 'sensationalist' performances, documentaries, adventure films, interval entertainment and live cabaret or circus attractions¹⁵. In Nantes too, several venues opened, styled like Italian theatres or replacing some of them, according to the historians and specialists of early cinema¹⁶. Consequently, André Breton and Jacques Vaché had a choice, somewhat limited but real, between a number of venues : the Américan Cosmograph, the Apollo, the Omnia Dobrée, The Palace, The Select, Pathé.

VAMPS and MUSES

If the legend is to be believed, it was in a Nantes cinema on the Place du Beffroi, not far from Vaché's lodgings, that they discovered together the actress Jeanne Roques, alias Musidora, in one of Louis Feuillade's serials, *Les Vampires* (1915). They were to be lastingly fascinated by her. The closest cinema to the Place du Beffroi, it seems, was the American Cosmograph on the Rue des Carmélites. The name was later changed to Cinématograph, in honour of Louis Lumière. André Breton was to see the vamp up close a little later, on the stage at Bobino, and apparently threw her a bouquet of roses at the end of the performance of a play entitled *Maillot noir*. This was an attempt at 'multimedia', mixing story and cinematographic projection, a type of show that foreshadowed the ballet *Relâche* (1924) which combined *Entr'acte*, a short film by Francis Picabia and René Clair, or the opera *La Tour de feu* (1928) which included cinematographic effects by Germaine Dulac¹⁷. The point is that from the moment of that highly romantic gift of flowers Musidora and Breton became friends, and she even agreed in principle to take a role in a short piece written by Breton and Aragon, another totally committed defender of the figure of 'la femme

¹⁵ Patrick de Haas, following Surrealism specialists and historians of the avant-garde like Noureddine Ghali, stressed Breton's enjoyment of 'les films français les plus complètement idiots', as a form of rejection, including through kitsch, of bourgeois good taste, and thus brings to mind Rimbaud's *Alchimie du verbe* : 'J'aimais les peintures idiotes, dessus de portes, décors, toiles de saltimbanques, enseignes, enluminures populaires ; la littérature démodée, latin d'église, livres érotiques sans orthographe, romans de nos aïeules, contes de fée, petits livres de l'enfance, opéras vieux, refrains niais, rythmes naïfs.' Cf. Patrick de Haas, *Cinéma absolu, avant-garde 1920-1930*, Paris, Mettray, 2018, p. 220.

¹⁶ Information given to the author by Alice Blanche Peeters and Dominique Blattlin. Cf. also the work of Jean-Jacques Meusy and of Frédéric Monteil, *La Belle Époque du cinéma et des fêtes foraines à Nantes (1896-1914)*, Nantes, Ouest éd., 1996.

¹⁷ Patrick Cazals, *Musidora, la dixième muse*, Paris, Veyrier, 1978, p. 64. In the early 1960s Francis Lacassin, lover of popular literature and art, also became enthusiastic about Feuillade in general and Musidora in particular, bringing them to the attention of readers of *Cinéma 61* and *L'Avant-scène cinéma*. He was co-author of the scenario of Georges Franju's *Judex* (1963) and co-author of *Musidora* (1973) by Jean-Christophe Averty, with Liliane Montevecchi in the lead role and Nicole Croisille as Colette.

moderne'¹⁸. A signed photograph of the actress to Breton, where she is reclining in her black combinaison, shrouded in the ghostly silk designed by Paul Poiret, is a sign of their mutual admiration.

Following their devotion to Musidora, it seems that years later the Surrealists, carried along by the 'blind' passion of Ado Kyrrou, became infatuated by Louise Brooks. They were not alone in this, since Henri Langlois (who, we might add, hired Musidora at the Cinémathèque Française to help her financially) and his disciple Freddy Buache, founder of the Swiss Cinémathèque, constantly praised the photogenic qualities and the acting skills of the American actress who created and immortalised Lulu¹⁹. Kyrrou wrote :

Dès qu'elle apparaît, l'écran se déchire, le drap blanc devient paysage désespéré, soleil dangereux, perspective sans fin. Elle est éblouissante; Mélusine, femme animale, femme enfant, amante, elle est la femme belle.

And, a few lines later :

Les lèvres de Louise Brooks sont des appels au meurtre de tout ce qui n'est pas amour, ses seins à peine voilés par des plumes ou des tissus soyeux sont la provocation la plus flagrante, ses cuisses, ses jambes... ses jambes...²⁰.

Their appreciation of *Lulu*, the film adaptation by Georg Wilhelm Pabst of the Frank Wedekind plays *Erdegeist* and *Die Büchse der Pandora*, would seem to prove that, unlike the Dadaists, the Surrealists certainly did not reject German Expressionism.

POSTROMANTICISM

Another key reference in the field is Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *Nosferatu, in der Symphonie des Grauens* (1922). For the Surrealists the punctum in this masterpiece of silent cinema is an intertitle to which they attributed a metaphysical meaning and which haunted them, for a time at least: 'Kaum hatte Hutter die Brücke überschritten, da ergriffen ihn die unheimlichen Gesichte, von denen er mir oft erzählt hat'. This

¹⁸ It was *Trésor des jésuites*, scheduled to open in Paris in 1928, but it never did. Aragon writes of Musidora as follows: 'Cette magnifique bête d'ombre fut donc notre Vénus et notre déesse Raison.' This short play can be found in Patrick Cazals' book; op. cit., pp.164-71.

¹⁹ Ado Kyrrou, *Le Surréalisme au cinéma*, Paris, éditions Arcanes, 1953. Three lyrical pages are devoted to the star, and he refers to an article by Jean Georges Auriol and Mario Verdone published in 1949 in the double issue 19-20 of the *Revue du cinéma*. Cf. *Le Surréalisme au cinéma*, Paris, Arcanes, 1953, pp. 119-121. Henri Langlois and Lotte H. Eisner, who also published in the journal, were active in the rediscovery of the star in the mid-50s. On the one hand, in 1955 the Cinémathèque loaned to James Card, director of Eastman House in Rochester (who wished to celebrate his fellow citizen) the very rare copies of *Loulou* and *Journal d'une fille perdue*. On the other hand, three years later, the Cinémathèque invited the actress to Paris. Every afternoon, Lotte H. Eisner, Langlois, Kenneth Anger and another great fan, Man Ray, went to see her at the hotel Royal Monceau, since she did not want to leave her room. For Langlois, 'Garbo n'existe pas, Dietrich n'existe pas, il n'y a que Louise Brooks'. He writes: 'ceux qui l'ont vu en chair et en os ne peuvent l'oublier. Elle est l'interprète moderne par excellence, car elle est comme les statues antiques, hors du temps'.

²⁰ Ado Kyrrou, op.cit., pp.115-16.

intertitle should normally be translated as : 'À peine Hutter avait-il passé le pont qu'il fut en proie aux étranges visions dont il m'a souvent parlé.' The unknown author of the French version condensed the sentence, its dry concision rendering it hermetic : 'Et quand il eut dépassé le pont, les fantômes vinrent à sa rencontre.' In the memories of those involved a number of variants crop up, of which the most stripped-back is : 'Passé le pont, les fantômes vinrent à sa rencontre²¹.'

It is true that in the scene immediately following the crossing of the bridge, the Romantic is swept into a world that is other, as dark as Hades, carried along in a carriage driven by a strange coachman, both vehicle and horse team draped in heavy black cloth. The shots in which they figure show them distorted, falsified, accelerated, in negative. In these two specific cases it would seem to be the essentially Romantic element that was the source of enchantment and continues for lovers of cinema and *amour fou*.²² Another possible link between surrealist cinema and German Romanticism is the use made by Buñuel and Dali, in both *Un chien andalou* (1929) and *L'Âge d'or* (1930), of Wagnerian themes of passion thwarted by social convention, with extracts from *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), juxtaposed and, at times mixed, with either tangos or the drums of Calanda.²³

CALIGARISM

Rudolf Kurtz's *Expressionismus und Film* (1926) was the first study of this movement inspired as much by the visual arts, *Der Sturm* (1910) and *Der Blaue Reiter* (1911), as by poetry and theatre – Frank Wedekind's influence being central. With a slight delay, Expressionism finally had an effect on cinema. The book was written during studio production or shortly after the public opening of the works under discussion, before a number of major works of the second half of the 1920s, including early talkies, burst onto the scene, and it gave a central place to the output of Robert Wiene. And among these, *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (1920), a film about madness, produced by Erich Pommer and magnificently played by Conrad Veidt, which made the most of sets signed Hermann Warm, Walter Reimann and Walter Röhrig. In France,

²¹ André Breton transcribes it thus : 'Quand il fut de l'autre côté du pont, les fantômes vinrent à sa rencontre', in *Les Vases communicants*, Paris, Gallimard, 1932.

²² It was no accident that Ado Kyrou titled one of his first texts in the recent periodical of which he was the co-founder (and for two years the director, before writing for *Positif*) : 'Romantisme et cinéma – Pour un cinéma frénétique', *L'Âge du cinéma*, n° 1, mars 1951, p. 3.

²³ Since *Un chien andalou* was a silent movie, the authors played records during the projection, like Germaine Dulac with *Impressions visuelles* (1928). When a soundtrack was added to the film Buñuel used a piece by Vicente Alvarez and his tropical orchestra, 'Tango argentino' published in 1959 as a 25cm, *Nuits à La Havane*. In *L'Âge d'or* the musical themes from Wagner's opera are part of the profilmic, interpreted by a rather unorthodox orchestra, with a violinist in Jesuit robes smoking a cigarette, and a director who collapses during the concert.

around this time, Émile Vuillermoz was greeting this cinematographic aesthetic as Europe's 'revenge' on then-dominant Hollywood cinema²⁴.

Alongside this prototype Expressionist film, which fulfilled the criteria set out by Kurtz – a set design based on painted backdrops and angular shapes, exaggerated acting, a nightmarish scenario etc. – and which gave rise to the concept of *caligarism*, the author put Robert Weine's *Genuine* (1920) and *Raskolnikow* (1923), *Von Morgens bis Mitternachts* (1920) by Kalheinz Martin, an adaptation of the play of the same name by Georg Kaiser in which the abstract décor was foregrounded, *Das Haus zum Mond* (1921) by the same director and, finally, *Das Wachsfigurenkabinett* (1924) by Paul Leni, who was to direct in Hollywood the remarkable version of *The Man Who Laughs* (1928), by Victor Hugo, with Conrad Veidt in the main role²⁵.

EXPRESSIONIST STYLE

Rudolf Kurtz contrasted the Expressionist movement with its predecessor, Impressionism, which was primarily pictorial. The new trend gradually shook up the theatre and poetry before affecting the cinema which was still in thrall to Naturalism and the art movie. Kurtz did not include in his corpus *Der Student von Prag* (1913) by Paul Wegener and *Stellan Rye* by Hanns Heinz Ewers, since he claimed they did not have enough of the formal elements shared by the corpus (no chiaroscuro, flat decors or highly-strung acting, with the exception of John Gottowt, made up like Mephistopheles, caricatured as a Scapinelli), and was indebted to Romanticism for the theme of the double and a number of typical motifs (Faustian themes, the frustrated love between a penniless youth and a rich aristocrat, the figure of the gypsy, the world of la Bohème, the social function of dancing, of the ball, the waltz and the trance, favoured by Heinrich Heine).

The ghostly image, psychotic delirium or schizz were shared by both Romanticism and Expressionism. Whether they were surrealist films – indeed pre-surrealist, as in Abel Gance's *La Folie du Dr Tube* (1915) Loïe Fuller's *Le Lys de la vie* (1921), with René Clair (René Chomette), *Salomé* (1923) by Charles Bryant, with his star and wife Alla Nazimova²⁶, or Jean Renoir's *Sur un air de Charleston* (1926) – or belong to the

²⁴ Émile Vuillermoz, 'Réalisme et expressionnisme', *Les Cahiers du mois*, n° 16-17, 1925, in Laurent Guido, *L'Âge du rythme*, Lausanne, Payot, 2007, p. 67.

²⁵ Nicole Gabriel, 'Paul Leni et *L'Homme qui rit*', *Jeune Cinéma*, n° 347-348, septembre 2012, pp. 87-91.

²⁶ Alla Nazimova, recalled or, rather, called up by Robert Desnos during a trance – 'sommeil hypnotique ou provoqué.' Cf. André Breton, 'Entrée des médiums', *Littérature*, n° 6, novembre 1922 ; and in *Les Pas perdus, Œuvres complètes*, I, Paris, Gallimard, 1988, p. 277.

category of caligariism – anything outlandish is normally attributed to dream, hallucination or mad delirium²⁷. Antonin Artaud found in the cinema an ‘excitant remarquable [qui] agit sur la matière du cerveau directement’²⁸. Kurtz felt that Expressionism ended in abstract art. Lotte Eisner offers an exhaustive – and at times over-expansive – vision of Expressionist cinema. She refers in her introduction to *Der Student von Prag*, stresses the importance of the scenario and notes that the actor (and co-author) Paul Wegener was a member of Max Reinhardt’s troupe and that, as we know, he put great emphasis on lighting. Expressionist or not, this full-length film is modern in its mise-en-scène, in the subtle use of special effects (e.g. the double exposure that enables the student to talk to his double at the gate to the countess’ estate), in its fluid montage. Its metaphysical content goes well beyond the melodramas of the 1910s.

DIABOLICAL DÉCOR

Prior to the publication of her book on German cinema Lotte H. Eisner published under the title ‘Décor démoniaque’ one of the chapters relating to the question of décor in *L’Âge du cinéma*²⁹. While regretting that the décors for *Caligari* were finally not provided by Alfred Kubin, described as an ‘artiste visionnaire dont les œuvres frénétiques surgissent d’un chaos clair-obscur’ in the spirit of the German Romantics, Eisner noted that the canvases painted by Warm and Retnig produced a feeling of ‘excitation perpétuelle’, something specific to Expressionism, according to Kasimir Edschmid. She writes : ‘Ces maisons ou cette ébauche sommaire d’un puits à l’angle d’une ruelle semblent en effet vibrer d’une extraordinaire vie intérieure.’ Eisner refers in passing to the world of Gustav Meyrink’s *Golem* (1915) – adapted for the cinema five years later by Paul Wegener and Carl Boese – namely a ‘ghetto hanté où les maisons poussées au hasard, pareilles à de mauvaises herbes, semblent avoir une vie perfide et hostile’, where the inhabitants are ‘énigmatiques créatures, qui vivent dans le tréfonds de leur âme, et errent sans volonté, faiblement animées par la présence d’un invisible courant magnétique.’

Louis Delluc for his part foregrounded the structure of a film like *Caligari*. The control of the tempo was no longer based on the content or on purely scenographic elements, but on the flow, in other words the montage. The fascination produced was reinforced by the rhythmic progression of the film : ‘D’abord lent,

²⁷ For Robert Desnos ‘le cinéma est le plus puissant des opiums’, Cf. Nouredine Ghali, op. cit., p. 346.

²⁸ Cf. Artaud’s response to one of the popular surveys of the time, René Clair’s questionnaire for a ‘Films’ supplement to *Le Théâtre et Comœdia illustré* in March 1923 : ‘Le cinéma est un excitant remarquable. Il agit sur la matière du cerveau directement. Quand la saveur de l’art se sera alliée en proportion suffisante à l’ingrédient psychique qu’il détient, il laissera loin derrière le théâtre que nous reléguerons à l’armoire aux souvenirs’, Antonin Artaud, *Œuvres complètes*, III, Paris, Gallimard, 1978, p. 64, quoted in Nouredine Ghali, op. cit., p. 346.

²⁹ ‘Décor démoniaque’, *L’Âge du cinéma* no.6, Paris, 1952, pp.29-31.

volontairement laborieux, il tâche d'énerver l'attention. Puis, quand se mettent à tourner les vagues dentées de la kermesse, l'allure bondit, s'active, file, et ne nous lâche qu'au mot fin, aigre comme une gifle.³⁰ Lotte H. Eisner delves into the issue of the object, something that obsessed Surrealist film-makers, photographers and painters, whether its distortion or its metamorphosis :

La déformation des objets, essentielle dans l'art expressionniste, est-elle provoquée uniquement par des conditions de lumière ou par les impondérables de la distance ? Il ne faut pas sous-estimer le pouvoir de l'abstraction qui s'ajoute à la « vision » expressionniste.³¹

DIABOLICAL CINEMA

Lotte H. Eisner's book was well received not just by Rudolf Kurtz, who sent her polite congratulations, but also by André Breton, who sent her a letter with warm congratulations and a note to add how much he regretted having had access to it only two years after publication. He writes :

La teneur intellectuelle et humaine du livre est aussi éminente que sa valeur documentaire, de premier ordre et de première main. Ce que vous nous apprenez sur les dessous de l'expressionnisme est d'une valeur fondamentale. Mais cela me rend furieux de penser que tout cela est resté si bien caché dans notre pays. Sans cela, le développement général de l'art ne serait pas passé de la même façon et je crois que cet art aurait culminé avec un grand flot de compréhension entre l'Allemagne et la France ; mais nous sommes passés à côté.³²

Eisner adopted Kasimir Edschmid's definition of the Expressionist artist, as summarised by Kurtz in the introduction to his book : 'L'expressionniste ne voit plus, il a des "visions" (...) la chaîne des faits : usines, maisons, maladies, prostituées, cris, faim n'existent pas ; seule existe la vision intérieure qu'ils produisent.'³³ She extended Kurtz's list, at the risk of being off-topic, and analysed numerous silent films and talkies, including among others : Hans Kobe's *Torgus* (1920), Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *Phantom* (1922), Georg Wilhelm Pabst's *Geheimnisse einer Seele* (1926), Alfred Abel's *Narkose* (1929), Ernö Metzner's short [*Polizeibericht*] *Überfall* (1928), *Der Golem* (1920) by Paul Wegener [and Carl Boese], Fritz Lang's *Der Müde Tod* (1921), Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922), Arthur von Gerlach's *Vanina* (1922), and Arthur Robison's *Schatten* (1923).

³⁰ Louis Delluc, text of 1923, in *Le Cinéma et les cinéastes*, Paris, Cinémathèque Française, 1985, quoted by Laurent Guido, op. cit. p. 181.

³¹ Crevel attacked the 'déformation systématique, dont beaucoup, obnubilés par les succès de *Caligari*, semblent vouloir faire un style de cinéma.' René Crevel, 'Réponse à l'enquête 'Les lettres, la pensée moderne et le cinéma'', in *Écrits sur l'art et le spectacle*, Toulouse, Ombres, 2011, p. 160, quoted by Boris Monneau, in 'Le Spectateur surréaliste', *Culture Pop !, Revue Chameaux*, n° 8, Québec, Université Laval, automne 2015.

³² Laurent Mannoni, 'La "Eisnerin" et les écrans démoniaques', *Sociétés & Représentations*, n° 32, Paris, pp. 241-251.

³³ Lotte H. Eisner, op. cit., p. 14.

ROMANTICISM

*The Dictionnaire André Breton*³⁴ investigates the Romantic sources the founder of the movement had covered in the *Manifeste du Surréalisme* : 'Chateaubriand est surréaliste dans l'exotisme (...) Hugo est surréaliste quand il n'est pas bête [...] Bertrand est surréaliste dans le passé. Rabbe est surréaliste dans la mort.' The names of Victor Hugo, Gérard Nerval and Aloysius Bertrand recur in particular in *Les Pas perdus*, and Breton ignored neither 'minor Romantics' like Pétrus Borel or Xavier Forneret (an indisputable precursor of Surrealism, for Breton), nor 'the German domain', with Novalis or Achim von Arnim, discussed in his introduction to the *Contes bizarres* (1933) published by *Les Cahiers libres*. In his text on cinema, 'Comme dans un bois', where he recalls the time spent wandering in Nantes with his friend Vaché, Breton underlined the importance of cinema at a time when he had the same age as cinema. He writes :

Nous ne voyions alors dans le cinéma, quel qu'il fût, que substance lyrique exigeant d'être brassée en masse et au hasard. Je crois que ce que nous mettions au plus haut en lui, au point de nous désintéresser de tout le reste, c'était son pouvoir de dépaysement. Ce dépaysement est à plusieurs étages, je veux dire admet différents paliers. La merveille, auprès de quoi le mérite d'un film déterminé est peu de chose, réside dans la faculté dévolue au premier venu de s'abstraire de sa propre vie quand le cœur lui en dit [...]. Dès l'instant où il a pris place jusqu'à celui où il glisse dans la fiction qui se déroule sous ses yeux, il passe par un point critique aussi captivant et insaisissable que celui qui unit la veille au sommeil.

The cinema was for Breton 'le lieu où se célèbre le seul mystère absolument moderne.' And he listed several works that he liked: Robert Z. Leonard's *A Little Journey/Ah ! Le beau voyage* (1927), Henry Hattaway's *Peter Ibbetson* (1935), and *Comment j'ai tué mon enfant* (1925) by Alexandre Ryder, from a novel by Pierre L'Ermite.

L'ÂGE D'OR and L'ÂGE DU CINÉMA

Luis Buñuel's *L'Âge d'or* (1930) remains for us all, whether we like it or not, the film most representative of the Surrealist movement. It was one of the first in France to be given not just a soundtrack but to be literally a 'talkie'. It was shown again in Cannes this year³⁵, with a fully restored soundtrack that rendered the slightest nuances of the dialogue, the ambiance, the music and suggested noises³⁶. The soundtrack made use of the most advanced processes in Europe at the time, from the German company Tobis

³⁴ Henri Béhar, *Dictionnaire André Breton*, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2013, pp. 892-893.

³⁵ The film was digitalised by Hiventy and the sound perfectly restored by L.E. Diapason. Cf. revue *Jeune cinéma*, n° 395, été 2019, p. 35.

³⁶ For some critics, 'les premiers ahanements (*ah! ah!*) sonores de l'histoire du cinéma sont vraisemblablement ceux de Lya Lys accouplée dans la boue à Gaston Modot dans *L'Âge d'Or*'. Cf. Patrick de Haas, op.cit., p.290.

Klangfilm. Since a great deal has been written about the film, suffice it to say that it deals with *l'amour fou* through a process of free association, and thus jettisons the traditional narrative structure.

Because of the blasphemy, the humour noir and the paeon to anarchy, both content and fragmented form outraged the Ligue des Patriotes and the Ligue anti-juive who smashed up Studio 28 when the film was first shown. It is said that the Viscount Charles de Noailles who, with his wife Marie-Laure, had backed the film, was even barred from the Jockey Club. The clear object of desire expressed in each of the film's sequences also seemed to motivate the troupe of well-to-do extras and artists who had taken part in the adventure. At times, via a game of musical chairs where only Cupid knows the rules, some of them threw themselves into *amour fou* and free love both on and off-screen. Max Ernst, the bandit leader, was in the process of leaving Gala, Paul Éluard's official wife, who did the voiceover for Marie-Berthe, one of the guests, while Salvador Dali, co-scenarist for the film, waited in the wings, for Gala.

PHOTONOVEL

Photography was widely used by the Surrealists to illustrate not just their periodicals but also their essays, stories and novels, as André Breton's oeuvre illustrates. In *Nadja*, besides two drawings of the young woman in question, the author made use of several photos by Jacques-André Boiffard and a few by Man Ray, Henri Manuel, Valentine Hugo, alongside shots by unknown or at least unacknowledged photographers. In the Pléiade edition of 1988 a photo taken in 1959 by Pablo Volta, from the Musée Grévin, was added to *Nadja*. In *Les Vases communicants*, Breton uses a photogramme from the Expressionist film *Nosferatu* and quotes from memory the inter-title discussed earlier, now modified by the poetic translation. Breton forgot neither to insert his own portrait at times nor to draw attention to himself by publishing the copy of a letter received from Freud. In *L'Amour fou*, alongside the photos of Man Ray, there are others signed Brassai, Dora Maar or Cartier Bresson.



Nosferatu, *Les Vases communicants*, A. Breton

Man Ray, along with Berenice Abbott, the gallery-owner Julien Levy and a number of Surrealists, contributed to the belated, well-nigh posthumous, recognition of Eugène Atget. Abbott called him the 'Balzac de la caméra' and praised his vision as that of a 'véritable romantique'.³⁷ Historic Paris, as shot by Atget, emptied of all human presence, as Walter Benjamin noted, was the fruit of his exclusive use of the long exposure. The photographer did not wish to resort to a modern camera, or perhaps simply could not afford one. This exposure time, while weakening the 'valeur d'exposition' favoured by Benjamin, increases the cultural value³⁸ or, put another way, the aura that originates in the black and white of the shots heightened or softened by the sepia or purple. There is, for instance, a photo by Atget of a Paris butcher's shop in issue no.5 of the periodical *Littérature* (1922) and three un-credited photos that are clearly his in issue no.7 of *La Révolution Surréaliste* (1926).

DADA AND SURREALIST CINEMA

In his catalogue of Dada and Surrealist cinema³⁹ Alain Virmaux included seven works from the Dada sphere: *Entr'acte* (1924) by René Clair and Francis Picabia ; four by Hans Richter : *Inflation* (1928), *Rennsymphonie* (1929), *Zweigroschenzauber* (1929) and *Vormittagspuk* (1928) ; three by Man Ray : *Retour à la raison* (1923), *Emak Bakia* (1926) and *Anemic Cinema* (1926) co-authored with Marcel Duchamp. As for Surrealist cinema, he included only a handful : *La Coquille et le clergyman* (1928), *L'Étoile de mer* (1929) by Man Ray on a poem by Robert Desnos, *Un chien andalou* (1929) by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, and *L'Âge d'or* (1930) by Luis Buñuel in collaboration with Salvador Dalí. He also refers to an aesthetic curiosity in the form of a collective film by Hans Richter and several exiled Surrealists, *Dreams that Money Can Buy* (1947), shot in the USA during the war and first shown many years later.

To this coherent but somewhat restricted list Ado Kyrou has added a few more works⁴⁰, and in the case of Dada in particular, Hans Richter's *Alles dreht sich alles bewegt sich* (1929). In *En marge du cinéma français* (1954) Jacques B. Brunius skirted the thorny issue of defining these types of so-called pure

³⁷ Berenice Abbott and André Boiffard started out as assistants to Man Ray. For him, as for Atget, what is unique to cinema is the ability to 'isoler pour rendre étrange ce qui est familier', in Pierre Bost's words. Cf. Herbert Molderings, in *Man Ray photographe*, Paris, Philippe Sers, 1981, p. 15.

³⁸ Hegel is said to be the initiator of the distinction between 'exposure value' and 'cultural value' of a work, works shielded from view, rarified or sacralised by secrecy.

³⁹ *Cinéma dadaïste et surréaliste*, Paris, Centre Pompidou, 1976.

⁴⁰ Ado Kyrou, op.cit., p. 173.

cinema and set out three avant-gardes⁴¹ or successive historical phases : the first, that of Louis Delluc ; the second, which includes Germaine Dulac, Abel Gance, Jean Epstein and Marcel L'Herbier ; and finally a third with Man Ray, Francis Picabia and René Clair, Henri Chomette (the latter's elder brother), Alberto Cavalcanti, Jean Renoir (with the astonishing *Sur un air de Charleston*, shot in 1926), Claude Autant-Lara (*Fait divers*, 1923), Germaine Dulac, not forgetting Edmond T. Gréville and Brunius himself (the mythical film *Elle est bicimidine*, 1923), lost or simply a joke verging on a 'fake'. While resorting to a slightly different terminology based on visual metaphors, this is the typology used by Henri Langlois.

RETURN to the OBJECT

Jean Mitry has argued that Surrealist cinema inaugurated a 'retour à l'objet concret', which did not imply that 'les images aient l'obligation de "raconter" quoi que ce soit, mais d'évoquer, de suggérer, comme dans un poème'⁴². It would thus seem that Antonin Artaud's idea that 'pure' or 'abstract' cinema, by Viking Eggeling, Hans Richter, Henri Chomette etc., was a mistake that had gained credence among avant-garde film-makers. The real was back, even though the Surrealists were admirers of the fairy-tale cinematography of a Méliès. Fantasy and reality merged. Or, in the words of Ado Kyrou : 'le cinéma présente des êtres en chair et en os, donc même le rêve de ces personnages prend chair et os.' Artaud left a double mark on the birth of this cinema : by attacking earlier works or current rival productions, and by writing the scenario for the first film that could claim to belong to this movement, *La Coquille et le clergyman*. Paradoxically, while more than a little disappointed by the film as directed by Germaine Dulac – who kept him away from the set – the poet would nevertheless lay claim to his role as pioneer.

Angry with André Breton who had excommunicated him and who had little love for Jean Cocteau, author of *Sang d'un poète*, Artaud was to display a touch of bad faith when writing to Jean Paulhan on 22 January 1932 :

Cette vieille querelle entre Cocteau et les Surréalistes est absurde. Car au fond tout cela se ressemble et je vous assure que des gens non au courant de leurs bisbilles d'animaux mettraient sur le même plan, rangeraient dans le même sac un film comme *L'Âge d'or* et un film comme *Le Sang d'un poète*, aussi gratuits, et aussi inutiles l'un que l'autre (...). Mais je pense de tous ces films que *La Coquille et le clergyman* a fait des petits et qu'ils appartiennent tous à la même veine spirituelle mais ce qui avait un intérêt en 1927 – car *La Coquille* était bien le premier du genre et un film précurseur – n'en a plus en 1932, soit 5 ans après.

⁴¹ The Impressionist school, when transposed into cinema with its visual and rhythmic stretching of limits, its subjectivity and the photogenic quality so central for Louis Delluc, corresponded to the first or French avant-garde, thus merging Brunius' first two categories.

⁴² Jean Mitry, *Le Cinéma expérimental*, Paris, Seghers, 1974, p. 211.

SURREALIST SCENARIOS

Alongside works actually produced and distributed, sometimes only years later because of censorship, one should add the projects and scenarios, some of which were published. Besides the script for *La Coquille et le clergyman*, Antonin Artaud wrote seven scripts which to date have not been worked up. These include a fantasy film, *Les Dix-huit Secondes* (c. 1925)⁴³, expanding the timespan prior to the suicide of the protagonist, a role that the author hoped to play (the female role was to go to Génica Athanasiou). Other titles were still-born : *Deux Nations sur les confins de la Mongolie* (c. 1926)⁴⁴, *Vols* (c. 1928)⁴⁵, *Les 32* (1929)⁴⁶, *L'Avion solaire* (1929)⁴⁷, *Le Maître de Ballantrae*, based on Stevenson (1929)⁴⁸, *La Révolte du boucher* (1930)⁴⁹.

We referred earlier to the Desnos poem freely illustrated by Man Ray, *L'Étoile de mer* (1929), in which the stanzas serve as inter-titles. According to Kyrrou, Benjamin Péret wrote a crazy scenario in 1919, Dada in spirit, *Pulchérie veut une auto*. According to Odette and Alain Virmaux, Philippe Soupault left 'six cinematographic poems', dated between 1918 and 1925, 'dont un ou deux auraient fait l'objet, vers 1922, d'une transposition cinématographique due à Walter Ruttmann', but now lost. Furthermore, the co-author of *Champs magnétiques* also wrote *Le Cœur volé*, around 1934, a scenario planned for Jean Vigo but 'unpublished for some thirty years'⁵⁰. Without going as far as the position adopted by Fernand Léger, with its hint of futurist radicalism, according to which 'l'erreur picturale, c'est le sujet. L'erreur du cinéma, c'est le scénario', we have to accept René Clair's conclusion : 'un film n'existe que sur l'écran'⁵¹.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this brief overview I have sought to bring together two cinematographies that are normally quite separate, namely the films shot in the Berlin studios of Weissensee, Johannisthal and Babelsberg that endeavoured to profit from the caligariism fashion, and the relatively short films springing from the surrealist imaginary. I have not undertaken a detailed filmic analysis of each work, but have sought to bring out the differences and similarities between the two artistic currents, while pursuing the overview and introducing,

⁴³ Antonin Artaud, op. cit., p. 9.

⁴⁴ Op. cit., p. 14.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 31.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 44.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 46.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 54.

⁵⁰ Philippe Soupault, *Écrits de cinéma 1918-1931*, Paris, Plon, 1979, p. 22.

⁵¹ Patrick de Haas, op. cit., pp. 348-49.

where needed, comments on elements normally taken for granted. For instance, thanks to a German copy from the period, a literal translation of the famous *Nosferatu* board that had so impressed André Breton and his friends has been made possible⁵². We have pointed out that the Surrealists' liking for cinema was quite unlike that of the poet Ricciotto Canudo who endeavoured to make it a legitimate art form. They revelled in serials rather than 'serious' films, even where they claimed to be artistic, and fell madly in love with female vamps and stars, from Musidora to Louise Brooks.

I have been able to locate the Nantes cinemas where Breton and Vaché would enter and leave without so much as a glance at the titles or popular films, an attitude that influenced someone like Man Ray⁵³. In the universally acknowledged masterpiece (except by Artaud and his bad faith) *L'Âge d'or*, it is now clear that free love was a practice both on and off-screen, Surrealist couples forming and separating with the regularity of a movie-camera mechanism. Despite appearances, the Expressionist and Surrealist corpus share not only themes drawn from Romanticism (impossible love, the irrational, death, the double, emotional disturbance, dream and nightmare, the bizarre, protests against established society, blackness) but the formal techniques used to articulate them (double exposure, ellipses, inserts, anti-naturalist acting). What in *Caligari* is an integral part of the scenario, namely the protagonist's sleepwalking and the mise-en-abyme, via theatricalisation, become sources of enchantment for the Surrealists. They associate the fairground character of this cinema with a bygone age of the art form.

⁵² Nouredine Ghali, op. cit., p. 196.

⁵³ Man Ray maintained that in any film aimed at a wide public, even in a flop, there would always be a few minutes worth watching. Furthermore, 'si un film l'ennuie, il le transforme volontairement en clignotant des yeux à une cadence accélérée, en passant ses doigts devant ses yeux, en formant des grilles, ou en plaçant sur son visage un tissu mi-transparent.' Ado Kyrou, op. cit., p. 248.

The Magic Horn and Little Cunégonde: Romantic Poetics in Arp's 'Configurations' (1918-1930-1950)

Agathe MAREUGE

A moi l'homme antiprogrès qui refuse l'obéissance au progrès on m'a décerné comme haute distinction la rose enchantée rouge foncé des contes de fées.¹

In this line from Jean Hans Arp's later work, he expresses his liking of the fairy-tale genre through the image of an honour conferred on the poet. Over 50 years of artistic production Arp's poetic and plastic works have integrated themes relating to fairy-tales and the taste for the marvelous or 'enchantment'. Arp draws these themes from German Romantic writers in particular; writers who were among his favourite authors when he was a young writer and poet. These themes were developed from the time of Dada and Surrealism into the 1960s. As he wrote in 1958, 'at the age of 16 I took refuge in poetry. My admiration for the German Romantics has lasted to this day'.² The repeated use of certain clearly identifiable and recognizable themes is the most obvious sign of the presence of German Romanticism in Arp's poetics, from Dada to his late work. The elements borrowed from Romanticism are diverse – like the movement itself – and involve narrative forms inspired by fairy-tales as well as a taste for a combinatory art form sometimes linked to a certain formal reduction. Our main focus in the present study will be the exploration of two themes drawn from the Romantic corpus which appear in Arp's texts as early as the Zurich Dada years, and which evolve over the following decades: firstly the 'magic' or 'enchanted horn' (*Wunderhorn*) motif, borrowed from the volume edited by Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim; and secondly, the theme of Hansel and Gretel, from the eponymous tale by the Grimm brothers, together with Little Cunégonde, the protagonist of other popular German tales. These recurrent themes, relating back to Heidelberg Romanticism, will allow us to identify two poetic groups associated in 1957 with the 'Wunderhornkonfiguration' ('Configuration of the magic horn') and 'Kunigundulakonfiguration' ('Configuration of Little Cunégonde').

¹ Jean Arp, 'Inédits 1961-1964', in *Jours effeuillés. Poèmes, essais, souvenirs 1920-1965*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, p. 618.

² Hans Arp, 'Betrachten' [1958], in Hans Arp, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, *Zweiklang*, Zürich, Arche, 1960, p. 84.

The first section will explore the Dada sources of these two groups of poems. The second section will show how Arp integrated them into his poetics of configurations (both poetic and artistic) alongside his constellations and concretions, a poetics based on a conception of the work considered always incomplete and constantly revised, modified, 'reconfigured'.

In the final stage in the development of Arp's configurations, we will show how the later works (from the 1950s and 60s) of the poet-editor-composer took up yet again this older material, giving it new titles, thereby clarifying the Romantic legacy in a historiographical gesture that situates Dada and Surrealism within the dual filiation of German Romanticism and French Symbolism.

In the last section, we will show that the 'contemporary fables' ('Zeitgemäße Fabeln') from the same period, both a variant and a development of the 'Kunigundulakonfiguration', reveal the two creative and potentially contradictory principles, mentioned above, drawn from Romanticism: on the one hand the development of narrativity, linked to the marvelous; and on the other hand the aesthetics of the fragment and combinatory art marked by chance, thanks to which Arp comes closer to the Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel of the Athenäum, hence to Jena Romanticism.

The magic horn, Hansel and Gretel, Little Cunégonde: the presence of German Romanticism in Arp's Dada works (from Heidelberg Romanticism to 1918 Zurich)



III. 1. Hans Arp, *Der Vogel Selbdritt*

In 1920 Arp published his first volume of poems in German under the title *Der Vogel Selbdritt* (Berlin, Otto von Holten), a series of 19 poems, with no punctuation or capital letters, illustrated with wood engravings also by Arp. Two of these poems introduced characters familiar to readers of fairy-tales. In 'die edelfrau pumpt feierlich wolken...', which gives its title to Arp's second volume of German poems, *Die Wolkenpumpen* (*The Cloud Pump*), published the same year, he introduced Hansel and Gretel, the central characters of one of the tales collected by the Grimm brothers (1812-1815), as well as Little Cunégonde (Kunigundula), Cunégonde being the name of a character from popular tales, alongside a dragon, who appears in the form of an inscription on a panel. In 'verschlungene knaben blasen das wunderhorn', the first line introduces boys blowing the 'magic horn', relating back to the volume of popular tales and songs collected by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. The two poems, brought together for the first time in *Die Wolkenpumpen*, were originally published separately in two Dada journals. The first was published in May 1919 as an extract of *Die Wolkenpumpe* ('aus "die wolkenpumpe"') in *Anthologie Dada* (issue 4-5 of the Zurich journal *Dada*, edited by Tristan Tzara) (III. 2); it was republished in 1920 as the first stanza of a poem titled 'Die Schwalbenhode' in *Almanach Dada* edited by Richard Huelsenbeck. The second poem, marked 'aus dem "Cacadou supérieur"', appeared in *Dadameter. Die Schammade*, the single issue of a journal published in Cologne by Max Ernst and Theodor Baargeld (III. 3). The Romantic themes are thus appropriated by Arp and presented in several publications linked to his activities in various European Dada centres, in Switzerland and Germany, in collaboration with his Dada friends. Arp's wood engravings appear on the covers of both journals.



III. 2. *Anthologie Dada*, 1919

In his first important poetological text, 'Wegweiser' ('Waymarkers'), published as the preface to his 1953 anthology, *Wortträume und schwarze Sterne* ('Word-dreams and black stars'), Arp reflects on the years 1914-1920:

In den Jahren 1914 bis 1930 las ich Chroniken aus dem Mittelalter, Volksbücher, Volkslieder ; ich las besonders entzückt in 'Des Knaben Wunderhorn'. Dies Buch klingt 'wie nie ein Harfenklang und keiner Frauen Sang, kein Vogel obenher.³ Ich liebte Gassenhauer, Kommerslieder. Einen großen Einfluss übten auf mich Kindergeschichten und Kinderzeichnungen aus. Durch sie wurden verwandte Welten in mir erweckt.⁴



III. 3. *Dadameter. Die Schammade*

³ Quotation from 'Das Wunderhorn', the first text in Brentano and Achim von Arnim's collection.
⁴ Hans Arp, 'Wegweiser', in *Wortträume und schwarze Sterne. Auswahl aus den Gedichten der Jahre 1911-1952*, Wiesbaden, Limes, 1953, p. 5-11 (p. 8).

Arp would later explain what had focused his attention in the volume of stories (1805-1808) by Arnim and Brentano, two poets belonging to Heidelberg Romanticism: their popular, almost anonymous, childlike character. He repeats the lines from the first text quoted by Arnim and Brentano at the start of the volume, which give the volume its title: although popular, these stories are more beautiful than 'all the sounds of the harp or songs by women, more beautiful too than all bird song'. Arp is here offering a key to the interpretation of his own dada works, of which 'die edelfrau pumpt feierlich wolken...' and 'verschlungene knaben blasen das wunderhorn...' are typical examples.

The two poems,⁵ which present important formal similarities, are composed of the juxtaposition of simple sentences in the form of affirmative statements, following the model of one statement per line. They evoke a world ruled by chance and the absurd, a magical world quite different from reality as we know it, in which the poem introduces a certain illusory coherence thanks to the use of affirmative statements and logical connectors such as 'darum' ('that is why') or expressions such as 'wer... macht...' ('he who can... does...'): 'den städten sind die füße abgesägt den kirchtürmen nur volle bewegungsfreiheit in den kellern gegeben darum sind wir auch nicht verpflichtet die krallen hörner und wetterfahnen zu putzen';⁶ 'wer einen schwanz hat bindet sich eine laterne daran. die ganze nacht wird auf dem kopf gestanden rittlings auf drachen getanzt.'⁷ Formal coherence compensates for the rejection of semantic linearity. 'Dada-Arp' is exacerbating the Romantic marvelous.

What role do the Romantic themes play in these poems and what role do they play in Dada texts? In 'die edelfrau pumpt feierlich...' characters from Romantic stories are reduced either to names of ships which have lost their bearings ('die schiffe heißen hans und grete und fahren ahnungslos weiter'⁸), to an inscription on a panel, or a submissive state ('der drache trägt die inschrift kunigundula und wird an der leine geführt'⁹). While Arp's appropriation process could be seen as a banalisation of these themes, it is in fact more ambivalent. Like the hypocoristic name 'kunigundula' or 'Little Cunégonde', the relation of our Dada poet to the Romantic corpus consists in assimilating this legacy in order to manipulate it more easily, with great freedom of movement ('volle bewegungsfreiheit'), in the context of the everyday or of nature. This apparent banalising of tradition marks an attachment to Romantic aesthetics and poetics as expressed

⁵ See appendix, *Mélusine 2* (French version) for the French translation.

⁶ 'on a scié les pieds des villes les clochers n'ont pleine liberté de mouvement que dans les caves c'est pourquoi nous ne sommes pas obligés de nettoyer les griffes cornes et girouettes'.

⁷ 'tous ceux qui ont une queue s'y accrochent une lanterne. toute la nuit on se tient sur la tête on danse à califourchon sur des dragons.'

⁸ 'les bateaux se nomment hans et grete et poursuivent leur route sans se douter de rien'.

⁹ 'le dragon porte l'inscription petite Cunégonde et il est conduit en laisse'.

in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* or later in *des Hau – und Kindermärchen*. Whatever the intervention of the Romantic ‘authors’– editors, which is a matter for discussion (to what extent did they rework the texts they collected?), it was primarily a question of collecting from the people, from multiple sources, the tales, songs and stories belonging to everyone, a shared heritage in short. Moreover, Dada non-sense is a direct descendant of the magic of fairy-tales. As a Dadaist, Arp adopted this filiation quite simply, and one can argue that Romantic poetics materialised and intensified in a totally different historical context. In contrast to the Romantic project of expressing a national spirit by turning to the people during and after the Napoleonic wars, the Zurich Dadaists drew from several cultural traditions in 1914-1918, including enemy traditions, to feed their multilingual, multinational and pacifist output. In this respect, a study of the German Romantic sources of Arp’s Dada texts should be completed by their French Symbolist heritage, a double filiation at the heart of Arp’s poetry, from his early works to the late poetry (‘les poèmes de Rimbaud et de Novalis... m’accompagnent depuis des années’, stated Arp in 1956);¹⁰ but this cannot be undertaken here.¹¹

Added to this, in the two poems, brought together through the similarity of their themes (the stone bags and the bags full of stones of the opening lines), the first line gives the text its impetus. ‘verschlungene knaben blasen das wunderhorn’: As in Brentano and Arnim’s volume, the image of the young boys (‘knaben’) blowing the magic horn – even if they are devoured in Arp’s text – animates and, as it were, sets the poem in motion, triggering fantastic visions (masts, constellations, castles in Spain) marked by drunkenness and the absurd. In ‘die edelfrau pumpt feierlich wolken...’ the apparently mechanical opening image of the pump sets the poem in motion – in a half-human half-natural movement fed by clouds. This key image in Arp’s poetry gives its title to the volume published almost at the same time as *Der Vogel Selbdritt*, *Die Wolkenpumpe*, also published in 1920 by Paul Stegemann in Hannover, another Dada centre around the figure of Kurt ‘Merz’ Schwitters, a close friend of Arp. Reinhard Döhl has quite convincingly identified affinities between the poems of *Der Vogel Selbdritt* and *Die Wolkenpumpe*,¹² based on the fact that ‘die edelfrau pumpt feierlich wolken...’ was published in *Der Vogel Selbdritt* and on

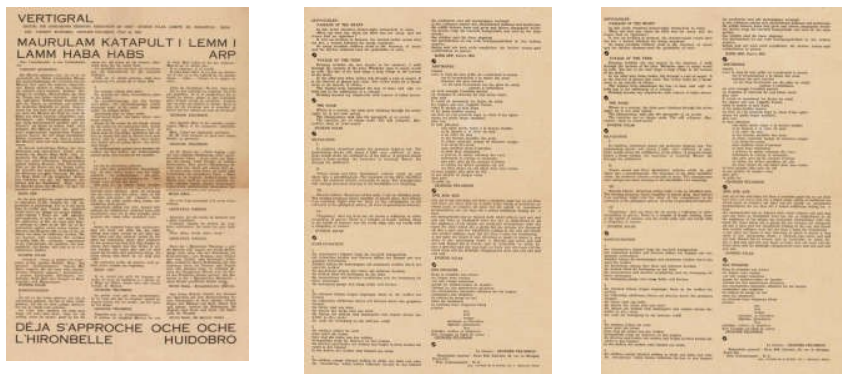
¹⁰ Arp, ‘Réponses aux questions posées par George K.L. Morris’ [1956], in *Jours effeuillés*, op. cit., pp. 443-6 (p. 446).

¹¹ In my published PhD thesis I outlined an analysis of references to Rimbaud (‘Le Bateau ivre’, *Les Illuminations*) and Maeterlinck (‘Les Serres chaudes’) in the poem ‘verschlungene knaben blasen das wunderhorn...’ as well as in an early text by Arp published in *Das Neue Magazin* about his lost book, *Das Logbuch*. See Agathe Mareuge, *Petite éternité. L’œuvre poétique tardive de Jean Hans Arp*, Dijon, Les presses du réel, 2019, pp. 264-67

¹² ‘Zwischen den Texten [besteht] [...] eine weitgehende Affinität’. Reinhard Döhl, *Das literarische Werk Hans Arps 1903-1930. Zur poetischen Vorstellungswelt des Dadaismus*, Stuttgart, Metzler, 1967, p. 149.

Arp's decision to publish under the title 'extrait de "la pompe à nuages"' poems published later in *Der Vogel Selbdritt*. Moreover, many of the themes in *Die Wolkenpumpe* belong to the fairy-tale genre (dragon, prince, dwarf...), but they are not linked to precise characters, and they are mixed with mythical or mythological themes (Aeolus...) or borrowed from Christian imagery (the Last Supper, angels, seraphins and cherubins also appear in one of the poems of *Der Vogel Selbdritt*, and the qualifier in the title itself, 'Selbdritt', is normally used in Christian iconography to refer to Saint Anne, the Virgin and Child). The image of the cloud pump best accounts for Arp's poetic process at the time and its occurrence in 'die edelfrau pumpt feierlich wolken...' can be interpreted as a metaphor of the poet's creative gesture, drawing from the Romantic repertory to activate the 'dada pump'.¹³

The configurations (1930s): development of the Romantic theme as a matrix. Fragment and combinatory art (Jena Romanticism)



III. 4. *Vertigral*

In the early 1930s Arp recycled and extended the material of the Dada poems, the two poems becoming the matrix of longer poems titled 'Konfigurationen', published in Paris under that title (with the addition of a third 'configuration') on 15 July 1932, in the single issue of the journal *Vertigral*, edited by Eugène Jolas, who was also the editor at the time of the famous journal *Transition* in which other poems by Arp were published (ill. 4). *Transition* was printed in newspaper format, on four double pages printed recto-verso, with contributions in French, German and English by Jolas, Arp, Vicente Huidobro – a Chilean poet with

¹³ For an analysis of the 'movement of the pump' and the 'poetic eruptions' of Arp in Dada journals, see Valérie Colucci, who identifies three writing techniques, particularly in the poems from *Der Vogel Selbdritt* and *Die Wolkenpumpe*: typographical flux, syntactic impetus and semantic dynamism. See Valérie Colucci, *Itinéraire d'un 'Originaldada': l'œuvre artistique et poétique de Hans Arp dans les revues de dada Zurich, Cologne et Hanovre (1916-1924)*, PhD thesis, Strasbourg, Université Marc Bloch, 2006, p. 314.

whom Arp collaborated on other projects at that time – and Georges Pelorson (who changed his name to Georges Belmont after the war).

How were Arp's configurations composed? Like the 'Konstellationen', which are similar, they were written by Arp in the early 1930s, firstly in plastic and graphic form as collages made from torn or cut-out papers, painted wood reliefs, then as sculptures. This creative process was gradually extended to his poetic compositions, in German and French, and several collections of poems were published under these titles. Configurations and constellations, whether poetic, graphic or plastic, are based on a similar principle, that of combinatory art which consists in the potentially infinite variation and rearrangement of the same elements into new 'configurations' or 'constellations', 'according to the laws of chance'. The idea of chance is used in its German meaning of 'Zufall', i.e. what happens, what falls to the lot of an individual or an artist, a creative device in which the artist chooses to let go of part of the creative process and decides to let a third element – which could be called chance, nature or matter – intervene on equal grounds with the artist or poet. In the poem 'Wegweiser', quoted above, Arp's definition of the constellations could also apply to the configurations:

„Nach dem Tode meiner Mutter, im Jahre 1930, schrieb ich Gedichte mit einer beschränkten Anzahl Wörter, die in verschiedenen Konstellationen auftreten. [...] Die Beschränkung in der Zahl der Wörter bedeutet keine Verarmung des Gedichtes, vielmehr wird durch die vereinfachte Darstellung der unendliche Reichtum in der Verteilung, Stellung, Anordnung sichtbar.¹⁴

The limited number of words he uses for his constellations and configurations are mostly drawn from his earlier texts, showing a principle of continuity between Dada and later works and, as a consequence, continuing the genealogy of which the Dadaist was already part, by continuing to refer to a literary tradition which was generally considered taboo at the time of Dada.

A new element appeared with the configurations: the profusion of images characteristic of Dada poems undergoes a partial rearrangement, and the important process of repetition – of statements, grammatical structures, or simply themes or nouns indefinitely repeated in new statements – highlights in a new way the Romantic themes we have detected, alongside many others, in the Dada texts. The configurations proceed both by expansion, in the sense of a narrative deployment; and inversely, by a reduction to the elementary, in the sense of a combinatory art playing on the tensions between fragment and totality, cherished by Jena Romantics like Novalis or Friedrich Schlegel.

¹⁴ 'Après la mort de ma mère, en 1930, j'écrivis des poèmes avec un nombre limité de mots présentés selon différentes constellations. [...] La limitation du nombre de mots ne signifie par un appauvrissement du poème ; au contraire, la présentation simplifiée rend visible la richesse infinie de la répartition, de la disposition et de l'arrangement.' Hans Arp, 'Wegweiser', op. cit., p. 9-10.

If we consider these two types of configuration a little more closely, we note that the first configuration is made up of six verses, the first stanza repeating almost word for word the poem 'verschlungene knaben blasen das wunderhorn...', the only difference being that the three sentences which made up the last verse in 1920 are now separated from each other, each forming a separate stanza. The following five stanzas consist in the more-or-less free expansion of the themes of the first stanza. Hence, the start of the third stanza is the ninth line of the first stanza ('wer einen schwanz hat bindet sich eine laterne daran') which is then developed in response :

die mäuse binden sich laternen an ihre schwänze
 die geldkatzen binden sich laternen an ihre schwänze
 die dampfkuhbisse binden sich laternen an ihre schwänze.¹⁵

It then gradually frees itself from this structure while continuing to 'reconfigure' the same elements, gradually returning to those of the first line:

die laternen dürfen nur an schwänzen angebunden werden
 die schwänze genügen um so viele laternen anzubinden daß die nacht golden wird
 die schwänze der vögel sind blumen
 die mäuse bilden sich aus wachs eine katze und tanzen rittlings auf ihr
 die luft steigt aus ihrem sattel und beißt den dampf in die nase
 die betrunkenen blumen herrschen über den frischen sternern
 die verschlungenen schuhe glieder nasen finger schwänze
 sie beweisen hinreichend das wunder¹⁶

The stanza ends with an assertion, 'they are sufficient proof of the miracle', Arp playing here, as he often did, on the double meaning of 'das Wunder', meaning both miracle and marvel. The other stanzas, of variable length, function in a similar way.

In the second configuration, inversely, the Dada poem 'die edelfrau pumpt feierlich wolken...' now becomes the fourth and last stanza. Here too each statement is given its own line. The Dada matrix therefore functions conclusively, proposing one last arrangement, provisionally definitive, for the themes and statements of the poem. The third stanza introduces the main characters, switching or modifying their activities:

¹⁵ 'les souris s'attachent des lanternes à leurs queues/les escarcelles s'attachent des lanternes à leurs queues/les morsures de vaches à vapeur s'attachent des lanternes à leurs queues'.

¹⁶ 'les lanternes ne peuvent être attachées qu'à des queues/les queues suffisent pour attacher tant de lanternes que la nuit en devient dorée/les queues des oiseaux sont des fleurs/les souris se forment un chat en cire et dansent à califourchon sur lui/l'air monte de leur selle et mort le nez de la vapeur/les fleurs ivres règnent sur les étoiles fraîches/les souliers membres nez doigts queues dévorés/ils démontrent suffisamment le miracle'. N. B. My translation cannot account for the German wordplay on Luftschloss ('château en Espagne') which means literally 'château d'air', and Geldkatze ('escarcelle'), where the literal meaning is 'chat d'argent'.

die edelfrau trillert im sack
 grete putzt die türme
 hans sägt die steine aus den wolken
 kunigundula trägt die diskusse zu den puppen
 die drachen sind lautlos wie wolken und tragen in ihren krallen die städte in den himmel¹⁷

This technique gives the impression that actions or characters are interchangeable, while extending the field of possibilities to infinity and freeing them from the limits of reality, because the assertive tone and formal coherence are maintained, as in Dada. The changes are both at the level of the sentence and the nouns themselves, parts of composite words being dissociated from each other to function in an autonomous manner, for instance – and in exemplary fashion – with ‘freedom of movement’ or ‘bewegungsfreiheit’: ‘die freiheit führt die bewegung an der leine’ (‘freedom leads the movement on a lead’). Thanks to the play with poetic language, the configurations reveal the power structures behind the use of words and, beyond this, linguistic conventions. For Arp, therefore, freeing himself was not a matter of gratuitous formal play, but on the contrary was intended to liberate language by uncovering its infinite creative possibilities with a modest number of elements.

Thanks to this combinatory art, Arp is closer to Jena Romanticism, that of Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel, which preceded and was quite different from Heidelberg Romanticism.¹⁸ While this is particularly true of Arp’s constellations, which develop a poetics of the stars formulated by Novalis, it also concerned the configurations, to the extent that they also display chance – Arp refers here to Novalis¹⁹ – and because they enact a formal tension between totalisation and fragmentation.²⁰ This tension is based on Novalis’s conception of ‘encyclopaedistics’, as explained in ‘Das Allgemeine Brouillon’,²¹ and on Schlegel’s conception of the fragment, as set out in the journal *Athenäum* at the time. Consequently, Arp’s appropriation of the Romantic legacy shows a detailed reading embracing diverse aspects of this current of

¹⁷ ‘la femme noble grisolle dans le sac/grete nettoie les tours/hans scie les pierres des nuages/la petite Cunégonde apporte les disques aux poupées/les dragons sont silencieux comme des nuages et apportent avec leur griffes les villes au ciel’.

¹⁸ On Arp’s constellations as a poetological model heir to Novalis and Mallarmé, see *Petite éternité*, op. cit., pp. 209-248.

¹⁹ See his essay ‘Die Musen und der Zufall’, *Du* (Switzerland), October 1960.

²⁰ For a more detailed analysis of Arp’s encyclopedistics, see *Petite éternité*, op. cit., p. 120-149 and my article, ‘Une communauté de papier : la “topo-team”, amitiés créatrices et généalogies poétiques’, in Jill Carrick, Déborah Laks (eds.), *Topographies de Daniel Spoerri: l’artiste en ses réseaux/Daniel Spoerri’s Topographies: Networks of Exchange*, Paris, Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte/ Heidelberg University (forthcoming 2020), in which I explore the filiation linking early German Romanticism with Arp and Daniel Spoerri.

²¹ Novalis’s ‘Das Allgemeine Brouillon’ (1798-1799) is subtitled ‘Materialien für eine Enzyklopädistik’.

thought, materialised not only in his work on Romantic motifs and themes, but also in a poetics and aesthetics associated with it.²²

1950s configurations: a clarification of the Romantic legacy in Arp's late poetics and historiography. Kunigundula in Dada historiography.



Ill. 5. Hans Arp, *Auch das ist nur eine Wolke*, 1951

It was above all in the 1950s and the early 1960s that this Romantic legacy was made explicit in the next stage in Arp's configurations, focusing on three main publications associated with it. First, Arp published the volume *Auch das ist nur eine Wolke* ('This also is nothing but a cloud') with Vineta in Basel (ill,5). The work consists of four sections, each of which explores in its own way the narrative forms linked to the marvelous, drawn yet again from older material, according to a structuring principle that Aimée Bleikasten has called 'the palimpsest effect'.²³ 'Der gestiefelte Stern' ('The booted star') takes up a title from the 1920s linked to the title of a famous comedy by Ludwig Tieck, *Der gestiefelte Kater*, and to the fairy-tale collected some years later by the Grimm brothers (as well as, implicitly, Charles Perrault's *Chat botté*). The second part,

²² Georges Bloess has shown how, through his 'participation au cycle universel' of nature, Arp is affiliated with Novalis: 'C'est alors que peuvent naître chez lui les mythes et les fables, la fonction du poète étant de donner la parole à tous les êtres, y compris ceux du règne minéral.' Georges Bloess, 'L'œuvre d'Arp après 1954', in Aimée Bleikaste (ed.), *Arp poète plasticien*, Actes du colloque de Strasbourg – Septembre 1986, *Mélusine* 9, Cahiers du Centre de recherche sur le surréalisme, Paris, L'Âge d'homme, 1987, pp. 113-124 (p. 121). See also Georges Bloess, 'Voix, geste, forme, ou la "flamme chantante du néant"', in Aimée Bleikasten, Maryse Staiber (eds.), *Arp en ses ateliers d'art et d'écriture*, Strasbourg, Association Jean Hans Arp / Éditions des Musées, 2011, pp. 43-55

²³ Aimée Bleikasten, 'Arp poète ou l'art du palimpseste', in *L'Œuvre poétique de Hans Arp*, doctoral thesis, Strasbourg, université de Strasbourg II-Marc Bloch, 1988, p. 60. Aimée Bleikasten presented a synthesis of her research on Arp's 'palimpsestic' writing at the conference she organised in Strasbourg in 2009, during the exhibition *Art is Arp* at the MAMCS (curated by Isabelle Ewig): A. Bleiksaten, 'Palimpsestes, écritures et réécriture', in A. Bleikasten, M. Staiber (eds.), *Arp en ses ateliers d'art et d'écriture*, op. cit., pp. 72-95.

even more explicitly, is titled 'Märchen' ('fairytale'). The third section, 'Zeitgemäße Fabeln' is linked to the genre of the fable (said to be 'zeitgemäß' or belonging to its time). The fourth section, using the same title as the volume, brings together texts linked to dream accounts, echoing Arp's involvement in Surrealism. The third section is particularly relevant for our argument : it is composed of nine prose texts, the titles taken from the nine lines of the poem 'die edelfrau pumpt feierlich wolken...' Each text functions as a short autonomous account in which the line in question is repeated at the beginning, middle and end of the text, creating a game of echoes, repetition or closure with the title. In keeping with the genre of the fable, each account presents, by way of a moral lesson, critical reflections on contemporary society and its obsession with progress. The last text, where the tone is both virulent and bitter, introduces the Dadaists, who had predicted that progress would give way to destructive rage: 'Die Dadaisten haben die Entwicklung des Fortschrittes zur Tollwut vorausgesehen und vorausgesagt. Wir lehnten es ab, ein nützliches Glied der unnützen menschlichen Gesellschaft zu werden.'²⁴ To this madness Arp opposed once again Dada nonsense, which he claimed is the reaction of poets, by attributing to the Dadaists an apparently inoffensive and absurd song whose chorus - as an ultimate cock-a-snook - is the last line of the Dada poem: 'und wir sangen ein Liedlein mit dem Refrain: 'Darum sind wir auch nicht verpflichtet, die Krallen, Hörner und Wetterfahnen zu putzen.'²⁵

Given the context of this exacerbated critique of civilisation, what happens to Hansel, Gretel and Little Cunégonde, who appear to be totally outside the real world? In the story about them, the boats Hansel and Gretel seem to be protected and continue unperturbed on their infinite path ('und weiter und weiter'), ignoring the blind violence of the forks (apt symbols of human civilisation) who behave 'wie Schakale, Vielfraße, Aasgeier, Schweine' (like jackals, gluttons, vultures, pigs). Unlike the mute resistance that Hansel and Gretel seem to embody, in the following tale the dragon with the inscription 'Little Cunégonde' seems to be subjected to consumer society and, what is worse, it is used as a trap. It is displayed in the window of a small-town shop, with the purpose of luring passers-by inside so that they yield hopelessly to feverish buying. 'Little Cunégonde' seems to be nothing more than the derisory survivor of a lost world. The Romantic and fabulous traces are in line with the Dadaist critique of western rationality and confirm that any (futile?) resistance to this society is more than ever expressed through language, whether in Arp's configurations of a name, a panel brandished in front of passers-by or an unusual ditty.

²⁴ 'Les dadaïstes ont prévu et prédit l'évolution du progrès en folie furieuse.'

²⁵ 'Nous refusons de devenir un membre utile de la société humaine inutile et chantions une chansonnette qui avait pour refrain : "C'est pourquoi nous ne sommes pas non plus obligés de nettoyer les griffes, les cornes et les drapeaux du temps".'

Reinhard Döhl has noted that the Romantic corpus was shattered as early as 1919 with the famous poem 'Kaspar ist tot', surviving in the form of lexical traces contrasting with a radically new Dadaist writing.²⁶ From this date, and even more after World War II in the later configurations, it can be argued that the persistence of Romantic poetics combined with Dada deliberately exposed how much it was out of step with historical reality. In this context, fairy-tale characters in tales seem to embody not so much a golden age as the innocence of a world before human conventions, and we do not know whether it is lost – and poetry consists in reaffirming, unperturbed and regardless of the price to be paid, its incongruous and stubborn presence.



Ill. 6. Hans Arp, *Worte mit und ohne Anker*, 1957

To conclude this exploration of the persistence of Romanticism in Arp's poems, we will focus on two late publications which will help clarify the role of the Romantic legacy in Arp's historiography. In *Worte mit und ohne Anker* ('Words with and without anchors') published in 1957 by Limes in Wiedbaden (ill.6), Arp brought together for the first time all his German configurations. The first part of the volume, titled 'Konfigurationen 1918 1930 1950', consists of seven configurations. The last two ('Irländerkonfiguration' and 'Entenkonfiguration') both date from 1950. The three intermediary configurations ('Strassburgkonfiguration', 'Konfiguration I' and 'Konfiguration II') are dated 1930-1931. The first two configurations, discussed above, are given a specific rather than a generic title for the first time: 'Wunderhornkonfiguration' and 'Kunigundulakonfiguration', making the Romantic filiation more visible in

²⁶ Döhl talks of a 'monde romantique qui n'est plus présent que par ses accessoires lexicaux, et qui est complètement chamboulé : un monde textuel produisant de façon aléatoire et combinatoire à partir de ruines et d'accessoires, et qui en même temps est à nouveau détruit : un monde langagier absurde et inversé.' ('Eine nur noch in Wortrequisiten vorhandene romantische Welt, völlig durcheinander gebracht : eine Textwelt, die aus Trümmern und Requisiten willkürlich und kombinatorisch erzeugt und zugleich wieder zerstört wird : eine unsinnige, eine verkehrte Welt in Sprache.') Reinhard Döhl, op. cit., p. 129

order to distinguish the two configurations originating in Dada. Besides, Arp confuses the reader, as he often did, by indicating Zurich 1918 as date and place, whereas it applies only to the 'matrix' stanzas and not to the configurations as a whole. The poet proceeds in this way explicitly, allowing the configurations to fit into a continuous poetics, as indicated in the title with the three dates. His poetics was born in Dada Zurich, undergoing new developments in the 1930s, a period of intense creativity for the artist, since it also corresponded to the period of the torn papers and sculpture in the round, then in a final stage in the 1950s, evidence of the fact that the late works, after World War II, reveal a formal renewal of pure poetic inventivity. Through his choice of titles in this work of compositional editing Arp expressed his continuing commitment to the fairy-tale and the marvelous.



III. 7. Arp, *Gesammelte Gedichte*, volume I

The last publication is the first volume of the collected poetic works in German (*Gesammelte Gedichte*, volume I), covering the years 1903-1939, published in 1963 by Arche in Zurich in collaboration with the publisher Peter Schifferli and Marguerite Arp (ill. 7). Arp himself decided the arrangement of the poems in different sections, and (with Marguerite) indicated dates and titles. Once again, the poet seems to have pleasure in playing with dates and introducing confusion in his pseudo-historiographical annotations. In section 8, devoted to the configurations, 'Wunderhornkonfiguration' and 'Kunigundulakonfiguration' are marked 'Aus 'Vertigral' Zürich 1918' for the first and 'Aus 'Vertigral' 1932' for the second, mixing the period of creation of the Dada matrix-poems (Zurich 1918) with that of the publication of the configurations (in *Vertigral*, Paris 1932) and finally the specific definitive titles, dated 1957 in *Worte mit und ohne Anker*. Two further points are worthy of note: firstly the choice each time to indicate Zurich 1918, insisting therefore on the originating Dada character; and secondly, the wish to indicate the last titles given to the poems by the author, i.e. those specifying the link to tales and the marvelous, originating in German Romanticism –

before being at the heart of Arp's dada and, of course, surrealist works.²⁷ This additional characteristic of his later works occurred at a time when the poet - who was also a composer and editor - cast a retrospective eye over his work as a whole and then rearranged or reconfigured it in line with quite precise historiographic strategies, which fit into a poetics still playing on the relation between fragments and totality, between narrative and formal reduction, based on a conception of the work, whether text, poem or collection, understood as ceaselessly repeated, modified and resolutely unfinished.

ILLUSTRATIONS :

- III. 1. Hans Arp, *Der Vogel Selbdritt*, Berlin, Otto von Holten, 1920 (cover)
- III. 2. *Dada* 4-5, Zurich, May 1919
- III. 3. *Dadameter. Die Schammade*, Cologne, 1920
- III. 4. *Vertigral*, Paris, 15 July 1932
- III. 5. Hans Arp, *Auch das ist nur eine Wolke*, Basel, Vineta, 1951 (cover)
- III. 6. Hans Arp, *Worte mit und ohne Anker*, Wiesbaden, Limes, 1957 (cover)
- III. 7. Hans Arp, *Gesammelte Gedichte*, volume I, Zurich, Arche, 1963 (cover))

²⁷ Aimée Bleikasten and Henri Béhar have argued in favour of the unity of Dada and Surrealism in Arp's poetic creation. See Aimée Bleikasten, 'Arp: de la grosse caisse dada à la fable surréaliste', in Henri Béhar and Catherine Dufour (eds.), *Dada Circuit total*, coll. Les Dossiers H, Lausanne, L'Âge d'homme, 2006, pp. 109-122; Henri Béhar, 'Arp surréaliste ou le ruban du père Castel', in A. Bleikasten (ed.), *Arp poète plasticien*, op. cit., p. 99-112; and Henri Béhar, 'Une amitié stellaire: Arp et Tzara en leur atelier', in A. Bleikasten, M. Staiber (eds.), *Arp en ses ateliers d'art et d'écriture*, op. cit., pp. 218-232.

Carl Einstein and Surrealism

Klaus H. KIEFER

I Carl Einstein between the lines and above the fray

1. Philological problems

Before I begin, I wonder whether my exiled compatriot – who had such a difficult return¹ – spoke French better than me because language is at the heart of all the issues I am going to raise, whether mother tongue or foreign language, and because, at the end of the day, language always remains ‘foreign’, just like a civilisation, mentality or personality. Translators, mediators, interpreters are always needed. As early as 1929, one year after his move, a francophile Einstein bemoaned the fact that he missed his mother tongue ‘like bread’.² Think of the languages of literature and painting where one can scarcely translate the other, as Einstein was eventually forced to admit; the ‘language of flowers’ – and of bodies – is another example, studied by Georges Bataille in *Documents* when Einstein was the editor.³ Two fatal clashes between European nations occurred in his lifetime. As Einstein acknowledged to Pierre Albert-Birot (20 Dec. 1919): ‘beaucoup des choses [sic] qui sont cassées.’ (L, 48) And within the 20th-century avant-garde there were equally violent confrontations: for instance, its ‘primitivism’ presupposed – as Einstein writes – ‘den furchtbaren Schock der Kolonisation’ [BA 2, 401]). But history doesn’t end there. To quote Einstein again: ‘L’Europe colonise et l’on colonise l’Europe.’ (W 4, 286) And now Europe is terrorised: ‘eine masse von idioten erstickt europa’ (CEA, 130).

¹ In 1962, Helmut Heißenbüttel regretted that Carl Einstein was largely forgotten (‘Ein Halbvergessener: Carl Einstein’ in *Über Literatur. Aufsätze*, München, 1970, pp. 36-41). Since then, thanks to a few pioneers and, from 1984, the Conferences of the Carl-Einstein-Gesellschaft, research has developed (Cf. www.carleinstein.org). However – a consequence of national philology (Nationalphilologie) – the *surrealist* Einstein is unknown in Germany, and the *Surrealist Einstein* in France.

² Einstein to Ewald Wasmuth, 21 janvier 1929: ‘wie ein Stück Brod [sic]’ (L, 320). Einstein, often called a ‘Parisian’, was not bilingual.

³ See Kiefer: ‘Carl Einsteins “Surrealismus” – “Wort von verkrachtem Idealismus übersinnt”’, in *Der Surrealismus in Deutschland*, Interdisziplinäre Studien, Isabel Fischer / Karina Schuller (eds.), Münster: MV Wissenschaft 2016 (Wissenschaftliche Schriften der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität, sér. 12: Philologie, vol. 17), pp. 49-83, 65 ff.

Given the historical dynamism and the complexity of Franco-German relations, research cannot be restricted to the bias of any single individual, in this instance André Breton,⁴ to decide who is Surrealist and who is not.⁵ The list changed over time and was heterogeneous, as we know ; moreover, there were part-'Surrealists', and from all periods. It is, to quote Fontenelle, 'l'histoire des oracles'. Bypassing misleading interpreters, it is up to us as researchers to discuss, ad infinitum as it were, what constitutes 'Surrealism'.

2. Multiple contacts and missed opportunities

Carl Einstein first visited Paris in 1905 and settled there permanently in May 1928. Given these dates, he cannot be considered to have emigrated, and for this reason the 'Exilliteratur' specialists frequently neglect Einstein. Yet, like Walter Benjamin, numerous German intellectuals and artists with Jewish origins or classified as 'degenerate' were already being attacked in the 1920s by the Nazis as they rose to power. In Paris, Einstein extended his many contacts and continued enthusiastically with a project spelt out in August 1928 in a letter to Dr Reber (L, 277), industrialist and collector (he was the latter's advisor) : *Documents* ; to Ewald Wasmuth he says : 'ma revue' (L, 319).⁶ Unfortunately, the birth, development and end of this legendary periodical have been falsified, not least by those who published in it, Georges Bataille and Michel Leiris and their credulous followers (although Denis Hollier⁷ apparently changed his mind thanks to the research of Liliane Meffre⁸ and myself). Georges Wildenstein had appointed Carl Einstein editor of the periodical, and he was to leave his mark on both the aesthetics and the ethnology, including his 'ethnologie

⁴ Breton's ignoring of Einstein seems deliberate and personal, especially if one takes into account the latter's inexplicable 'refus africain' (Vincent Bounoure, quoted in Jean-Claude Blachère, *Les totems d'André Breton. Surréalisme et primitivisme littéraire*, Paris : L'Harmattan 1996, p. 34), but 'l'art nègre' – was ' Carl Einstein'.

⁵ In June 1920 Aragon, Breton, Eluard, Fraenkel, Paulhan, Soupault and Péret assessed the world's 'plus grands écrivains' between -20 and +20. Among the 200 names a certain 'Einstein' was given 10 points by Aragon and Breton. Although ahead of Jean Paul, the name Einstein ends a list of scientists; it is therefore most likely to be Albert Einstein (Cf. <http://www.andrebretton.fr/fr/item/?GCOI=56600100363020> ; Cf. ill. 1). Other contributions to the site also refer to the physician. I do not believe Breton is talking about 'un livre' by Carl Einstein in the manuscript 'Rêve' ; 'Einstein' is always Albert (Cf. <http://www.andrebretton.fr/person/12007> and OC^{Br} 1, 616, OC^{Br} 3, 972, OC^{Br} 4, 529).

⁶ For sources, cf. Kiefer : 'Die Ethnologisierung des kunstkritischen Diskurses – Carl Einsteins Beitrag zu *Documents*', in *Elan vital oder Das Auge des Eros. Kandinsky, Klee, Arp, Miró und Calder*, Hubertus Gaßner (ed.), München et Bern : Benteli 1994, pp. 90-103; academia.edu); stress mine.

⁷ Cf. Denis Hollier : 'The Question of Lay Ethnography. The Entropogical Wild Card', in *Undercover Surrealism. Georges Bataille and "Documents"* catalogue Hayward Gallery, London, Dawn Ades / Simon Baker (eds.), Cambridge/Mass : The MIT Press 2006, pp. 58-64.

⁸ Cf. Liliane Meffre : *Carl Einstein 1885-1940. Itinéraires d'une pensée moderne*, Paris, Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne 2002, pp. 229 sqq.

Carl Einstein was a reader of *Littérature*, sent to him by his friend Moïse Kisling (L. 61); and Nico Rost stated (CEA, 506) that his 'friend' Einstein saw the first issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* (December 1924). He probably also knew the first *Manifeste*, published the previous month, although Einstein only refers to it in his 'ethnographic study' on André Masson in 1929 (in *Documents*), perhaps coinciding with the second edition : 'C'est avec une grande timidité que nous commençons d'apprécier l'imaginaire comme dominante' (BA 3, 26), which echoes Breton's thinking :

C'est par le plus grand hasard, en apparence, qu'a été récemment rendue à la lumière une partie du monde intellectuel, et à mon sens de beaucoup la plus importante, dont on affectait de ne plus se soucier. [...] L'imagination est peut-être sur le point de reprendre ses droits. (OC 1, 316)

Why this approach by Einstein, who was rarely so explicit ? In the well-known letter to Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler of June 1923, in which Einstein outlines his 'cubist' aesthetic (when apologising for a failed commercial venture) he was still searching for some 'seelische Aequivalente' (L. 127) in order to anchor art in social life. Breton's notion of 'interférence' (OC 1, 318) between dream and waking state, following his discovery of Sigmund Freud, was capable of explaining the production of non-imitative and proteiform works by Picasso, Braque and others. 'Wiederholung oder Erfindung man wollte sich entscheiden' (K 1, 56) as Einstein put it in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*. His affinities with the 'génération romantique' were to both multiply and diverge, as we shall see.¹⁷

As regards Einstein's close link with Surrealism, let me add a little-known story. On his way back from London (probably) via Paris Einstein went to the exhibition of Joan Miró (whom he knew well) at the Galerie Pierre in June 1925. Let me quote a newspaper of the day : 'Les deux salles de la galerie archipleines avaient débordé dans la rue. On buvait du champagne sur le trottoir. Tous les Surréalistes étaient là'.¹⁸ The names of Aragon, Breton etc. are then listed. Einstein's name is listed among the 500 visitors ; but we cannot know whether Einstein and the Surrealists met.

Claire Goll, Max Morise, Benjamin Péret, Philippe Soupault, Roger Vi[]trac – all, of course, surrealists of multiple hues. Einstein was necessarily in touch with these colleagues – and hundreds of others. Cf. Kiefer : 'Das soll Europa sein ? – Jean Cocteau dans l'EuropaAlmanach de Carl Einstein et Paul Westheim en 1925', *Recherches Germaniques*, n° 47 (2017), pp. 53-73 (academia.edu).

¹⁶ Cf. Einstein's call for papers sent to Tristan Tzara on 30 July 1924 (L, 225).

¹⁷ It is thanks to Klee (K 1, 142 sq.) that the pejorative connotation in 'romantisch' is dropped by Einstein and becomes synonymous with 'surrealist' (Cf. 'die SURR die sich immer mit sich selber, ihrem occulthen leben befassen. also romantiker' [CEA, 40]. Finally, it refers to the notion of modernity : 'Diese Modernen waren Romantiker.' (FF, 147)

¹⁸ *La Boîte à couleurs*, in Joan Miró : 'Ceci est la couleur de mes rêves'. *Entretiens avec Georges Raillard*, Paris : Seuil 1977, p. 197. I owe this information to Osamu Okuda (Berne).

Einstein who, in 1926, had dared decree what the art of the 20th century was going to become in the wake of revolutionary Cubism, had been since the early '20s an admirer of a marginal painter that the Surrealists only discovered as one of their own three years later : Paul Klee. How could a fervent supporter of Cubism like Einstein appreciate this 'Märchenknabe' or child prodigy ?¹⁹ The answer lies in the fact that it was precisely creative imagination, so central for Breton, which in Einstein's thinking provided the missing link between the opposites Picasso and Klee,²⁰ between Cubism and Surrealism. And yet, while neither the book nor the article on Klee destined for *Documents* came to fruition, it is fascinating to see how in the three editions of *Art in the 20th century*, Einstein's comments on Picasso and Klee come together to arrive at what, for Einstein, was to be the aesthetic 'leader' in the 1930s. However, the date was portentous, because the National-Socialist regime attacked modern art ; it wasn't enough for Joseph Goebbels to call himself 'expressionist' in his autobiographical novel *Michael*.²¹

Einstein, exiled from one day to the next, turned the entire avant-garde, including of course Surrealism, into a *tabula rasa*. His *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*²² is a furious polemic targeting artists and intellectuals of the avant-garde who had proved unable to confront a now triumphant fascism. This attack was tantamount to a 'suicide', because it was Einstein himself who had 'made' 20th-century art through his major role in making it an international success.

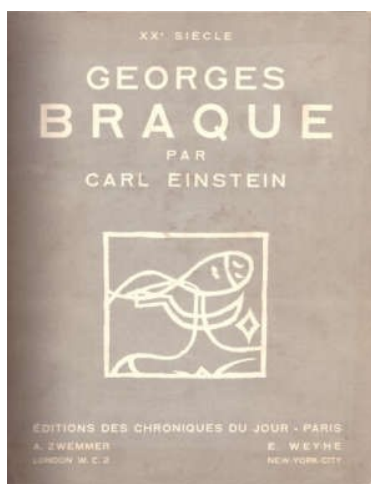
Nonobstant, this posthumous and little-known work shares material with Einstein's 'surrealist' texts, especially his *Georges Braque* (ill. 3), published in a French translation in 1934, which includes the information 'écrit en 1931-1932'.

¹⁹ Einstein to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl, 1923 (L, 176).

²⁰ Cf. Christine Hopfengart, 'Der Maler von heute › – Paul Klee im Dialog mit Pablo Picasso', in *Klee trifft Picasso*, Zentrum Paul Klee Bern, Ostfildern : Hatje Cantz 2010, pp. 32-63.

²¹ Joseph Goebbels, *Michael. Ein deutsches Schicksal in Tagebuchblättern*, München: Zentralverlag der NSDAP 1929 (9th ed. 1936), p. 77 : 'Wir Heutigen sind alle Expressionisten.'

²² When Einstein first refers to *Fabrikation der Fiktionen* (to Fritz Saxl, late May 1935, L. 407), he gives the title in French because the text should have been translated, as was *Georges Braque*, the German market being shut down as early as 1933. The project was never completed.

ill. 3 : Carl Einstein : *Georges Braque*, 1934

ill. 4 : Carl Einstein, 6 May 1938

The author thus distanced himself from his own work, deemed too 'idealist' and 'subjective'. And the *Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, written no doubt after 1933 but before his departure for Spain in the summer of 1936 to fight fascism alongside the anarcho-syndicalists (ill. 4) of the famous Durruti Column, stands as a dialectical negation of the avant-garde (see the layout of the two illustrations).

Unfortunately, the author was not to formulate a synthesis, even though synthesis was not at all to his liking when always at the forefront of movements, as his friend Benn was to write later.²³ Einstein, released from the camp of Bassens in 1940 as the German troops and the Gestapo were advancing, committed suicide at the Gave du Pau.²⁴ He may have been attempting to reach the Côte d'Azur, still in the Free Zone, either to meet up with his brother-in-law Gabriel Guévrekian – the architect of the famous cubist garden of the Villa de Noailles (Hyère)²⁵ – who had settled in Saint-Tropez; or in the hope of boarding the last boat from Marseille to the USA.

²³ Cf. Kiefer, 'Primitivismus und Avantgarde – Carl Einstein und Gottfried Benn', *Colloquium Helveticum*, vol. 44 (2015) : Primitivismus intermedial, pp. 131-168.

²⁴ Cf. Alain Ruiz, 'De Paris au camp de Bassens et au Gave de Pau : l'ultime parcours de Carl Einstein pendant la "drôle de guerre"', in *Carl Einstein im Exil. Kunst und Politik in den 1930er Jahren*, Marianne Kröger / Hubert Roland (eds.), München : Wilhelm Fink 2007, pp. 57-112.

²⁵ Charles and Marie-Laure de Noailles have an outstanding role in the notes to BEB II (CEA, 40 et 41).

3. THEORY – TEXTS – IMAGES

Despite his commitment to leaving his mark on 20th-century art, indeed to 'leading' it in the positive path of Picasso or Klee, Einstein had no wish to found a school of art even though he enjoyed being surrounded in his Paris studio by artists, intellectuals and young people like Michel Leiris, a docile listener who writes of him in his *Journal*,²⁶ or Georges Bataille who, on the contrary,²⁷ never mentioned him. Leiris, Kahnweiler, Masson, Klee and others discussed and approved Einstein's ideas.²⁷ Like André Breton, Einstein knew the majority of avant-garde painters and sculptors, including for instance Hans Arp, Juan Gris, Picasso, Masson, Miró... on whom he wrote detailed studies in *Documents*. Yet it is a complete 'surrealist' aesthetic that Einstein set out in his *Georges Braque*. Despite the title this was not at all a book on Braque, as Einstein himself admitted to Ewald Wasmuth in 1932 ('kein buch über Braque' (L, 372). Why, then, this misleading title which left this book little known and, moreover, badly translated into French? Braque was, it is true, a very close friend of Einstein, a witness at his wedding to Lyda Guévrékian in 1932, but perhaps the provisional titles that Einstein mentions in his letters, 'Réflexions' or 'Esthétique',²⁸ seemed too vague for publishers during the economic crisis in the early 1930s. Other publishers, both French and English, rejected his projects outright. Fraud on the part of the publisher was to prevent the publication of the American version of *Georges Braque*.

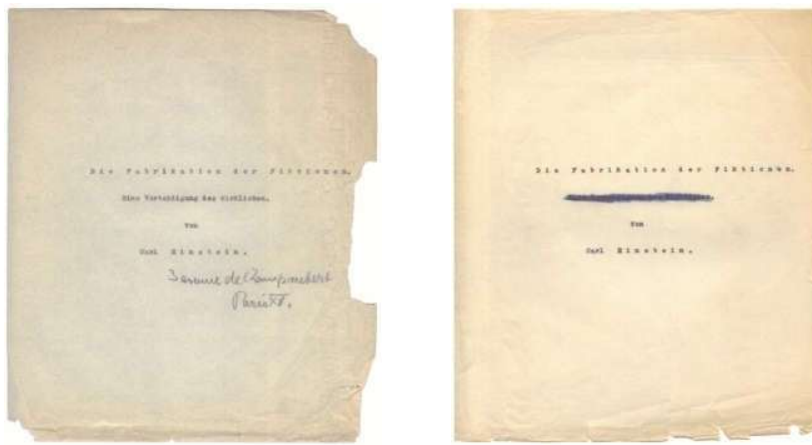
There is in *Georges Braque* a problem that haunts Einstein's writing and was evident in *La Sculpture nègre*: the absence of concrete, analytical links between text and image. In *Georges Braque* the artist is merely an example for Einstein's ideas, which are obviously based on an extensive aesthetic experience. Just as *La Sculpture nègre* can be seen as a cubist manifesto, *Georges Braque* is something of a 'surrealist' one. I can quite understand that for certain Surrealist specialists it is hard to acknowledge that the most elaborate theory on the contemporary avant-garde is to be found not in Breton and his friends, but in Carl Einstein and, above all, not in Walter Benjamin whose contribution to our understanding of the movement is much overrated.

²⁶ Cf. Michel Leiris, *Journal 1922-1989*, Jean Jamin (ed.) Paris : Gallimard 1992, pp. 137, 140, 164 ; e.g. 15 Sept. 1929 (p. 202) : 'Dîné hier chez Carl Einstein avec Zette [Louise Leiris] et les Bataille.'

²⁷ Cf. Kahnweiler to Masson, 7 Nov. 1939, and Masson's reply the next day, in *André Masson : Le rebelle du surréalisme. Écrits*, Françoise Will-Levaillant (ed.), Paris : Hermann 1976 (Coll. Savoir), p. 261 sq.. Cf. also Kiefer, 'Einstein in Amerika – Lebensbeziehungen und Theorietransfer', in *Carl-Einstein-Kolloquium 1994*, Frankfurt/M. et al. : Peter Lang 1996 (Bayreuther Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft, vol. 16), pp. 173-184 (repr. academia.edu).

²⁸ Einstein to Sophia Kindsthaler und Ewald Wasmuth, 1930 : 'meine Aesthetik' (L, 335, and to Ewald Wasmuth, 15 Feb. 1932 : 'Réflexions' (fr. ! L, 373).

And yet, in *Georges Braque* and elsewhere Einstein is somewhat dismissive of Surrealism : 'Wort von verkrachtem Idealismus übersonnt' (BA 3, 324) – a phrase that has caused problems for a number of French translators. Here I quote Jean-Loup Korzilius : "'surréal" (terme ensoleillé par un idéalisme raté)' (GB^{Ko}, 86 ; cf. GB^{Zi}, 70). Einstein was in tune with Kahnweiler when he condemned the 'Kasernenorganisation' (L, 248) of the group, and was still mocking in January 1939, in a letter from Spain, about what might be 'sur-' or 'sous-' reality (L, 416).²⁹ We should note here that the subtitle of *Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, crossed out in the copies still available (ill. 5), was 'Une défense du réel', where the word 'réel' obviously alludes to 'surréal'.³⁰



Ill. 5 : Carl Einstein : *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, 1933-36, version A (CEA, 131) and D (CEA, 167)

Where 'Surrealism' would have been the appropriate word Einstein often replaced it by a term he had forged, 'génération romantique', and he even imagined an 'intervalle romantique' in the political tendencies of the day. *Georges Braque* ends on the perfect Surrealist credo : 'Der Mythos ist wieder in das Wirkliche einbezogen worden und Dichtung wird zum ursprünglichen Element des Realen.' (BA 3, 409).³¹

²⁹ This pun has nothing to do with Bataille's criticism of Breton's sense of superiority ; cf. OC^{Ba} 2, 93-109 : 'vielle taupe' and the prefix 'sur' in 'surhomme' and 'surréaliste'.

³⁰ Cf. Kiefer, 'Eine Verteidigung des Wirklichen Kunst und Realität im Spätwerk Carl Einsteins', Paper for Panel 5: Zum Realismusverständnis Carl Einsteins, 6th International Conference of EAM (European Network for Avant-garde and Modernism Studies), 5-7 Sept. 2018: 'Réalismes de l'avant-garde', Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster (in press).

³¹ As early as 1925 Aragon was more sceptical regarding Surrealism's 'illusions collectives' and wondered how the Surrealists could induce 'un peuple entier à croire à des miracles, à des victoires militaires' (OP^A 1, 89 et 90), etc. Yet the 'mythologie moderne' of Aragon's *Paysan de Paris* is neither primitive in Einstein's sense, nor at all modern. The places and objects described belong largely to the world of the 19th century, now coming to an end. By way of contrast, the myths of Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* are wholly anchored in modernity. It is thus not surprising that Einstein appreciated Döblin (L, 166), but ultimately preferred Joyce.

The awakening must have been awful, if one reads this passage and many others in the light of the events of 1933 and beyond. I reproduce here an extract from the last chapter of *Georges Braque* which stands like a 'mauvais message' (title of Einstein's only play, in 1921) :

L'accentuation romantique de l'irrationnel implique une régression vers un état primitif et même, si l'on veut, vers un état de barbarie. Enfin nous ne nous contentons plus de sublimes déductions et d'une superstructure cultivée à l'excès qui exclut les forces fondamentales de l'homme et des événements. Un besoin de destin et d'obsession nous porte à nouveau. (GB^{Ko}, 164)³².

From this perspective the aberrations of a Benn or a Heidegger when faced with National-Socialists seems somewhat less surprising. Einstein's 'nous' is irreparable, but we must remember that he distanced himself from the 'medizinerei'³³ of his Berlin friend before 1933, and considered the recent publication of the philosopher, 'Vom Wesen des Grundes',³⁴ as a meaningless pun. But did he really avoid the ideological trap with this appeal to artists and intellectuals to accept political 'constraints'³⁵ too loosely defined as 'mythical' or 'totalitarian' ? Here too *Fabrikation der Fiktionen* is along the lines of *Georges Braque* rather than a well-meaning break.³⁶ The attempt to valorize a grandiose 'Latin' fascism in contrast to a stupid and 'Nordic' hitlerism at the Paris exhibition of Italian art in 1935, a year after Benn's famous speech welcoming 'his excellency' Marinetti (SW 4, 117ff.), is evidence of Einstein's dilemma.³⁷ All that remained was for him to set off for the antifascist front in Spain and, to quote him, 'sans dire un mot' (L, 416). It is up to us to question how far the 'collective myth' (OC^{Br} 2, 439), be it Romantic or communist, that Breton was still promoting in 1935, was involved in this dark context. One could no doubt suspect that the European dictatorships, including the Soviet Union, had done in their own ways what the Surrealists and Einstein merely dreamed ? The myth was not liberatory, 'die Mythe log' (SW 1, 205), as Benn (with some experience) put it in 1943; and let's not forget Fontenelle...

³² 'Die romantische Betonung des Irrationalen schließt eine Primitivierung, selbst wenn man will, eine Barbarisierung ein. Endlich begnügt man sich nicht mehr mit sublimen Ableitungen und einem überzüchteten Überbau, der die Grundkräfte des Menschen und des Geschehens ausschließt. Ein Bedürfnis nach', Schicksal und Zwang treibt uns von Neuem.' (BA 3, 408)

³³ Einstein to Ewald Wasmuth, 24 Sept. 1932 (L, 375)

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, 'Vom Wesen des Grundes', in : *Festschrift Edmund Husserl zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet*, Halle a. d. S. : Niemeyer 1929, pp. 72-110. Given the 'depth' of the title, this will not be translated.

³⁵ Cf. Maria Stavrinaki, *Contraindre à la liberté. Carl Einstein, les avant-gardes, l'histoire*, Paris : Les presses du réel, 2018.

³⁶ *Fabrikation der Fiktionen* does 'moralise' the avant-garde (cf. Matthias Berning, 'Carl Einstein und das neue Sehen. Entwurf einer Erkenntnistheorie und politischen Moral' in *Carl Einsteins Werk*, Würzburg : Königshausen & Neumann 2011 [*Epistemata*, vol. 734], p. 254), but it does not avoid ideological ambivalence.

³⁷ Unpublished article (CEA, 192).

Besides myth, there were a dozen other surrealist keywords, such as the famous ‘automatisme psychique,’ that Carl Einstein borrowed. These terms were usually translated into German by Einstein and integrated into his own discourse which, nevertheless, was evolving in a direction quite different from that of the Surrealist group, i.e. towards a complete cultural history, leaving out polemics : the aggressor places himself above the fray. In this transfer the keywords of the Surrealist movement acquire a wider, universal scope.³⁸ ‘Die Kunst des zwanzigsten [Jahrhunderts] [...] war von passivem Automatismus beherrscht. (FF, 140) In a similar fashion the somewhat dilettantish discovery of ‘art nègre’ in 1915 led to a revalorization of all the ‘arts primitifs’, i.e. a break with the classical canon. That shift can be seen in Dr Reber’s collection, where works by Picasso stand alongside Cycladic art works : ‘Reber considère l’art moderne *sub specie aeternitatis*.’ (BA 3, 122) We have here, already, the full thematic range of *Documents*.

Einstein’s so-called ‘Paris’ archives, hidden by Brach during the Occupation, contain thousands of notes, drafts, papers, in both French and German. Neither the ‘Manuel de l’art’, with its ‘Dictionnaire des terminologies techniques’, nor the ‘Histoire de l’art’ or the ‘Traité de la vision’ came to fruition. Carl Einstein, who died at the age of 55, clearly had much more to say. Let us return to a revealing example of surrealist discourse, ‘automatisme psychique’ (OC^{Br} 1, 328), in order to highlight Einstein’s definition. He agreed that automatism should be given the status of ‘moyen essentiel [mais pas absolu !] de la recherche et de l’invention’ (K 3^{M/St}, 199) and, like Breton, he saw what Baudelaire had already evoked in the *Les Fleurs du mal* as dangerous, even masochistic : ‘Plonger au fond du gouffre [...] pour trouver du nouveau’ (OC^{Bau} 1, 134). For Einstein, every artist is subject, *nolens volens*, to this ‘drame de la métamorphose’ (BA 3, 223) and comes back to the ‘surface’ of consciousness as it were thanks to ‘la censure tectonique’. He creates a ‘Gestalt’ and can thus communicate with the public. Einstein brought together in the term ‘censure tectonique’ the influence of his former art professor Heinrich Wölfflin and Sigmund Freud, that ‘vieux romantique’ (BA 3, 643), criticised nevertheless for his negative attitude (BA 3, 382) not just towards an unconscious full of repression, hence suffering, but also towards censorship itself which installs or reinstalls the rules of conventional logic in an innovatory dynamism.³⁹

³⁸ Karlheinz Barck (‘Motifs d’une polémique en palimpseste contre le surréalisme : Carl Einstein’, *Mélusine*, n° 7 [1985], pp. 183-204) does not perceive this dialectic ; cf. Maria Stavrinaki, ‘Le “Manuel de l’art” : vers une histoire “tectonique” de l’art’, *Les Cahiers du Musée national d’art moderne*, n° 117 (2011), pp. 17-24 which confirms my hypothesis.

³⁹ Nevertheless, on 8 March 1930 Einstein asked Freud (who owned *Negerplastik*) for ‘a few lines’ on Picasso for *Documents* because Freud’s work had had ‘une influence immense sur la jeunesse intellectuelle’ (L. 323). There is no record of Freud’s reply.

If we turn now from Einstein's art theory to literary practice via a term that he did not invent but redefined : 'psychogramme' (in both French and German), this was a synonym for 'écriture spontanée' (BA 3, 27), hence closely related to 'automatisme psychique'. Breton, it is true, did not restrict this mental function to any specific art (OC^{Br} 1, 328), whereas for Einstein the element 'gramme', meaning graphic or even literal, stands out both because writing uses arbitrary signs,⁴⁰ and because it uses them to keep the wave of hallucinations in check. 'Psychogramme' thus describes a dialectic between 'formless' and 'tectonic', between 'dionysian' and 'apollonian', to take up Nietzsche's famous opposition. From the start Einstein asserted that Braque is a 'poet'.⁴¹ On the other hand he had a polemical position vis-à-vis poets : 'Die Litteraten hinken ja so jammerhaft mit ihrer Lyrik und den kleinen Kinosuggestionen hinter Malerei und Wissenschaft her' (L. 127). In the 1923 letter to Kahnweiler referred to earlier Einstein claimed to be backed by the Cubists when writing *Bebuquin*, produced at the same time as the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*.⁴²

We are thus faced with two questions : (a¹) Should we be talking about cubist or surrealist texts, in his case ? and (b¹) what is Einstein's own literary style ? The two questions are badly put, clearly. They need to be transformed and reduced in scope. Let us drop firstly 'cubist' literature, which would lead to endless debate, and reformulate instead a reasonable question (a²) : what precisely does Einstein criticise in Surrealist poets and writers ? And (b²) : are there writers we could link with Einstein ; whom did he resemble ? Two supplementary questions could be appended : which colleagues did he regard highly ? In which milieu was he himself highly regarded ? To keep things short, I will look only into the years around 1930 because young Einstein's admiration for French literature and, especially, André Gide, is too vast. One must begin by taking into account what I termed 'visuelle Wende' at the Carl Einstein conference in Munich in 2001.⁴³ This 'iconic turn' of the young literary critic Einstein into an art critic can be explained by

⁴⁰ Einstein clearly took a great interest in semiotics from 1932, because references to the sign or signs occur frequently ; cf. Kiefer, 'Bebuquins Kindheit und Jugend – Carl Einsteins regressive Utopie', in : *Historiographie der Moderne – Carl Einstein, Paul Klee, Robert Walser und die wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste*, Michael Baumgartner, Andreas Michel, Reto Sorg (eds.), Paderborn : Fink 2016, pp. 105-120 (repr. academia.edu).

⁴¹ 'Braque le poète' ('Braque der Dichter' [BA 3, 246-250]), trans. from German by Bertrand Badiou and Jean-Claude Rambach, in *Avant-guerre*, no. 2 (1981) : *Sur l'art*, pp. 9-14. On the 'poétisation' of painting cf. Kiefer, *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins. Ein Beitrag zur Theorie und Geschichte der europäischen Avantgarde*, Tübingen : Niemeyer 1994 (Communicatio. Studien zur europäischen Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte, vol. 7), p. 452.

⁴² Like many who did not belong to the 'bande à Picasso', Einstein saw the *Demoiselles* much later ; cf. Kiefer : ' "Mit dem Gürtel, mit dem Schleier..." – Semiotik der Enthüllung bei Schiller, Fontane und Picasso', in *Die Lust der Interpretation – Praxisbeispiele von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Baltmannsweiler : Schneider Hohengehren 2011, pp. 127-145, p. 136 sqq.

⁴³ Kiefer (ed.), *Die visuelle Wende der Moderne. Carl Einsteins 'Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts'*, Paderborn : Fink 2003.

the prominence of Cubist painting within the avant-garde. Einstein obviously had to acknowledge that raw materials in the visual arts are more 'flexible', more 'ready' for innovation. And yet he criticised poets and writers – we are here dealing with question (a²) – for keeping to grammar, for being slaves to language and the structures, the weight of the past, the stultifying power it imposes. ('Lingua' is a leitmotiv in BEB II). We should recall how Breton followed syntax throughout his life : 'je me défie à l'extrême de tout ce qui, sous couleur d'émancipation du langage, prescrit la rupture avec la syntaxe.'⁴⁴ The only Surrealist poet that Einstein discusses in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* is Benjamin Péret, whose *Grand Jeu* is seen as the 'mutigste Arbeit' (K 3, 126) or 'entreprise la plus audacieuse' (K 3^{M/St}, 202) of the group.⁴⁵

Grammatical deviance is a poor measure of a literary work's worth, however. Agrammaticality, especially in something like syntactic 'errors', varies between languages. And what French will tolerate in this respect is no doubt much less than does German. In any case there is one author outside French Surrealism that, exceptionally, Einstein greatly admired, James Joyce. It is true that the only fragment of *Bebuquin* published in his lifetime – and of which no-one has dared to translate the provocative title 'Schweißfuß klagt gegen Pfurz in trüber Nacht'⁴⁶ resembles *Ulysses* or even *Finnegans Wake*, especially in the use of interior monologue, mythical allusion, word-play etc.⁴⁷ One cannot speak of influence, since Einstein did not speak English, and *Finnegan's Wake* was still a 'work in progress',⁴⁸ but the text was published in several issues of the journal *transition* edited by Eugène Jolas, a friend of Einstein and admirer

⁴⁴ Breton, quoted in *Actes du X^e congrès international de linguistique et philologie romanes*, 23- 28 April Strasbourg 1962, Georges Straka (ed.), Paris : Klincksiek 1965, vol. 2, p. 444. Aragon on the other hand (*Traité du style*, Paris : Gallimard 1980 [L'Imaginaire], pp. 27-30) maintained in 1928 that he was 'trampling on' syntax.

⁴⁵ This is actually one of the rare cases where Einstein talks *expressis verbis* about 'surrealism' in a published text ; the negative hypothesis of Liliane Meffre (K 3^{M/St}, p. 7) is therefore incorrect. Furthermore, it is odd that in the index to the work in question, taken up only in part by Meffre, 'Surrealismus' is included but not 'Romantische Generation' ; Péret is also referred to.

⁴⁶ Cf. Marianne Kröger, 'Carl Einstein und die Zeitschrift Front (1930/31)', in *Carl Einstein-Kolloquium 1994*, Klaus H. Kiefer (ed.), Frankfurt/M. et al. : Peter Lang 1996 (Bayreuther Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft, vol. 16), pp. 125-134.

⁴⁷ There are also passages which seem to be automatic writing ; cf. Einstein to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl 1923 : 'Als ich Bebuquin publizierte hiess es – ich schriebe das besoffen.' (L, 178).

⁴⁸ Available translations : *Ulysse*, French transl., Stuart Gilbert and Auguste Morel, which revised the Valery Larbaud translation (Paris : La Maison des Amis des Livres 1929) ; *Ulysses*, German transl., Georg Goyert, Zurich : edition Rhein 1930. Working with the author, a team of six translators, including Jolas, worked on the French translation of 'Anna Livia Plurabelle' [*Finnegan's Wake*]. The text was published on 1st May 1931 in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* [year 19 [1931], n° 212, pp. 637-646 [preface : Philippe Soupault, pp. 633-636]].

of Joyce.⁴⁹ Given Jolas' trilingual enthusiasm for the experimental writing of *Finnegan's Wake*,⁵⁰ it is highly unlikely that the two did not discuss at length Joyce's prose during their meetings in Paris or Jolas' village, Colombey-les-deux-Eglises. The latter enjoyed not just German Romanticism but the linguistic experiments of the Expressionist 'Wortkunst' and Dada. He was himself the author of texts one might call surrealist, 'paramyths' full of often multilingual neologisms and grammatical transformations, and he translated for *transition* chapter 6 of *Bebuquin*,⁵¹ 'Entwurf einer Landschaft'⁵² and other texts by Einstein.

From 1927 onwards the Surrealists entrusted him with the translation of many of their works, to the extent that – to quote Jolas – *transition* 'became mistakenly known as the American Surrealist review'.⁵³ On the other hand, relations between Joyce and the Surrealists were neutral, even hostile.⁵⁴ Joyce, therefore, opened up a fourth front against Surrealism in general. Jolas, as reporter and editor, was necessarily more generous: 'I was a friend of some of the Surrealist poets and artists, but I never was an official follower of their principles.'⁵⁵ He maintained that there was a difference between his Romanticism 'blanc' or 'vertigraliste' and the 'romantisme noir' of Breton and Co. For Jolas, Einstein remained an 'Expressionist writer'.⁵⁶ As a description of the Einsteinian style this was a rather questionable compromise. Although Einstein distanced himself from his Expressionist colleagues – 'lyrische Schreihälsa' (CEA, 43) – the grammatical inheritance cannot be ignored. I would however like to ascribe to Einstein's 'poème long',⁵⁷ 'Entwurf einer Landschaft' (ill. 6), published by Kahnweiler in German in 1930, a term that the author attributed to Benn in the favourable review written two years earlier: 'halluzinativer Egoismus' (BA 2, 504).

⁴⁹ Here I would refer only to my latest two complementary works : 'Dialogue – Carl Einstein und Eugene Jolas im Paris der frühen 30er Jahre', in *Carl Einstein et Benjamin Fondane. Avant-gardes et émigration dans le Paris des années 1920-1930*, Liliane Meffre and Olivier Salazar-Ferrer (eds.), Bruxelles : P.I.E. Peter Lang 2008 [Comparatisme et Société, vol. 6], pp. 153-172 and 'Modernismus, Primitivismus, Romantik – Terminologische Probleme bei Carl Einstein und Eugene Jolas um 1930', *Jahrbuch zur Kultur und Literatur der Weimarer Republik*, vol. 12 (2008), pp. 117-137.

⁵⁰ An anonymous critic [in Sam Slote : 'Après mot, le déluge 1 : Critical Response to Joyce in France', in *The Reception of James Joyce in Europe*, Geert Lernout and Wim van Mierlo (eds.), London and New York : Thoemmes Continuum 2004, vol. 2 : *France, Ireland and Mediterranean Europe*, pp. 362-381, p. 368] voices Einstein's positive vision : 'il [Joyce] traite la langue anglaise en matière plastique, procédant par raccourcissements et allongements, par déformations et sollicitations, par citations ironiques et anticipations nordiques.'

⁵¹ *Transition*, n° 16-17 [juin 1929], pp. 298-301.

⁵² *Transition*, n° 19-20 [juin 1930], pp. 212-217.

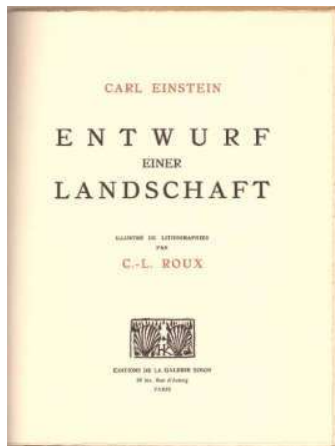
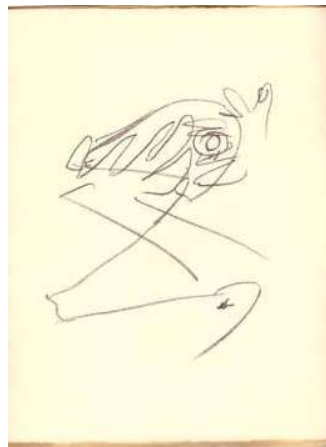
⁵³ Eugene Jolas : 'Surrealism : Ave atque Vale', in : *CW*, 228-237, 236.

⁵⁴ It was nevertheless Jolas who in 1928 refers to a common denominator linking Surrealism and Joyce, cf. 'The Revolution of Language and James Joyce', in : *CW*, 377-382, 378 sq.

⁵⁵ Id., 'Surrealism', p. 235 ; cf. his interview with Breton, in : *CW*, 102 sq.

⁵⁶ Id., *Man from Babel*, Andreas Kramer and Rainer Rumold (eds.), New Haven and London : Yale University Press 1998, p. 123.

⁵⁷ Einstein to Sophia Kindsthaler u. Ewald Wasmuth, 1930, all. 'langes Gedicht'. (L, 335).

ill. 6 : *Entwurf einer Landschaft*, 1930ill. 7 : G.-L. Roux, *C E joue au football avec sa tête*

Was this Surrealist or not ? (ill. 7)⁵⁸ But we have to see the closer links between Einstein's prose and Joyce. Where he misshaped and fragmented one can reasonably speak of 'cubism' – as did Kahnweiler⁵⁹ – but his themes and stylistic devices are heavily marked by Surrealism.

Einstein never called himself Surrealist, and he certainly did not have Dali's drive to be the 'surréaliste le plus surréaliste'. Yet in literary criticism and the theory of art, he adopted - then went beyond – both Cubism and Surrealism,⁶⁰ to the extent that we can rightly situate him *sit venia verbo* as 'sur-Surrealist'... B. J. Kospoth argues : 'People who are mystified by some modern books and pictures, such as James Joyce's *Work in Progress* and Georges Braque's paintings, are advised to study Carl Einstein's philosophy of art.⁶¹ *Georges Braque* and the unfinished works of the 1930s, even *Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, raised the innovatory provocations of the Surrealist movement to the level of a global aesthetic, based on ethnology. Einstein was thus neither Surrealist nor rebel or dissident vis-a-vis the movement, in the narrow sense that would presuppose an 'orthodoxy' ; he was simply 'at the head' of the twentieth century's intellectual and artistic avant-garde, as Gottfried Benn put it.

II. 'LINGUA', sign, myth, grammar and style in Carl Einstein

⁵⁸ Einstein's captions for Roux's lithographs are in the archives of the Galerie Louise Leiris, Paris.

⁵⁹ V. Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, *Juan Gris. Sa vie, son œuvre, ses écrits*, Paris : Gallimard 1946 (3rd ed.), p. 262.

⁶⁰ Salvador Dali, *Comment on devient Dali. Les aveux inavouables de Salvador Dali*, André Parinaud (ed.), Paris : Laffont and Opéra Mundi 1973, p. 146. 399.

⁶¹ Kospoth, 'A New Philosophy of Art', p. 5.

Ich fürchte, wir werden Gott nicht los, weil wir noch an die Grammatik glauben...

Friedrich Nietzsche : *Götzen-Dämmerung*

1. Language crisis

Carl Einstein took an early interest in language issues, which is not surprising given that the end of the century was already familiar with the 'language crisis', whether inspired by Nietzsche, Hugo von Hofmannsthal (the famous 'Letter to Lord Chandos' ('Ein Brief') or Fritz Mauthner, or personally by the inter-generational communication conflict, the expansion of knowledge, the development of the mass media etc.⁶² The collapse in authority and values demanded creative solutions. Chapter 3 of Einstein's early novel *Bebuquin oder Die Dilettanten des Wunders*, whose first four chapters appeared as early as 1907 under the title 'Herr Giorgio Bebuquin',⁶³ includes a rather paradoxical passage in which the author envisages the problem of the sign *in nuce*. His spokesperson is Nebukadnezar Böhm, an Epicurian intellectual (Bohemian, like his name), later a kind of mentor, perhaps Bebuquin's 'superego'. He disappears and is reborn, however, in a vat of cognac, similar to E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Der goldne Topf*.⁶⁴ Böhm was critical of all those who have never understood what makes a good painting : 'that is their failing. They resemble schoolboys lacking in concentration, hence unable to get beyond even a single concept, and it is precisely the concept that I reject. The concept is as nonsensical as the object. One can never escape combinations. The concept wants to approach the object whereas I want exactly the opposite' (BW, 23) :

Diese Leute haben nie ein gutes Bild begriffen, da steckt ihr Fehler. Das sind unkonzentrierte Gymnasiasten, die deswegen über einen Begriff nicht herauskommen [hinauskommen] und gerade den leugne ich. Der Begriff ist gerade so ein Nonsens wie die Sache. Man wird nie die Kombination los. Der Begriff will zu den Dingen, aber gerade das Umgekehrte will ich. (BA 1, 21 ~ BA 1, 98)

This interest in the philosophical goes back to the classroom. At the arts and humanities high-school Einstein (who passed the leaving exam, with some difficulty, in 1904) was enthralled by the idealist

⁶² Cf. Antonius Weixler : *Poetik des Transvisuellen. Carl Einsteins 'écriture visionnaire' und die ästhetische Moderne*, Berlin et Boston : de Gruyter 2016 (spectrum Literaturwissenschaft, vol. 53), pp. 83 sqq.

⁶³ I am drawing attention to the simultaneous birth of *Bebuquin* and the *Demoiselles* which both approach 'art absolu'. I say approach, since Picasso's painting, inspired by a brothel story, freezes the abstraction at a given moment (cf. Kiefer, "Mit dem Gürtel, mit dem Schleier...") and Einstein's protagonist, according to Benn (letter to F. W. Oelze, 31 May 1944) 'musste noch allerhand betreiben' [CEM, 79]).

⁶⁴ Einstein greatly appreciated E.T.A. Hoffmann (cf. letter to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl, 25 Jan. 1923 [L, 166]); an allusion to *Vase d'or* Cf. BA 1, 106 : 'serpentina alco[h]olica' !

allegory of Plato's cave,⁶⁵ but one would have to examine whether all the 1930's autobiographer has to say about the children's language is trustworthy. Be that as it may, in his more recent criticism of *Bébuquin* Kurt Hiller describes the author as '[ein] junger Kerl, welcher die Quintessenz des geistigen Tatbestands seiner Zeit intus hat und weiter will' (CEM, 52 ; ill. 8).



ill. 8 : Max Oppenheimer, Einstein, 1912

There is no question of analysing all the 'cocktails de la spéculation' (BA 3, 181) – and alcohol – that the characters down with gusto.⁶⁶ However, Böhm's remark is quite clear. Böhm hated deductions which start in an abstract idea or a concept,⁶⁷ even if formulated in a manner deemed 'claire et distincte', because it is through words and their logic⁶⁸ that civilisation takes hold. Böhm, as a follower of Ernst Mach, wanted to step backwards and create 'signs' based on things or, more precisely, on the elements and

⁶⁵ Plato's philosophy has a major role in all Einstein's oeuvre; see 'Bébuquin, Der unentwegte Platoniker', BEB II etc. Plato's 'top down' – hence deductive – metaphysics was held responsible for his 'terrible traumatisme de l'absolu' (CEA, 27). Einstein, with Böhm's lines (quoted above), sought to create a 'bottom up' aesthetics based on the elements and senses following Ernst Mach who, nevertheless, was seen as 'philosopher' of Impressionism. Of the two 'solutions' to this issue, 'totality/monumentality' or 'primitivism/cubism', Einstein chose the latter, his childhood friend Arnold Waldschmidt the former. Like Arnold Breker, he was to work later on reliefs for the Reichsluftfahrtministerium in Berlin (1937).

⁶⁶ The passage, it is true, is only in the follow-up to *Bébuquin* 'Shweißfuß klagt gegen Pfurz in trüber Nacht', published in *Front* [La Haye], Dec. 1930, pp. 53-61), but similar expressions are far from rare in the first novel : 'Man trank weiter, der Alkohol edete wie Gott aus dem Munde des Propheten.' [A 1, 107]) = (B^W, 39) 'Hier [Absinth] ein Mittel des Dilettanten.' [BA 1, 105]); Cf. L. 8 : 'Blackberrybrandy'.

⁶⁷ One needs to take into account the fact that the terminology of the young philosopher writer was not very precise.

⁶⁸ It is a methodological illusion on the part of linguistics that syntax, grammar etc., everything that Saussure called 'language', is devoid of value ; in short, linguistics disguises ethics.

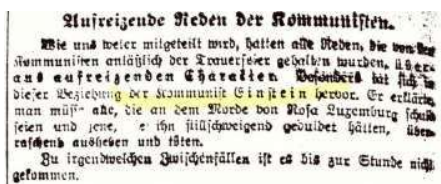
senses. Hence his preference for 'Bild' (painting),⁶⁹ over 'Begriff' (concept) and, more generally for painting's means of expression over those of language because, for Mach, visual perceptions are 'Empfindungen' or elementary 'sensations'.

Einstein was still far from being the art critic that he would later become, 'eine art Caruso in seiner spezialität' (Einstein, with self-irony, to Ewald Wasmuth 1932 (L, 372), and the paintings that he was familiar with were not yet 'cubist' (cf. BA 1, 81, 93, 99).⁷⁰ Böhm, adopting a professorial tone, criticized the circularity of 'Sache' and 'Begriff' (object and concept), which are 'combined'. Meanwhile, Ferdinand de Saussure was focusing on the linguistic sign whose two elements, 'concept' and 'acoustic image', he thought to be 'intiment unis et s'appellent l'un l'autre'.⁷¹ The Dadaist Hugo Ball, for whom *Bebuquin* was 'déterminant'⁷² discovered the 'play' between thing and concept, from which Saussure was to develop the idea of arbitrariness.: 'Warum kann der Baum nicht Pluplusch heißen, und Pluplubasch, wenn es gerechnet hat? Und warum muß er überhaupt etwas heißen?'⁷³ Unfortunately, neither Ball the mystic nor, later, the Surrealists were competent in theory.⁷⁴ This is not a criticism, merely a fact and a methodological problem. Creators are 'essayists' in the literary meaning of the term. The interpreter, who explains and corrects, always arrives *post festum*.

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- ⁶⁹ Translating 'Bild' as 'tableau' or 'painting' hides the ambiguity of the German. 'Bild' has a broader meaning and implies the linguistic image, metaphor; yet as the poet Einstein detested metaphor, paraphrase and anecdotes. Béb wants to become 'direkt ohne Umweg' [CEA, 10; Cf. AWE, 12]). Hence Böhm (and the young author too) was making a logico-grammatical error when placing the concrete object, the 'painting', on the same level as the abstraction, the 'concept'. Einstein was to exploit the poetic flexibility of language.
- ⁷⁰ Iconic signs function in the same way at any time, obviously, but non-imitative art intensifies one's awareness thereof.
- ⁷¹ Ferdinand de Saussure : *Cours de linguistique générale*, Charles Bally and Albert Sècheyaye (eds.), critical edition by Tullio Mauro, Paris : Payot 1976 (Payothèque), p. 99.
- ⁷² Cf. Hugo Ball : *La fuite hors du temps. Journal 1913-1921*. Préface by Hermann Hesse, trans. Sabine Wolf, Monaco : Editions du Rocher 1993, p. 39 : 'Les Dilettantes du miracle de Carl Einstein indiquaient la voie.' (*Die Flucht aus der Zeit*, Luzern : Josef Stocker 1946, p. 13 : 'Carl Einsteins Die Dilettanten des Wunders bezeichneten die Richtung.')
- ⁷³ Ball, 'Eröffnungs-Manifest, 1. Dada-Abend, Zürich, 14. Juli 1916', in *Dada Zürich. Texte, Manifeste, Dokumente*, Karl Riha and Waltraud Wende-Hohenberger (eds.), Stuttgart : Reclam 1992 (RUB 8650), p. 30 ; Cf. Kiefer : 'Spül müt mür! – Dadas Wort-Spiele', in *Die Lust der Interpretation*, pp. 177 sqq.
- ⁷⁴ This was the paradox of Raphaëlle Hérout ('L'imaginaire linguistique du surréalisme', in : wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Imaginaire-linguistique-HEROUT.pdf, pp. 1-18) when seeking to construct a linguistic theory of revolutionary surrealism by starting from good-will declarations devoid of practice, in Breton's case especially. To quote her : ' "Qu'est-ce qui me retient de brouiller l'ordre des mots, d'attenter de cette manière à l'existence toute apparente des choses ! " demande Breton, tout en précisant qu'il maîtrise parfaitement la syntaxe.' (p. 10)

2. Evolution, revolution, destruction

During the Great War and the Berlin revolution Einstein did not reflect upon the language he was using as a political and satirical instrument. Let's leave aside his role in Brussels on the Soldiers' Council, encouraging them to rebel from the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville ; Max Ernst witnessed it.⁷⁵ A little later Einstein delivered a funeral speech at the burial of Rosa Luxemburg [ill. 9] judged, unsurprisingly, aggressive by the liberal and right-wing media.⁷⁶ He edited with George Grosz the revolutionary journal *Der blutige Ernst* which 'peitscht die Schädlichen bis aufs Blut' (W 2, 392; ill. 10).



ill. 9 : Acht-Uhr-Abendblatt (Berlin), 13 June 1919 ill.10 : Carl Einstein u. Georges Grosz, *Der blutige Ernst*, 1919

Following the defeat of Spartakus, Einstein pursued his career as writer and art critic and soon developed two fundamental principles:

(1) The discovery of 'sculpture nègre' and the appearance of Cubism, followed closely, led him to understand that the artist is not obliged to imitate and is, on the contrary, free to create: 'Wiederholung oder Erfindung man wollte sich entscheiden.' (K 1, 56). Guillaume Apollinaire had argued as much for some time. Einstein's backing for the avant-garde had a philosophical dimension, and he created a veritable utopia for the creative individual (Picasso !). Thus ended metaphysics, whether Plato or Judeo-Christian – which haunted Einstein and his protagonists, nevertheless, because how could one

⁷⁵ Cf. Werner Spieß, *Max Ernst. Les Collages, inventaire et contradictions*, trans. Eliane Kaufholz, Paris : Gallimard 1984, p. 23 : 'Dans la seconde semaine de novembre, à Bruxelles, il avait pu entendre un discours prononcé par Carl Einstein sur la Grand-Place : "Lorsqu'il eut fini j'allai vers lui et lui serrai la main."' (ibid., p. 460, note 126 : 'Déclaration faite à l'auteur.')

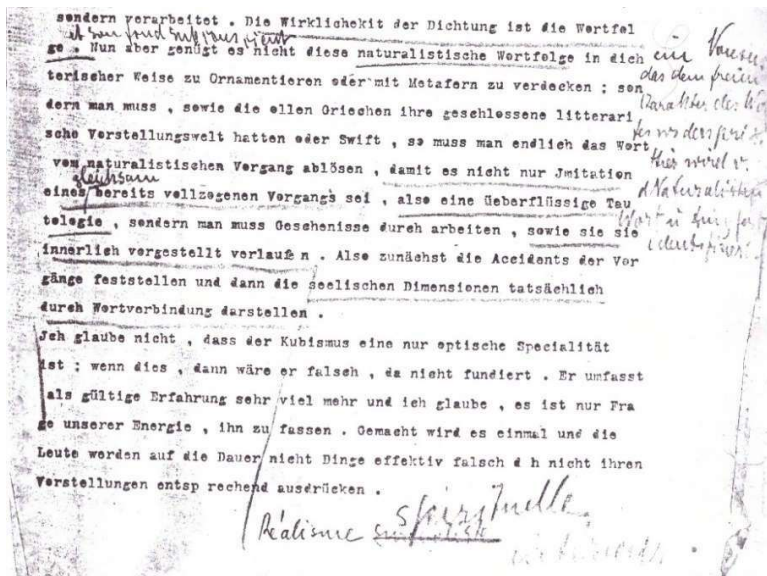
⁷⁶ Cf. Dirk Heißenrath : 'Einstein's Verhaftung. Materialien zum Scheitern eines revolutionären Programms in Berlin und Bayern 1919', *Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstands und der Arbeit*, n° 12 (1992), pp. 41-77, p. 53.

fill the chasm that the gods and absolute ideas had deserted ? In his well-known letter to Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler in 1923 - which he later wanted to use as a manifesto but was blocked by the first Surrealist manifesto - Einstein (ill. 11)⁷⁷ wrote :

[...] Geschichten wie, Verlieren der Sprache, oder Auflösung einer Person, oder Veruneinigung [sic] des Zeitgefühls. Also zunächst mal einfache Themen [...]. Solche Dinge hatte ich im Bebuquin 1906 unsicher und zaghaft begonnen. Die Arbeiten der « Kubisten » waren mir eine Bestätigung, dass eine Umnüancierung der Empfindung möglich ist: wahrscheinlich trotz allen Geredes, das einzig interessante. (L, 127)⁷⁸

⁷⁷ The significant additions to the manuscript are : superscript line 2 : 'et son fond subconscient' and bottom of page : 'Réalisme ~~surréaliste~~ spirituelle [sic]' ; cf. Kiefer : 'Carl Einsteins Briefe – Stilistik und Philologie', paper at Carl-Einstein Kolloquium, Karlsruhe : 'Carl Einstein Re-Visited : L'actualité de sa langue, de sa prose et de sa critique d'art/Die Aktualität seiner Sprache, Prosa und Kunstkritik', 2 février 2017, Museum für Literatur am Oberrhein u. 3-4 février, Zentrum für Kunst und Medien (in press).

⁷⁸ 'des histoires comme la perte de la parole, ou la dissolution d'une personne, ou bien la désunification [dissociation] du sentiment du temps. C'est-à-dire, pour commencer, des thèmes simples [...] C'est que j'avais commencé de faire, en 1906, dans 'Bebuquin', d'une façon incertaine et timide. Les travaux des 'cubistes' m'avaient confirmé dans l'idée qu'il est possible d'apporter des transformations dans les nuances de la sensation ; c'est probablement, en dépit de tous les discours, la seule chose intéressante.' (EKC, 49)



ill.11 : Letter to Kahnweiler , reworked after 1924

'The loss of speech' is obviously an allusion to Lord Chandos, and the 'dissolution of a person' to Ernst Mach ('Das Ich ist unrettbar.').⁷⁹ but here I shall limit my provisional commentary thereon to the odd word 'Veruneinigung' which, in German, is not quite proper. Through it Einstein introduces the fourth dimension of time into the make-up of the novel, and more radically than the traditional narrative with its past perfect, future etc. This is why the 'Doppel-Ich'⁸⁰ of Böhm-Bebuquin is both dead and alive. And with the death of the eponymous hero at the end the 'Beb-bouquin' ends of its own volition : 'Aus.' (BA 1, 130).⁸¹

(2) When writing about 'Cubist' avant-garde art in the 1920s Einstein always insisted on the advantage that the plastic arts had over literature, as his first intuition had taught him in 1907: 'Die Litteraten hinken ja so jammerhaft mit ihrer Lyrik und den kleinen Kinosuggestionen hinter Malerei und Wissenschaft her.' [L,

⁷⁹ Ernst Mach : *L'analyse des sensations. Rapport du physique au psychique*, transl. F. Eggers and J.M. Monnoyer, Nîmes : Jacqueline Chambon 1996, p. 27 ; *Die Analyse der Empfindungen und das Verhältnis des Physischen zum Psychischen*. Mit einem Nachwort v. Gereon Wolters, Darmstadt : Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1985 (1^{ière} éd. 1886), p. 20. Einstein claimed to be close to Ernst Mach (L, 127) but went on to add : '[Mach, der] garnicht die Sprache in Betracht zieht. Und gerade weil die Sache bei der Sprache anfängt, wollte ich die Geschichte eines Mannes schreiben und zwar keines "Intellektuellen", der die tote Sprache wie eine wirklich tötende Sache empfindet gegenüber seinen Erlebnissen.' [L, 127].

⁸⁰ Max Dessoir : *Das Doppel-Ich*, Leipzig : Günther 1886 (2nd edit.); cf. also Fritz Mauthner : 'Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache', vol. 1, *Zur Sprache und zur Psychologie*, Frankfurt/M. – Berlin – Wien : Ullstein 1982 (Ullstein Materialien; 1st edit. 1906), pp. 665 sqq.

⁸¹ Cf. Kiefer, 'Ätneralistisches Finale oder Bebuquins Aus-Sage. Carl Einsteins Beitrag zur Postmoderne', *Neohelicon*, année 21 (1994), n° 1, pp. 13-46.

127]),⁸² to quote his 1923 letter to Kahnweiler. Einstein was taking Horace's *ut pictura poesis* too literally, hence valorized colleagues in the light thereof. In 1931, it is true, he acknowledged that the Surrealist poets were seeking to 'die unmittelbare Zeichenfolge auszusprechen' (K 3, 126), hence were very close to sensations⁸³. But, he objected, 'Allerdings wagten die Poeten noch nicht, die Bindung der Grammatik abzuwerfen.' (K 3, 126 ; cf. FF, 234). Grammar equates to imposed, inauthentic, rules. For Einstein 'écriture automatique' or, to use his preferred term, 'psychogramme', and grammar are incompatible. While he never renounced his faith in the creative individual, doubts regarding the analogy between the arts began to slip into his thinking.

After all, the question is : to what extent was Einstein aware of the Surrealists' numerous linguistic experiments ? In reality, as Hans T. Siepe has shown,⁸⁴ there are a number of surrealist techniques that manipulate, indeed destroy, language, inherited from Dada. Yet Einstein failed to appreciate the endless word-play, hence it would seem that he did not see phonetics as part of grammar. As we shall see later, in his own works Einstein focused more on morphology (neologisms) and syntax, where French is somewhat fixed. According to Clément Pansaers, a Dadaist friend of Einstein, the latter thought Dada was a 'calembour qui pette trop longtemps'.⁸⁵ As for the Surrealists, Einstein appreciated Benjamin Péret's *Le Grand jeu*, calling it 'mutigste Arbeit' (K 3, 126),⁸⁶ yet never referred for instance to Leiris' *Glossaire*, even though he knew him well. In the Notes of BEB II Aragon's name appears only once. Breton (CEA, 41), called 'tribun' or 'chef' (W 4, 172), is referred to three or four times and subjected only to an ideological critique :

⁸² Einstein may have been thinking of poems like 'Alaunstrasse in Dresden', by Ludwig Meidner, which imitates the dynamism of the modern city (speed !) via a sensory traveling shot (in *Lyrik des expressionistischen Jahrzehnts. Von den Wegbereitern bis zum Dada. Mit einer Einleitung von Gottfried Benn*, Wiesbaden : Limes 1974 (5^e éd.), p. 205.

⁸³ In that quasi-simultaneity, in keeping with the teaching of Lessing's *Laocoon*, the verbal arts move closer to the visual arts which Einstein always preferred.

⁸⁴ Cf. Hans T. Siepe : 'Le lecteur du surréalisme. Problèmes d'une esthétique de la communication', trans. Marie-Anne Coadou, Preface Henri Béhar, Paris 2010 in : http://melusine-surrealisme.fr/henribehar/wp/wpcontent/uploads/2014/10/6.-Siepe_BAT.pdf.

⁸⁵ Einstein, quoted by Clément Pansaers : 'Dada et moi', in *Bar Nicanor et autres textes Dada*, Marc Dachy (ed.), Paris : Lebovici 1986, pp. 199-208, p. S. 203.

⁸⁶ Cf. Michel Collomb, 'Dévorer, éjecter, recycler : la logique primitive de Benjamin Péret (étude non encore publiée)' : 'Benjamin Péret, parmi ceux qui constituèrent le noyau dur du groupe surréaliste, fut certainement le plus constant dans l'effort pour mettre en concordance sa vie avec l'idée de révolution.' *Le Grand jeu* is dedicated to André Breton.

type bret[on], lyrisch visionärer revolutionärer fuer teure salons und kunsthaendler. ROSENBERG UND BRETON PAR EXEMPL[E], die zuechtung des privatrevolutionäers oder donnerstags⁸⁷ revolutionäeres lunch beim vicomte mit vorfuehrung der genies. (CEA, 41)

This article is too limited for a comparative study of the two poetics, and in this area one needs to take seriously Einstein's thinking in this note in his diary on 18 Feb. 1933 :

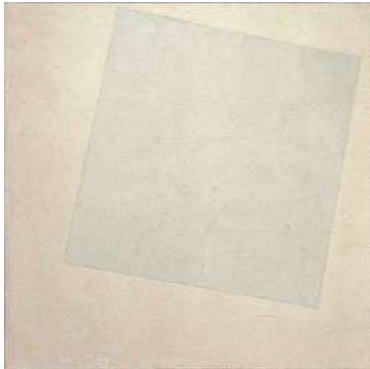
ich sehe, immer mehr werde ich allein sein, jude, deutschsprechend, in frankreich. jude ohne gott und ohne kenntnis unserer vergangenen zeit, deutschsprechend, doch gewillt die deutsche sprache nicht wie meine landsleute und gleichzüngige faul und müde versacken zu lassen. in frankreich, d.i. ohne leser. ich werde jetzt jeden tag mich kurz mit mir unterhalten ; denn seit langem bin ich von gleichsprachigen menschen und büchern gänzlich abgeschnitten. nie werde ich in französischer dichtung zu hause sein; denn ich träume und sinniere deutsch. also nun bin ich durch Hitler zu völliger heimatlosigkeit und fremdheit verurteilt. (CEA, 81; my stress, KHK).⁸⁸

Without going into detail regarding the loss of the mother tongue and of one's working language following the sudden status of migrant in 1933, let us return to the initial key issue. Why are 'object' and 'grammar' Einstein's main targets during his Cubist phase ? In *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, he defined the object as 'Träger der Übereinkünfte' (K 3, 50).⁸⁹ For the avant-garde imitation of the object was thus taboo, but totally destroying it (whether Dadaist or supremacist e.g.) (ill. 12) was not without risk : a *tabula rasa* or, in other words, no painting at all.

⁸⁷ 'Type bret[on], révolutionnaire lyrique visionnaire pour salons chics et marchands d'art. ROSENBERG ET BRETON PAR EXEMPLE, élevage du révolutionnaire privé ou jeudi lunch révolutionnaire chez le Vicomte avec présentation des génies.'

⁸⁸ 'je vois que je vais devenir de plus en plus seul, juif, parlant allemand, en France. Juif sans dieu et sans connaissance de notre passé ; parlant allemand, mais au contraire de mes compatriotes germanophones, décidé à ne pas laisser sombrer la langue allemande de façon paresseuse et fatiguée. En France, c'est-à-dire sans lecteurs. Dès maintenant, je vais dialoguer chaque jour brièvement avec moi-même puisque je suis totalement séparé d'hommes et de livres germanophones depuis longtemps. Je ne serai jamais chez moi dans la poésie française, car je rêve et raisonne en allemand. Donc, je suis condamné par Hitler à rester pour toujours étranger sans domicile.'

⁸⁹ In both the first and the final editions of *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Einstein's key concepts remain unchanged, although there were significant variants between 1926 and 1931.



ill. 12 : Kasimir Malévitch, *Carré blanc sur fond blanc*, 1918 ill. 13 : Otto Dix, *Zerfallender Kampfgraben*, 1924⁹⁰

Einstein was conscious of the dead-end in this reasoning and settled for a compromise, 'deconstruction' (as it were). In time, this was to seem unsatisfactory: 'Formerlebnis ist Kritik am Gegenstand' (K 3, 59; my stress, KHK). In his long poem 'Entwurf einer Landschaft' published in German (!) in 1930 by the Galerie Simon (hence, by Kahnweiler), he voiced his indignation when faced with the empty canvases of Malevitch, Lissitzky and others: 'Rahmen splintern vor Leere' (BA 3, 73).⁹¹ Einstein disliked the object but recognised that it was irreplaceable in other ways, whether philosophical or political (this will be true for the subject too, as we shall see): (1) The object belongs to the outside world, 'Kantisch Descartische Außenwelt' (W 4, 434), an out-of-date split ('Spaltung') he believed (imagining instead a functional, indeed 'batailleur' relationship between [W 4, 182] those long-opposed veterans of western philosophy, the subject and the object. And, (2) it belonged to the bourgeoisie: 'Der Bürger ist eine Umschreibung gegenständlichen Milieus, er ist Bestandteil, Beziehung zwischen Gegenständen. Die Zerstörung des Bürgers zur Rettung des Dynamischen ist gerechtfertigt.' (W 4, 148). The radical nature of his position, written for a Russian journal in 1921, but unpublished, was redefined, rather than revised, a few years later: 'Die Starrheit der Dinge wird vor allem durch die sprachliche Gewöhnung bewirkt.' (K 3, 59). Grammar, in short, was held responsible for the status quo of things. What an idealist!⁹²

⁹⁰ Ill. 13 : Otto Dix, *Zerfallender Kampfgraben*, from *Der Krieg* 1924, in *Expressionisten*. Sammlung Buchheim, Feldafing : Buchheim Verlag 1998, n° 553.

⁹¹ Cf. K 3, 190 = K 3^{MSt}, 319.

⁹² In his famous definition of 'Aufklärung' Kant had cited the Latin locution (whose origin is unimportant here): 'Caesar non est supra grammaticos' (Cf. Kiefer : 'Zur Definition aufklärerischer Vernunft. Eine kritische Lektüre von Kants < Beantwortung der Frage : Was ist Aufklärung? > ', in '*Die famose Hexen-Epoche*' – *Sichtbares und Unsichtbares in der Aufklärung. Kant – Schiller – Goethe – Swedenborg – Mesmer* -

Destroying grammar was easier to achieve in short texts, in poems for instance. Since Einstein disliked both the dada and surrealist games and Futurism's 'parole in libertà', what did he himself come up with? In 1917 one of his poems appeared in the journal *Die Aktion*: 'Tötlicher Baum', or 'killer tree'. The text evokes (vv. 3, 14) a soldier hit by a grenade and tangled up in barbed wire (v. 1: 'quere Masche' cf. Maschendraht/Stacheldraht) whose splintered body is draped over an uprooted tree, a frequent scene for photographers or artists like Otto Dix (ill. 13) for example. Einstein had seen this for himself; it did not need to be invented. A few lines of the poem will suffice here:

1 Glasig Zerstückten zerrt tauben Hals in quere Masche.

Gefetzter schwert blättrige Luft.

[...]

14 Griffe gegabelt jammern dir den Ast.

Aufwirft Haß in kantenen Rauten.

[...] (BA 1, 259)

Einstein's style is quite close to August Stramm's 'Wortkunst'.⁹³ Karl Kraus however, accuses the artist of 'insolence': 'rechheit ins Angesicht der Sprache' (W 1, 402; cf. Einstein's autocritique, FF, 116).⁹⁴ It is true that the relative coherence relating to the perceiving subject of Stramm's lettrist texts is missing; hence one could see the multi-perspectivist Einstein poem as cubist (v. 15: 'rhombes anguleuses'!). But such a tag is useless because the poem is probably imitating another 'destruction of objects' ('andere Zerstörung der Objekte' (K 1, 75), that of the Great War, glorified by so many artists. This obsession with 'deformation' calls to mind bizarre parallels. As Fernand Léger wrote to his fiancée Jeanne Lohy on 28 March 1915: 'A tous ces ballots qui se demandent si je suis ou je serai encore cubiste en rentrant, tu peux leur dire que bien plus que jamais. Il n'y a pas plus cubiste qu'une guerre comme celle-là qui te divise plus ou moins proprement un bonhomme en plusieurs morceaux et qui l'envoie aux quatres points cardinaux.'⁹⁵

Cagliostro, München: Oldenbourg 2004 [Ancien Régime, Aufklärung, Revolution, vol. 36], pp. 39-52). For Einstein grammar itself is the dictator.

⁹³ Cf. August Stramm, *Die Dichtungen. Sämtliche Gedichte, Dramen, Prosa*, Jeremy Adler (ed.), München et Zürich, 1990 (Serie Piper, vol. 980), pp. 89, 93 sq., 102: 'Sturmangriff', 'Schlacht', 'Patrouille' etc.

⁹⁴ Gottfried Benn, a friend of Einstein, chose the poem for his well-known anthology *Lyrik des expressionistischen Jahrzehnts* (p. 226).

⁹⁵ Léger, cited in *Georges Bauquier: Fernand Léger – Vivre dans le vrai*, Paris: Maeght 1987, p. 74 ('All diesen Trotteln, die sich fragen, ob ich Kubist bin oder noch sein werde, wenn ich zurückkomme, kannst du sagen: mehr als jemals. Es gibt nichts Kubistischeres als einen Krieg wie diesen, der dir einen Mann mehr oder weniger ordentlich in mehrere Stücke zerlegt und in alle vier Himmelsrichtungen verteilt.').

3. Fetish and sign

The young Einstein had turned to art criticism because the artist, painter or sculptor, when searching for adequate modern expressions, works 'in willigerem, flinkerem Material' (K 1, 171), and not in language frozen by grammar. Furthermore, he felt that language was 'sullied' ('etwas sehr versaut', (L, 255), as he was to write to George Grosz in 1927. The avant-garde at the start of the century was thus 'pure' painting. This iconic change of direction became more diverse in the second half of the 1920s. Firstly, Einstein was forced to follow the 'Protean' Picasso (K 1, 69) – who was no longer satisfied with decomposing a motif ; and besides, Surrealism appeared in 1924. Secondly, Einstein began to analyse the elementary units at the heart of what normally occurs. Paul Bouissac is quite correct when he argues that 'Dada and Surrealism undoubtedly put 'semiosis' in the spotlight',⁹⁶ but no other artist or intellectual of the day was as clearly 'à la pointe' of the avant-garde or understood the paradigm shift as well as Carl Einstein.⁹⁷

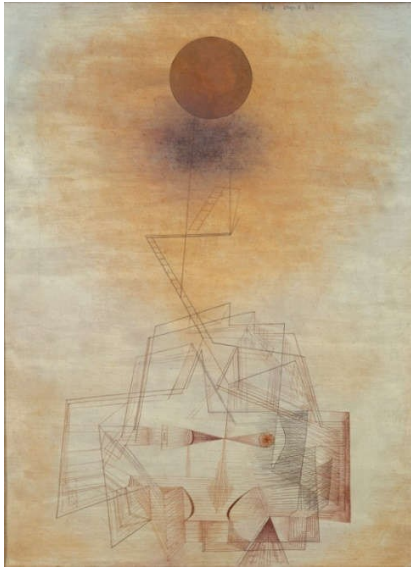
It is surprising that a fervent supporter of Cubism like Einstein, early in the 1920s, felt that there was something new in the work of Paul Klee. Thanks to the magic of fairytale, according to Einstein⁹⁸, Klee was able to create objects never seen before, and not merely to decompose conventional objects (ill. 14).⁹⁹ In short, it was Klee who led Einstein out of the dead-end into which the 'Vernichtung des Objekts' (K 3, 59) and, ultimately, Cubism, had taken him. Unlike Dada and Suprematism, the Surrealists also set off from the marvelous in their quest for the new.

⁹⁶ Paul Bouissac : 'Semiotics and Surrealism', *Semiotica. Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1-2 (1979), pp. 45-58, p. 55.

⁹⁷ Hence my giving him the title of 'maître penseur du surréalisme' in : Kiefer, 'Carl Einsteins "Surrealismus"', p. 60.

⁹⁸ Cf. the letter from Einstein to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl, 1923, where he calls Klee 'Märchenknabe' (L, 176), meaning part 'fairy child' and part child prodigy'.

⁹⁹ Einstein reproduces *Grenzen des Verstandes*, (1927) in K 3, 540 in black and whiter ; cf. *Paul Klee und die Surrealisten*, Michael Baumgartner and Nina Zimmer (eds.), Berlin : Hatje Cantz 2016.



ill. 14 : Paul Klee, *Grenzen des Verstandes*, 1927 ill. 15 : Gaston-Louis Roux, *Frigidaire der Grammatik*, 1930¹⁰⁰

Finally, Einstein who from *Negerplastik* (1915) onwards, dealt with the arts and African myths, was fortunate enough to discover a modern artist capable of producing, at the very least, a personal modern mythology ('private Mythologie' (K 1, 142)).¹⁰¹ In conclusion Einstein could write in *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* when dealing with the late 1920s : 'Endlich löste man sich aus der negativen Phase der Objektzerstörung'. (K 3, 211).

It is not easy to identify in which 'structuralist activity' Einstein conceived of the sign as the fundamental unit from which the 'Primat der Zeichen' derives (FF, 260) in all fields and across all his thinking until the end. Was he influenced by Nietzsche who had already declared in *Der Wille zur Macht* ¹⁰². 'Subjekt, Objekt, ein Täter zum Tun, das Tun und das, was es tut, gesondert : vergessen wir nicht, daß das eine bloße Semiotik und nichts Reales bezeichnet.').¹⁰³ The influence of Ernst Cassirer – some of whose

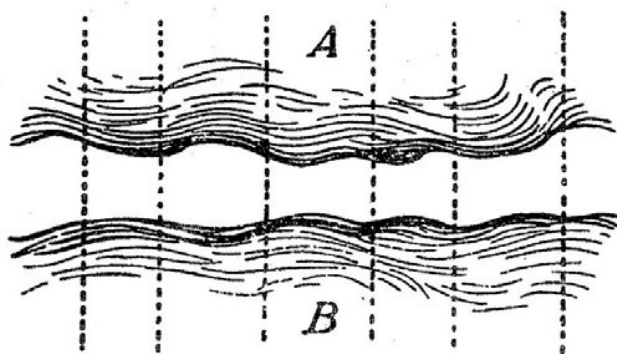
¹⁰⁰ Ill. 15 : Illustration III in *Einstein : Entwurf einer Landschaft*. Lithographs by Gaston-Louis Roux, Paris : Editions de la Galerie Simon 1930, s. p. opposite verse 'Zerfieles Wort / Wir atmeten enteist' (BA 3, 75) which does not follow the original composition, 'Si le verbe se brisait/ Nous respirerions dégelés'). The title was linked by Einstein who ironised on the 'romantischen Wirrwarr' [letter to Ewald Wasmuth, 11 March 1931, L, 351]) of the illustrations.

¹⁰¹ Cf. FF, 67, 115 and elsewhere for their criticism of the modern artist's lack of a collective dimension.

¹⁰² Nietzsche, *Oeuvres philosophiques complètes*, vol.14, *Fragments posthumes (début 1888- début janvier 1889)*, text and variants Giorgio Colli and Manzi Montinari, trans. Jean-Claude Hémery, Paris : Gallimard, 1977, p.57.

¹⁰³ Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht. Versuch einer Umwertung aller Werte*. Ausgewählt und geordnet v. Peter Gast unter Mitwirkung v. Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. Nachwort by Walter Gebhard, Stuttgart : Alfred Kröner 1996 (13e éd. revue ; 1ère éd. 1906) (Kröners Taschenausgabe, vol. 78), p. 428 (n° 634). This is the edition

classes Einstein had attended at Berlin University, and whose *Philosophie der symbolischen Formem* was starting to appear (v. 1, 'Die Sprache' 1923; v. 2, 'Das mythische Denken' 1924) – is evident from his letters to Fritz Saxl (L, 312), who collaborated with Aby Warburg and Cassirer. An indirect reference also suggests that Einstein at least leafed through the 1931 German translation of Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*.¹⁰⁴ The reference is a striking metaphor in the following phrase: 'Die Tatsachen vernebelten im Wolkenmeer der Zeichen und Meinungen.' (FF, 152, my stress, KHK. ('Les faits se dissimulaient dans la mer brumeuse des signes et des opinions.'). With 'Wolkenmeer' Einstein is alluding to the well-known Saussurian definition: 'sans le secours des signes, nous serions incapable de distinguer deux idées d'une façon claire et constante. Prise en elle-même, la pensée est comme une nébuleuse où rien n'est nécessairement délimité.'¹⁰⁵ In the German version, which appeared just when Einstein was visiting Berlin in 1931, Hermann Lommel renders 'nébuleuse' by 'Nebelwolke'.¹⁰⁶ The picture of the 'amorphous mass' of thoughts given by Saussure does indeed look like a cloud (ill. 16).¹⁰⁷



Ill.. 16: Ferdinand de Saussure: 'Wolkenmeer der Zeichen'

that Einstein must have known: Cf. Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werk*. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, München : dtv Berlin and New York : de Gruyter 1980, vol. 13 : Nachgelassene Fragmente 1887-1889, p. 258.

¹⁰⁴ Why the German translation, since the book was available in France from 1916 ? Perhaps he purchased or saw it during his trip to Berlin in 1931.

¹⁰⁵ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, Charles Bally and Albert Sècheyaye (eds.), critical edit. Tullio Mauro, Paris : Payot 1976 (Payothèque), p. 155.

¹⁰⁶ *Grundfragen der allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft*, transl. Hermann Lommel, Charles Bally and Albert Sècheyaye (eds.), Berlin an Leipzig : de Gruyter 1931, p. 133.

¹⁰⁷ Abb. 16, *Cours de linguistique générale*, p. 156.

Einstein no doubt appreciated the dialectical relationship, confirmed by linguistics, between arbitrary and fixed (through convention) with respect to his critique of intellectuals in *Fabrikation der Fiktionen*.

Einstein was interested not merely in a scientific analysis of language but equally, perhaps even more, in the use of poetic and aesthetic signs 'within social life',¹⁰⁸ i.e. in the 'performative' function which, according to Georges Sorel, generates 'social myths' ready for action ('Mittel zur Tat' (FF, 43). But the only sign capable of 'doing' is the fetish, in an animist (or 'biblical') culture of course. Einstein did not raise the question of the magical power of the sign as fetish¹⁰⁹ during the first stage of his ethnographic career, placing at the time the 'deconstructive' power of painting above language locked in the 'frigidaire der Grammatik' (BA 3, 83; ill. 15) as I have shown.

Einstein was to make a radical shift when he finally understood the poetic power of language arising from the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified : 'L'écriture n'imité pas les faits et les choses, elle les évoque par des signes étrangers à l'aspect des choses etc.' (W 4, 252) In short : 'Das Wort ist zeichenhaft [...]. (FF, 236), and this was the magical word, cherished by the Romantic poets, '[qui fait] chanter le monde' (Eichendorff). We have here the secret source that generates fiction – and yet, 'l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison' (OC^{Br}, 1,328)¹¹⁰ can also give rise to monsters...

We should note in passing that Einstein's thinking on semiotics can be found not merely in the archives BEB II, but also in *Georges Braque, La Fabrikation der Fiktionen*¹¹¹ and elsewhere ; hence between the late 1920s and the 1930s.¹¹² While 'irrationalising' the sign, Einstein, by way of a complementary reaction, envisaged a notion of style as social 'régulateur' or 'control' (W 4, 374 ; FF, 50).

¹⁰⁸ Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁹ Einstein distrusted the term : 'Man kann schwer entscheiden, wann der Neger glaubt er benutze ein Bildwerk oder der Fetisch übt gewissermaßen selbständig eine Funktion aus. Diese Empfindungen mögen oft ineinander übergehen,' (*La sculpture africaine*, in : *Les Arts de l'Afrique*, p. 208). For my definition of the fetish as 'pragmème' cf. Kiefer, *Die Lust der Interpretation*, pp. 16 et 142 sqq. One of the main falsehoods of modern linguistics (Cf. GB^{Ko}, 53) is separating language (and all the media) from its fetish function. I feel Westerners are ashamed of being subjected to a 'primitive' use of the sign in every communicative act; cf. also Kiefer, 'Kant als Geisterseher', in *Die famose Hexen-Epoche*, p. 37 sq. Kant camouflages the animism which makes (or should make) his 'categorical imperative' work via a comparison with a natural law. Quite evidently, researchers on Kant showed little enthusiasm for the idea.

¹¹⁰ Einstein uses this irrational principle from *Bebuquin* onwards: 'Immer ist der Wahnsinn das einzig vermutbare Resultat.' (BA 1, 129).

¹¹¹ As with *Georges Braque*, after 1933 Einstein was obliged to have his work translated in order to publish ; the French title is thus authentic, but the translation was either not completed or was lost. Cf. Einstein's letter to Fritz Saxl, late May 1935 (L, 407).

¹¹² Yet another reason why it is not logical to imagine a break between 'subjectivist' and 'materialist' phases ; Heidemarie Oehm's thesis has been out-of-date for a long time, of course.

The young author had hated all style(s) because it (they) ‘freeze’ poetry’s fulfilment. Behind this opposition between the arbitrary and conformity one can perceive the Nietzschean ‘dionysian’ and ‘apollonian’, or Wölfflin’s ‘métamorphosis’ and ‘tectonic’. ‘Die grammatikalischen Satzverbindungen entsprechen ungefähr den tektonischen Typenformen der Kunst.’ (FF, 234)

Along with Klee’s output, it was no doubt the surrealist notion of dream, inspired by Freud, that drove Einstein towards the creative concept of the sign.¹¹³ He applied it to the work of Braque who, at the start of the 1930s, was entering a freer, ‘mythological’ figurative phase. There was nothing coincidental in the artist’s choice of Hesiod’s *Theogony* for inspiration,¹¹⁴ since the latter’s ‘histoire de la création et de la naissance des dieux, se veut aussi métaphore de la création artistique’,¹¹⁵ (ill. 16 et 17) – and Carl Einstein was, at the time, an avid reader of Hesiod...



ill. 17 : Georges Braque, *La Théogonie Héraclès*, 1932



ill. 18 : Georges Braque, *Ulysse*, 1932

¹¹³ Einstein’s acknowledgement of psychoanalysis was quite late, but in his letter to Freud of 8 March 1930 he wrote : ‘welch ungeheuren Einfluss [seine] Arbeiten auf die geistige Jugend hier ausgeübt haben’ [L, 323]).

¹¹⁴ The dealer Ambroise Vollard had proposed that Braque illustrate a book of his choice. Braque’s decision to take his inspiration from Hesiod was unexpected – and the influence of Einstein, a specialist in mythology and a reader of Hesiod (cf. index BA 3) clear ! The two friends spent a lot of time together in Paris and Varengeville.

¹¹⁵ http://www.musee-lam.fr/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/theogonie_FR1.pdf. The 16 engravings completed before Vollard’s death were exhibited at the Musée d’Art moderne, d’Art contemporain et d’Art brut, Lille, 7 June – 28 Aug. 2011. The Museum is clearly unaware of Einstein’s role in the production of *Theogony*.

Einstein reproduced seven engravings in his monograph *Georges Braque* which – as already said – is ‘kein buch über braque’ L, 372)¹¹⁶ ; and an entire book would be needed to investigate the very close relations between the critic and the artist. It is enough for our present purpose to highlight what I have termed the ‘poétologisation de la peinture’.¹¹⁷ As Einstein declared in 1931/32 : ‘Malen nun heißt ein Dichten ; denn dichtend erschafft man Realität’ (BA 3, 326). Einstein’s articles in *Cahiers d’Art* in 1933 refer to Braque as a poet, ‘Dichter’ (BA 3, 246) and, in similar vein, he refers to Klee’s poetry as ‘Kleesche Dichtung’ (K 1, 142). He thus reduces art and literature once more to a single principle¹¹⁸ : the symbol, the sign, without developing a philosophy as did Ernst Cassirer. And while, in a letter of 11 March 1931, he admitted to Ewald Wasmuth : ‘Im grossen Ganzen glaube ich überhaupt, dass bildende Kunst gar nichts mit Literatur zu tun hat [...]’ [L, 351] – and this is not an isolated example of paradoxical resignation in this context - Einstein writes in the catalogue of the *Georges Braque* exhibition that he had organised for his friend (9 April - 14 May 1933) at the Kunsthalle Basel : ‘Er [Braque] schuf sich eine Grammatik erfundener Formen, eine variable Syntax, und immer reicher wird sie verwebt und verbunden.’¹¹⁹

What ‘dialectic’ moves from grammar, enemy no. 1 of poetry, to the poetic grammar of painting, and mixes the evolution of the argument *ut pictura poesis*, the ‘Cubist’ model, and resignation : ‘Sprechen und Malen jedes hat seine eigene Art’ (BA 3, 255),¹²⁰ while proclaiming the primacy of a ‘universal poetry’ across the arts ? It is true that the avant-garde is a very dynamic system, and system was never Einstein’s strong point. To put it in the expert’s own words: the critic ‘boite vraiment lamentablement à la remorque’ of

¹¹⁶ I am reproducing the Heracles engraving (GB^Z, 12 et GB^{Ko}, 22) and the frontispiece by *Ulysse*, hors série *Théogonie*, because both the German edition (W 3 et BA 3) and the edition by Liliane Meffre (GB^{Ko}) omit it, for reasons unknown. But Einstein’s choice is instructive : Ulysses (Germ. and Gk. : Odysseus), the wily one, presented in *Georges Braque* as a ‘mythonaute’ in the search for myth ; Cf. Kiefer, ‘Carl Einstein und der Mythos’, *Cahiers d’études germaniques*, n° 76 (2019) : ‘Emigration et mythe. L’héritage culturel de l’espace germanique dans l’exil à l’époque du national-socialisme’, Anrea Chartier-Bunzel (ed.), Mechthild Coustillac, Yves Bizeul, pp. 95-108.

¹¹⁷ Gérard Durozoi and Bernard Lecherbonnier (*Le Surréalisme. Théorie, thèmes, techniques*, Paris : Larousse 1972 [coll. Thèmes et textes], p. 196) use the term ‘poétisation’, which is more elegant, but I wish to stress that we are referring to Einstein’s theoretical discourse and not to the practice in itself; for further detail, the possible influence of Aragon, Cf. Kiefer, *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins*, pp. 449 sqq.

¹¹⁸ At the outset the (absurd) model was painting, Horace’s ‘pictura’. Besides, Einstein’s second paradigm, the poetic sign, is far removed from surrealist ‘nominalism’ ; cf. Siepe, *Le Lecteur du surréalisme*, pp. 52 sq.

¹¹⁹ Einstein, ‘Introduction’ in *Georges Braque*, Kunsthalle Basel, 9 April – 14 May 1933. ‘In memoriam Emanuel Hoffmann’ [catalogue], pp. 5-7, ici p. 5. The quotation is prefigured in K 1, 76 : ‘Er [Braque] schuf sich eine Grammatik erfundener Formen, eine kanonische Syntax.’ Einstein corrected ‘kanonisch’ (canonic) to the opposite, ‘variabel’ (K 3, 101) because in 1926 he had not yet understood.

¹²⁰ The recent French translation is less radical : ‘parler et peindre – chacune de ces activités a sa manière propre.’ (GB^{Ko}, 15). Nonobstant, Einstein had approved the initial translator.

free artistic creation (EKC, 48, cf. L, 127) – let alone of historical evolution – although the art critic can influence it, by also producing (secondary) literature.

4. 'Requiem for the Self'¹²¹

Einstein's work on a definition of the sign was intensified when Einstein the ethnographer carried out a test on himself, i.e. when the writer becomes an autobiographer.¹²² We do not know what became of the project 'l'ethnologie du Blanc' that Einstein referred to in an interview in 1931.¹²³ Was it merely a still-born project or a book which the publishers *La Nouvelle Revue Française* lost in the upheaval of Einstein's departure for Spain and arrest on his return (his wife Lyda had hastily hidden his manuscripts with Georges Braque) ?¹²⁴ Einstein, in any case, had long since completed his plan to finish *Bebuquin*.¹²⁵ Ruined by the financial crisis, he noted on 18 February :

ich will mich meiner erinnern, da die menschen mich vergessen haben. die letzten Antworten, die mich begleiteten, waren die Hackgeräusche meiner Uhr, um Papier zu haben, verkaufte ich sie. [...] seitdem sie weggegangen ist, ist es wunderbar still am fluss, wo ich sitze. (CEA, 26)¹²⁶

The complex 'autobiographical pact' of BEB II, rooted in exile,¹²⁷ has often been studied.¹²⁸ Here I wish to highlight the language learning of the young Beb, the 'lingua' theme (ill. 18)¹²⁹, whatever the name given later (Laurenz etc.).

¹²¹ 'Totenbuch des Ich' (CEA, 46) ; one cannot say 'book of the dead' [of the self] which would nevertheless be less catholic and more Egyptian, but with a second complemen

¹²² Cf. the Chap. 'Ethnologie im Selbstversuch' in Kiefer, *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins*, pp. 467 sqq.

¹²³ B. J. Kospoth, 'A New Philosophy of Art', p. 5.

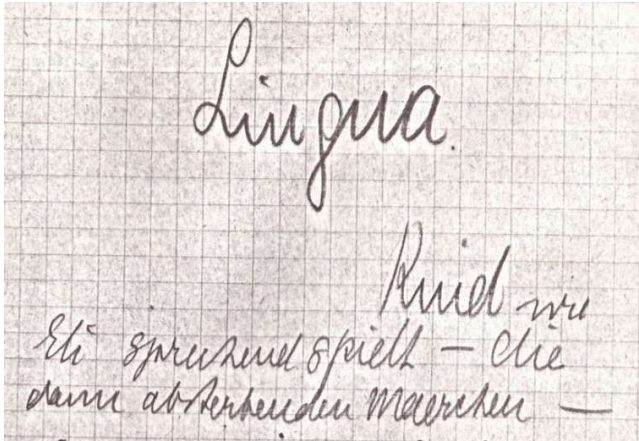
¹²⁴ Cf. Sibylle Penkert, *Carl Einstein. Beiträge zu einer Monographie*, Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1969 (Palaestra, vol. 255), p. 18.

¹²⁵ Cf. Einstein to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl, 1923 : 'Den zweiten Teil Bebuquin mache ich fertig – wenn wir zusammen sind. » (L, 186).'

¹²⁶ 'Je veux me souvenir de moi, puisque les gens m'ont oublié. La dernière réponse qui m'accompagnait continuellement était le tic tac martelant de ma montre, afin d'acheter du papier, je l'ai vendue. [...] Dès qu'elle est partie, un silence merveilleux règne au bord du fleuve [la Seine] où je suis assis.'

¹²⁷ Einstein saw his situation as exiled author in a fatal prophecy by a soothsayer at the Lunapark in Karlsruhe : 'ich sehe dich [Beb] ganz allein und verlassen in einer mansarde in einem fremden land und du wirst an deinem laehmenden träumen sterben' [I see you [Béb] alone and abandoned sitting in an attic room in a foreign country and you will die of your paralysing dreams] (CEA, 9).

¹²⁸ Cf. Marianne Kröger, *Das 'Individuum als Fossil' Carl Einsteins Romanfragment BEB II. Das Verhältnis von Autobiographie, Kunst und Politik in einem Avantgardeprojekt zwischen Weimarer epublik und Exil*, Remscheid : Gardez ! 2007 (Komparatistik im Gardez !, v.5) which examines all the essential approaches. I stress that BEB II is not an autobiography of Cal, but a fictionalised biography of Beb, who is not *individuum* in the classical sense but in the Nietzschean sense of moden *dividuum* (Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe* in 15 Bänden, v.2 : Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, p. 76 ; an unstable type in which



II. 19 : Carl Einstein : Cutting, BEB II

It comes as no surprise that the qualities of the 'mythomaniac' protagonist (K 3^{M/St}, 351) correspond closely to the child genius Paul Klee and the 'neolithic' childhood of Jean Arp (BA 3, 170-174), since it is not a question of the empirical research that, for instance, Jean Piaget was engaged in at that time on 'le langage et la pensée chez l'enfant'.¹³⁰ Einstein often resorted to fragments of memory from his youth in Karlsruhe as raw material in shaping his later ethnographic and semiotic ideas.¹³¹ The language of the child creates a mythical cosmology. The young Oedipus conjures up a knife to kill the father (CEA, 7). Fortunately, the floating sign is stopped by parents and schoolteachers who 'colonise' the wild child (CEA, 27). The narrator's comment on learning is simply 'kaput' (sic, CEA, 7), and on the final year examination, 'Genickbruch' (CEA, 9). Whereas the cosmogony is well recounted and rich in characters, images and episodes, the account of the split of 'subject' and 'object' is short and abstract. We can nevertheless uncover three guilty parties in this 'Kindertragödie' (CEA, 27) : adult language, which has the upper hand; the laws of physics taught at school; and philosophy. The latter is focused on Plato's idealism and his allegory of the cave, 'hoehlenmaerchen' (CEA, 9) that neither Beb nor his teachers actually understand.

Einstein is reflected, the way Bebuquin could have done had he not turned away from the labyrinth of mirrors (B^w, 11) 'um allen Überlegungen über die Zusammensetzung seiner Person vorzubeugen'. [BA 1, 92].

¹²⁹ *Lingua.* / 'Kind wie Eli sprechend spielt die dann absterbenden maerchen' (CEA, 7). Eli (or Eli Coingule etc.) is a figure from Beb's dreams who, nevertheless, has the same negative experience regarding the 'rational' which drags the child away from his 'age of marvelous fairytales'.

¹³⁰ Jean Piaget, *Le langage et la pensée chez l'enfant. Etudes sur la logique de l'enfant*, Neuchchâtel and Paris : Delachaux & Niestlé 1976 (9e éd. ; 1ère éd. 1923).

¹³¹ The text is constantly moving between 'truth' and 'poetry/fiction', e.g in BEB I, Beb's group is clearly afraid of Halley's comet (CEA, 21 et 27) – which could only be sighted between April and May 1910.

How does Kant come into the picture ; who is responsible for 'eine der Grundfälschungen der Philosophie' (BA 3, 293) because it decreed '[weil er] Gleichgewicht zustande brachte zwischen Objekt und Subjekt' (BA 1, 99) ? On these, BEB II remains silent, but it is precisely *Bebuquin* (source of the quotation above) which picks up the story because the protagonist has finally reached the academic and artistic milieu in Berlin where he meets major scholars on Kant, such as Georg Simmel, Alois Riehl and others. *Bebuquin* juggles with quotes from them, like an excited lecturer ('wildgewordener Privatdozent' (Kurt Hiller, W 1, 501). The 'childhood' chapters of BEB II are, in the fullest sense of the term, the 'pre-history' of *Bebuquin*. And the reason why the opposition between 'subject' and 'object' ('[d]ie Entgegensetzung von "ubjekt" und "Objekt"')¹³² that was treated by Ernst Cassirer as progressive and liberating, is treated by Einstein as tragic in Germany cannot be discussed in depth here. Firstly, he felt the 'I', the grammatical category par excellence of the subject, to be 'hateful', just like the object, as we saw.¹³³ Secondly, his ego was at best able to put up with being part of a group, whether communist or capitalist, for short periods.

Thanks to the arts, which benefit from the arbitrary nature of sign and dream, Einstein hoped to overcome the 'deadly' function of language which stifles the individual : 'wenn Beb spricht, die toten sprechen mit.' (CEA, 7). But the 'grand narrative' capable of replacing a disastrous judeo-christianity by something like a happy animism is still to come. What exoticism, we might add ! In reality, Einstein had only a formal concept of myth which, while not altogether devoid of meaning, did not allow the various mythemes brought together to form a whole.¹³⁴ Meanwhile, the totalitarian state has many...¹³⁵ In *La Fabrikation der Fiktionen* Einstein acknowledges the fact : 'Die Primitivendichteten kollektivbetont [...]. Die moderne Primitive ist subjektiv betont ; ihre [Figurationen] entsprechen keiner allgemein erlebten Realität.' (FF, 115). The renaissance of European culture through 'l'unité du style artistique à travers toutes les

¹³² Cf. AWE, 21 sq. ; cf. also Einstein's letter to Gide in 1923 : 'une grande maison d'édition m'a demandé de diriger la maison. Peut-être que j'accepte.' [L, 120]. He declined, and also distanced himself from a commitment with the Bauhaus [Cf. his letters to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl 1923, especially L, 176].

¹³³ Einstein read Pascal several times and clearly took the philosopher seriously.

¹³⁴ Cf. Kiefer, 'Missing links – Carl Einstein et Blaise Cendrars', *Constellation Cendrars*, n° 3 [2019], p. 113-125..

¹³⁵ I will not discuss here how the Nazis built their 'mythe du 20e siècle' [Alfred Rosenberg] – which obviously worked so well (not merely because of the SA or Assault Sections) that Breton and Bataille thought about resorting to the same mechanism and, especially to 'l'aspiration fondamentale des hommes [...] au fanatisme' [OCBr 2, 499 and OCBa 1, 382]. Thinking of 'surrealism' and 'fascism' they hit upon the fatal notion of 'surfascism' [OCBr 2, 1665]. A study of myth, favoured by the Surrealists, including Einstein, and the National-Socialists, remains to be undertaken.

manifestations de la vie d'un peuple',¹³⁶ dismissed by Nietzsche, was not achieved by a heterogeneous avant-garde. Einstein's belief in the magical strength of the fetish 'poetry', whether verbal or visual, collapsed. Artists and intellectuals proved to be mere 'féticheurs'; and the fetish, a Romantic spell from the past, is now merely a superstitious 'grigri' (BA 3, 286, 306). Einstein has a clear memory of the idea of the 'imposture des prêtres' (FF, 211) during the century of the Enlightenment. There has rarely been stronger, clearer, indeed suicidal self-criticism – to the extent that one is led to ask, why not sooner ?

Einstein's last comments on the issue of the links between grammar and politics can be found in a speech given in 1936 to commemorate the death of Buenaventura Durruti :

Durruti, dieser außergewöhnlich sachliche Mann, sprach nie von sich, von seiner Person. Er hatte das vorgeschichtliche Wort 'ich' aus der Grammatik verbannt. In der Kolonne Durruti kennt man nur die kollektive Syntax. Die Kameraden werden die Literaten lehren, die Grammatik im kollektiven Sinn zu erneuern. (BA 3, 520)¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Nietzsche, 'Considérations inactuelles I : David Strauss, l'apôtre et l'écrivain', in *Fragments posthumes [Été 1872 – hiver 1873-1874]*. Colliand and Montinari (eds.), trans. Pierre Rusch, op.cit. p. 17-89, p. 22. Here is the full prophetic and ambiguous passage from Nietzsche : 'Kultur ist vor allem Einheit des künstlerischen Stiles in allen Lebensäußerungen eines Volkes. Vieles Wissen und Gelehrthaben ist aber weder ein nothwendiges Mittel der Kultur, noch ein Zeichen derselben und verträgt sich nöthigenfalls auf das beste mit dem Gegensatze der Kultur, der Barbarei.' [Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden, vol. 1 : Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I, p. 163]. Einstein pursued the notion of stylistic and cultural union following his trip to Egypt in 1910 [Cf. his letter to Emilie Borchardt, 1910 : 'in Ihrem land bekam ich die strengste und vollkommenste anschauung von stil, künstlerischer tradition und gesamtkultur.' [L, 11)]. While acknowledging 'Protean' Picasso's status, he actually preferred Braque ; cf. Kiefer : *Diskurswandel im Werk Carl Einsteins*, p. 321.

¹³⁷ Liliane Meffre was the first to translate this paragraph in *Carl Einstein et la problématique des avant-gardes dans les arts plastiques*, Berne et al. : Peter Lang 1989 (Contacts, sér. III : *Études et documents*, vol. 8), p. 134 ; and in : *Carl Einstein 1885-1940*, p. 295. She had herself noted 'gaps' in the translation, that she thought to be by Augustin Souchy. Thanks to Marianne Kröger who gave me access to the original French text, I was able to ascertain that Einstein omitted only the second paragraph in his radio talk (in German or French – no one mentions this), or else the editors deleted it since this sophisticated consideration on grammar seems out of place in a political context ; cf. Einstein, 'La colonne Durruti', in : *Brochure éditée par les Services Officiels de Propagande de la C.N.T. - F.A.I. Avenida Buenaventura Durruti, 32 Barcelone (Espagne), Seix y Barral, Empresa colectivizada, Barcelona, España, pp. 18-20.*



ill. 20 : Carl Einstein, Perpignan, 16 Feb. 1939

We should not expect too much coherence when looking at thousands of random notes and in a troubled past. In Spain Einstein (ill. 19) had already gone beyond his 'Romantic episode'¹³⁸ His belief in the power of art to transform society was in ruins, but in early 1938 he had not given up all hope. After the defeat of fascism he wanted to return, 'paar ordentliche Bücher schreiben, fern aller Vorlieben der Modernen und Wohlmeinenden aller Avantgarden, Bücher, hart und komisch', taking as examples *Gulliver's Travels*, *Don Quichotte*, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. In a letter to Tony Simon-Wolfskehl in 1923 he appended to this prestigious list a tentative addition : 'Vielleicht Bebuquin wenn er fertig ist. Sonst hat es sich auch nicht gelohnt. Vielleicht bin ich grössenwahnsinnig aber ich spreche nur von Absicht nicht Gelingen. Der Teufel hole das Metier.' (L, 175)

¹³⁸ Cf. Kiefer, 'Modernismus, Primitivismus, Romantik – Terminologische Probleme bei Carl Einstein und Eugene Jolas um 1930', *Jahrbuch zur Kultur und Literatur der Weimarer Republik*, vol. 12 (2008), pp. 117-137.

ABBREVIATIONS etc.

AWE = *Avantgarde Weltkrieg Exil. Materialien zu Carl Einstein und Salomo Friedlaender/Mynona*, éd. par Klaus H. Kiefer, Frankfurt/M. - Bern - New York : Peter Lang 1986 (Bayreuther Beiträge zur Literaturwissenschaft, vol. 8)

BA 1, 2, 3 = Carl Einstein : *Werke. Berliner Ausgabe*, 3 vols., éd. par Hermann Haarmann et Klaus Siebenhaar, Berlin : Fannei & Walz 1994-1996

B^w= Carl Einstein : *Bébuquin ou les dilettantes du miracle*, précédé d'une lettre de Franz Blei à l'auteur et suivi d'une lettre de l'auteur à Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, traduction et postface par Sabine Wolf, s. l. : Les Presses du Réel 2000 (coll. L'écart absolu)

CEA = *Carl Einstein-Archiv*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, <https://archiv.adk.de> (le numéro indique le fichier)

CEM = Carl Einstein-*Materialien* [vol. 1] : *Zwischen Bebuquin und Negerplastik*, éd. par Rolf-Peter Baacke, Berlin : Silver & Goldstein 1990

CW = Eugene Jolas : *Critical Writings, 1924-1951*, éd. par Klaus H. Kiefer et Rainer Rumold, Chicago/Ill. : Northwestern University Press 2009
 EKC = *Carl Einstein Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. Correspondance 1921-1939*, trad. et éd. par Liliane Meffre, Marseille : André Dimanche 1993
 FF = Carl Einstein : *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, Gesammelte Werke in Einzelausgaben, vol. 4, éd. par Sibylle Penkert, Reinbek/H : Rowohlt 1973

GB^{ko} = Carl Einstein : *Georges Braque*, éd. par Liliane Meffre et trad. par Jean-

Loup Korzilius, Bruxelles : La Part de l'Œil 2003

GB^{zi} = Carl Einstein : *Georges Braque*, trad. par M. E. Zipruth, Paris : Chroniques du jour – London : Anton Zwemmer - New York : Erhard Weyhe 1934 (XX^e siècle, vol. 7)

K 1, 2, 3 = Carl Einstein : *Die Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Propyläen Kunstgeschichte, vol. 16, Berlin : Propyläen Verlag 1926, 1928, 1931 (2^e et 3^e éd. revues et augmentées)

K 3^{MSt} = Carl Einstein : *L'Art du XX^e siècle* [1931], trad. par Liliane Meffre et Maryse Staiber, Arles : Chambon 2011 (Actes Sud)

K = Carl Einstein *Briefwechsel 1903-1940*, éd. par Klaus H. Kiefer et Liliane Meffre, Stuttgart : Metzler 2020 (L indique le numéro de la lettre)

OC^{Ba} = Georges Bataille : *Œuvres complètes*, 11 vols., Paris : Gallimard 1970-1988

OC^{Bau} = Charles Baudelaire : *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols., éd. par Claude Pichois,

Paris : Gallimard 1975-1976 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade)

OC^{Br} = André Breton : *Œuvres complètes*, 4 vols., éd. par Marguerite Bonnet et al., Paris : Gallimard 1988-2008 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade)

OP^A = Louis Aragon : *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, 2 vols., éd. par Olivier Barbarant et al., Paris : Gallimard 2007 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade)

SW = Gottfried Benn : *Sämtliche Werke*. Stuttgarter Ausgabe, éd. par Gerhard Schuster, Stuttgart : Klett-Cotta 1986-2003

trad^{Mit} = trad. par Liliane Meffre : *Carl Einstein 1885-1940. Itinéraires d'une pensée moderne*, Paris : Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne 2002

W 1, 2, 3, 4 = Carl Einstein : *Werke*, 4 vols. éd. par Rolf-Peter Baacke et al., Berlin et Wien: Medusa et Fannei & Walz 1980-1992.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Ill. 1 = Aragon et al. : « Notation des plus grands écrivains », 1920, in : <http://www.andrebretton.fr/fr/item/?GCOI=56600100363020>

Ill. 2 = Carl Einstein : *Negerplastik*. Mit 116 Abbildungen, München : Kurt Wolff 1920 (2^e éd.), dédicace, in : <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100586090>

Ill. 3 = Carl Einstein : *Georges Braque*, trad. par M. E. Zipruth, Paris : *Chroniques du jour*, London : Anton Zwemmer, New York : Erhard Weyhe 1934 (XX^e siècle)

- III. 4 = Carl Einstein [officier des milices anarcho-syndicalistes], photographie anonyme, in : *Meridià. Setmanari de literatura, art i política. Tribuna del Front intel·lectual antifeixista*, Barcelona, 6 mai 1938, p. 4
- III. 5 = Carl Einstein : *Die Fabrikation der Fiktionen*, 1933-36, version A (CEA, 131) et D (CEA, 167).
- III. 6 = Carl Einstein : *Entwurf einer Landschaft*. Illustré de lithographies par Gaston-Louis Roux, Paris : Éditions de la Galerie Simon 1930
- III. 7 = Gaston-Louis Roux : Illustration I ; lithographie, ca. 21 x 18 cm, in :
Carl Einstein : *Entwurf einer Landschaft*. Illustré de lithographies par Gaston Louis Roux, Paris : Editions de la Galerie Simon 1930, association/sous-titre de Carl Einstein : « C E joue football avec sa tête »
- III. 8 = Max Oppenheimer : *Einstein* (1912), frontispice, in : Carl Einstein : *Bebuquin*, Berlin-Wilmersdorf : Verlag der Wochenschrift Die Aktion 1917 (Aktions-Bücher der Aeternisten, vol. 5)
- III. 9 = Acht-Uhr-Abendblatt (Berlin), 13 juin 1919, p. 2 (coupure)
- III. 10 = Carl Einstein et Georges Grosz : *Der blutige Ernst*, n° 4 (1919) : Die Schieber
- III. 11 = « Kahnweilerbrief » (retouchée après 1924, coupure), CEA, 282
- III. 12 = Kasimir Malévitch : *Carré blanc sur fond blanc* (1918), huile sur toile, 79,4 x 79,4 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York
- III. 13 = Otto Dix : *Zerfallender Kampfgraben* (1924), gravure, 35,3 x 47,5 cm, in : *Expressionisten. Sammlung Buchheim, Feldafing* : Buchheim Verlag 1998, n° 553
- III. 14 = Paul Klee : *Grenzen des Verstandes* (1927), crayon, huile, aquarelle sur toile, 56,2 x 41,5 cm, in : *Paul Klee : Leben und Werk*, éd. par Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern, Ostfildern : Hatje Cantz 2012, p. 199, Pinakothek der Moderne, München
- III. 15 = Gaston-Louis Roux : Illustration III, lithographie, ca. 21 x 18 cm, in : Carl Einstein : *Entwurf einer Landschaft*. Illustré de lithographies par GastonLouis Roux, Paris : Editions de la Galerie Simon 1930, association/sous-titre de Carl Einstein : 'Frigidaire der Grammatik'.
- III. 16 = Ferdinand de Saussure : *Cours de linguistique générale*, Charles Bally u. Albert Sècheyhay (eds.) ; critical edition by Tullio Mauro, Paris : Payot 1976, p. 156
- III. 17 = Georges Braque : *Héraclès* [illustration II], gravure sur cuivre, 20,6 x 16,4 cm, in : Carl Einstein : *Georges Braque*, trad. par M. E. Zipruth, Paris : *Chroniques du jour* – London : Anton Zwemmer - New York : Erhard Weyhe, 1934 (XX^e siècle, v.7), p. 12
- III. 18 = Georges Braque : *Ulysse*, frontispice, pastel (?), mesures ?, in : Carl Einstein : *Georges Braque*, trad. par M. E. Zipruth, Paris : *Chroniques du jour* – London : Anton Zwemmer - New York : Erhard Weyhe 1934 (XX^e siècle, v.7)
- III. 19 = Carl Einstein : Coupure de BEB II (CEA, 7)
- III. 20 = 'Carl Einstein à la terrasse du Palmarium à Perpignan (en rentrant d'Espagne)', photographie anonyme, in : *Match. L'Hebdomadaire de l'actualité mondiale*, no. 33 (16 février 1939), p. 34

My chapter is made up of two articles given at the study-day 'Rebelles du surréalisme' (2 April 2016), in : <http://melusine-surrealisme.fr/wp/?p=2069>, and 'Langages du surréalisme' (25 March 2017), in : <http://melusine-surrealisme.fr/wp/?p=2287>, Henri Béhar and Françoise Py (eds.) (Association pour la Recherche et l'Étude du Surréalisme). Corrected, supplemented and updated.

NB : Where Einstein's text is not quoted in German, the original was written in French.

MARCUSE, AESTHETICS, FREUDO-MARXISM and the SURREALISTS

Catherine DUFOUR

INTRODUCTION

At the centre of the gigantic theoretical edifice erected by Marcuse lies an essential notion, the 'aesthetic dimension' which, as Gérard Raulet writes, is also its 'Gordian knot'¹ as a result of the repetitions, reworkings, ambiguities and contradictions. It is a preoccupation that occupies a central place in Marcuse's very last works, *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* (1972), *The Aesthetic Dimension* (1978), but also in the vast number of unpublished articles and interviews brought together by Douglas Kellner in 2006 under the title *Collected Papers*², and which are a key entry-point to his thought. On this issue, which calls into question the links between art and revolution, the Surrealists occupy a central position that calls for investigation. But engaging with this founding problematic demands first a brief overview of Marcuse's intellectual development.

MARCUSE, FROM ONE REVOLUTION TO ANOTHER

Born in 1898, Marcuse took part in the German Revolution of November 1918 in Berlin.³ Fifty years later, as with his contemporary Wilhelm Reich,⁴ the students of Nanterre claimed him as representing the Freudo-Marxist dream theorised in his best-known publications, *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), the work most read by the May '68 generation. By that point Marcuse had already published an immense oeuvre in which nearly all the major German philosophers from Kant to Adorno figured. It is worth noting, however, that his early interest had been literature : his 1922 doctorate on the Bildungsroman, which examined the confrontation between the artist and a reality that frustrates his quest for love and happiness, raised issues central to his thinking.⁵ His thesis on Hegel, supervised by

¹ Gérard Raulet, *Herbert Marcuse. Philosophie de l'émancipation*, PUF, 1992, p. 21.

² *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, Routledge, 2006, 6 volumes.

³ Cf. Claude Dupuydenus, *Herbert Marcuse ou les vertus de l'obstination*, Paris, 2015, p. 47.

⁴ Reich was well known to Marcuse who, despite their differences, wrote positively of his 1920-1930 texts in *Eros and civilization*, 1955.

⁵ See Douglas Kellner's detailed analysis in 'Marcuse's doctoral dissertation : engaging the German artist novel', *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, pp. 10-31 ; and Claude Dupuydenus, 'La littérature avant tout', *op. cit.*, pp. 54-58. See Manuel Quinon, 'La réception de Herbert Marcuse en France

Heidegger⁶, *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* (1932), also heralded the theoretical corpus of the 1950s-60s in which history is envisaged as 'yet-to-come' and 'mobility'⁷.

Arguing, like Hegel, that the fundamental characteristic of Being itself is to be divided, he analysed the bi-dimensionality of the real in the light of an 'ontology of the possible',⁸ i.e. a dialectic of the real and the possible, which is at the heart of his thought : the real being always 'something more'⁹ than what is given, 'what is real is possible'. Philosophy's task, consequently, is to combat processes of reification by giving back to the real the potential it harbours¹⁰, and the task of politics is to achieve 'concretely the rational fusion of the real and the possible'. 1932 also saw the publication of Marx's 1844 *Manuscripts*. This was to be a decisive text for Marcuse who subsequently sought to bring together the problematics of reification (Lukács), anguish (Heidegger) and disalienation (Marx).¹¹ In 1933 he was hired by the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, under Max Horkheimer who, with Adorno, was one of the main representatives of the 'critical theory' of the dissident Marxists of the 1920s.¹² After its closure by the Nazi regime in 1933 the Institute continued its work at Columbia University, New York. Marcuse, obliged to leave Germany, was active in the Institute until 1941,¹³ the date of his break with Horkheimer and the publication of *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (1941), a major work bringing together his reflections on Marxism, industrial societies, and the Revolution. Between 1941 and 1951, in Washington, he concentrated on official security assignments against fascism. Although no longer part of the Institute he remained faithful to the 'critical theory' which attacked instrumental reasoning, challenged all totalitarian systems,

(1956-1968). *Phénoménologie d'une conscience critique*, a detailed account of the growing interest for this philosopher in French intellectual circles from the late 1950s-60s : DEA de sociologie de la connaissance, Université Paris IV-Sorbonne, www.academia.edu/11313090.

⁶ Marcuse fell out with Heidegger after the war because he was a Nazi sympathizer : cf. Claude Dupuydenus, 'Heidegger : la désillusion', *op. cit.*, pp. 68-72, as well as the letters they exchanged in 1947-48, *ibid.*, pp. 136-43 ; on the history of Marcuse's thesis with Heidegger, cf. Gérard Raulet, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-30.

⁷ The brief synthesis below was inspired by Frédéric Vandenberghe, 'Herbert Marcuse. De l'ontologie à la technologie. Considérations intemporelles sur le réel et le possible', *Une histoire critique de la sociologie allemande : aliénation et réification, Tome II, La Découverte* ; <https://www.caim.info/une-histoire-critique-de-la-sociologie-allemande-9782707128553-page-107.htm>, p. 18-25.

⁸ Cf. Frédéric Vandenberghe, *op. cit.*, footnote 22 p. 23, which links this 'ontology of the possible' to Ernst Bloch's 'ontology of not-yet'.

⁹ This quotation and the next are from Marcuse, as found in Frédéric Vandenberghe, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁰ Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 25.

¹¹ On this synthesis, cf. Gérard Raulet, *op. cit.*, p. 24 and sq., and Frédéric Vandenberghe, *op. cit.*, p. 14 et sq.

¹² Especially Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* and Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*

¹³ The main texts of 1933-1941 are summarised by Claude Dupuydenus in the chapter 'Le libéralisme engendre la barbarie', *op. cit.*, pp. 83-116, and especially 'The Struggle Against *Liberalism* in the *Totalitarian View of the State*' (1934), 'Philosophical Foundations of the *Concept of Labor in Economics*' (1933), 'The Affirmative Character of Culture' (1937) and 'On Hedonism' (1938).

including the 'administered world'¹⁴ of democratic societies. At the heart of his thinking : contemporary forms of domination¹⁵, including authority within the family, the struggle for emancipation, the promotion of revolutionary forces against repressive systems, the place of work and pleasure in a culture. Marcuse was not to return to Germany, unlike Adorno et Horkheimer, and this was to make of him a philosopher 'doublement exilé'¹⁶. In 1951 he embarked on a second career in a number of American universities, in San Diego, California, from 1965 where, now the leading intellectual of the youth protest movement, he opposed the war in Vietnam, and was a militant supporter of Black and Women's rights.

MARCUSE and the SURREALISTS

In 1937, in Adorno and Horkheimer's journal of the Institute for Social Research, Marcuse published an article entitled 'The Affirmative Character of Culture'. Evidence of the key importance he attached to the aesthetic and, despite a lingering idealism, the political dimension of art as developed by the avant-gardes of the early 20th century, for whom artistic creation, no longer sublimatory, metaphysical or innocent, was committed : art, henceforth, was linked to revolution. This explains why the Surrealists interested Marcuse, whose texts refer repeatedly to the writers of the first generation (Breton, Aragon, Éluard, Péret, Artaud). His interest was fully developed in *Eros and Civilization*, which analysed art as a privileged form of resistance to the powers of repression. In the 1960s the work was to influence French Surrealists of the second generation (Joubert, Audoin, Bounoure, Schuster) and it was to have a key role in 1968, the 'surrealist year', both in Paris and Prague.

Towards the end of his life Marcuse had links with the Chicago Surrealist group, as we see in the extensive synthesis in issue 4 of the journal *Arsenal* (1989), 'Herbert Marcuse and Surrealism', published by Franklin Rosemont, leader of the group. It includes several letters from Marcuse written between October 1971 and March 1973.¹⁷ Rosemont confirms that Surrealism was at the centre of Marcuse's interest, especially over the last 25 years of his life, an interest which allowed him, for instance, to object in his letters to erroneous judgements which he put down to the caricatural view of Surrealism held by American academic critics. Rosemont notes that the works referred to in Marcuse's essays concern only Breton (*Manifestes, Le Surréalisme et la Peinture, Pour un art révolutionnaire indépendant* co-authored

¹⁴ Expression used in Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944).

¹⁵ Marcuse contributed to the study edited by Horkheimer, *Authority and the Family* (1936) ; see also Adorno, *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950).

¹⁶ Cf. Claude Dupuydenus, 'Introduction. Marcuse doublement exilé', *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁷ Letters to Chicago surrealists', 12 Oct. 71 – 6 March 73, *Arsenal* n° 4 (1989), pp. 39-47.

with Trotsky) or Péret (*Le Déshonneur des poètes*). He deplores the absence of *Les Vases communicants*, *L'Amour fou*, *Point du jour*, or *Arcane 17* with its Fourierist and feminist connotations, together with Péret's *Anthologie de l'amour sublime*, so close in theme and date to *Eros and Civilization*. In fact, despite Rosemont's claims, Marcuse was familiar with Breton's *Position politique du surréalisme*,¹⁸ since he refers to the essay in September 1945 in an untranslated article which also referred to Éluard, 'Some Remarks on Aragon. Art and politics in the totalitarian era'.¹⁹ It is worth analysing this essay on the avant-gardes, Surrealism, Aragon and the Resistance poets, because it contains in embryonic form Marcuse's main theses on the aesthetic, argued at length in his later works.

'SOME REMARKS ON ARAGON': Basis of the 'aesthetic theory'

The brief bibliography at the end of this article includes a work by Whitehead, to whom Marcuse was indebted for the notion of the 'Great Refusal'.²⁰ The article focuses on Surrealism of the Resistance, which had revived the lyrical tradition of love and patriotism, and resorted to classical poetic forms far removed from the radical formalism of the avant-gardes which, in Marcuse's opinion, had reached its limits. The article begins by acknowledging the ability of the System to absorb any radical challenge : avant-garde art is no longer a threat to established authority ; it is now merely academic, while all forms of aesthetic 'terrorism', 'le scandale pour le scandale' (in French in the text),²¹ the references to Sade or Lautréamont, the rejection of the 'génie français' (also in French), have been outstripped by new forms of real terror. This was to become one of the key concepts of *One-dimensional Man*, targeting a closed society, reified, enslaved to consumerism and leisure, and manipulated by an ideology that had infiltrated all cultural output with the illusion of freedom : 'repressive desublimation'.

We encounter another key concept of the Marcuse corpus : in order to be revolutionary the Surrealist Resistance poets decided to avoid open confrontation with political issues. They opted for a Form that could tear the work from the negativity of the totalitarian world, thus creating a space and time that were other, with the potential to free alienated lives. This valorisation of Form, obsessively revisited in Marcuse's

¹⁸ Rosemont based his argument on the fact that this text did not figure in the edition of the *Manifestes* (Le Sagittaire 1946) mentioned by Marcuse.

¹⁹ 'Some Remarks on Aragon. Art and Politics in the Totalitarian Era', *Collected Papers*, op. cit., vol. 1, *Technology, War and Fascism*, ch. VII, pp.199-214.

²⁰ See Olivier Penot-Lacassagne, 'Herbert Marcuse : Le Grand Refus', in Christophe Bourseiller and Olivier Penot-Lacassagne (eds.), *Contre-cultures !*, CNRS Éditions, 2013, pp. 155-59 ; Jean-Marc Lachaud, 'Du "Grand refus" selon Herbert Marcuse', *Actuel Marx*, 45, 2009 pp. 37-48 ; <https://www.cairn.info/revue-actuel-marx-2009-1-page137.htm>

²¹ The allusion is to Aragon who, in the 1924 preface to *Libertinage*, argued in favour of 'le scandale pour le scandale', Aragon, *Œuvres romanesques complètes*, La Pléiade, 1997, pp. 278-9.

last three essays, is close to the ideas that Adorno would defend to counter Sartrean commitment around 1962.²² An extended analysis of *Aurélien* in the 1945 article allowed Marcuse to reformulate - this time with respect to the novel - his thesis that art is political solely when it rejects all political content, even if its objective is revolution. In 1945 Marcuse thus shared with Breton the ideas that the latter had developed in 1935 in *Position politique du surréalisme*.

The influence of Hegel's 'pensée négative', the cornerstone of Marcuse's dialectic and thinking on the aesthetic, is obvious in that article. In the preface to the 1960 edition of *Reason and Revolution* Marcuse maintained that he was rushing to defend negative thought, 'in danger of disappearing', and stressed the internal link between the Hegelian dialectic and avant-garde literature, focused on writing absence. Hegel, it is true, had had a direct influence on Mallarmé, the Surrealists or Brecht :

The absent must be made present because the greater part of truth is in that which is absent. [...] Poetry is thus the power 'de nier les choses' (*to deny objects*) – the power which Hegel claims, paradoxically, for all authentic thought.

In support of his claim Marcuse refers in the 1960 preface to Valéry's ideas and to 'l'absente de tous bouquets' by Mallarmé. The argument was taken up again in *One-Dimensional Man* to counter the ideology of 'communication' : Marcuse argues for poetry which only speaks of 'absent things' and he goes on to praise 'inevitable commitment of poetic language to negation', Brechtian distancing, the new language of Rimbaud, the Dadaists and Surrealists, and Blanchot's 'absolute refusal'.²³ And while, surprisingly, the poetry of the Resistance, of Aragon or Éluard – quoted at length in 'Some Remarks on Aragon' – used a more traditional language, the language of sensuality and love, this was far from conventional Romanticism : this gentleness was 'positive negation'²⁴ of the horror of war, to which were added the constraints of classical verse, which increased the 'estrangement' of the work, removed from a destructive reality.

The stress on sensuality in the article is a reminder that, in keeping with its etymology, the aesthetic (aisthesis) in Marcuse concerns not just art but the senses, the body, new ways of seeing, a 'new sensitivity' (a chapter title in *An Essay on Liberation*). Sensual love is 'promesse de bonheur' (in French in the text).²⁵ Marcuse would never forget either Aragon, master of the love song, or Baudelaire's 'Invitation au voyage', a perfect example of the rejection of the aims of the culture of performance, rejected and subverted in favour of idleness and pleasure.

²² His article 'Commitment' (1962) argues that it is through Form that a literary work can oppose the world, in order to avoid any compromise with 'mutilated life', *Notes on Literature* (1958).

²³ Especially Aragon's *Le Crève-cœur* (1941) and *Les Yeux d'Elsa* (1942) and Éluard's *Les Sept Poèmes d'amour en guerre* (1943).

²⁴ 'Some Remarks...', art. cit., p. 207, for this quotation and the next.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

***Eros and Civilization*, 'a surrealist book': The key role of imagination**

As early as 1938, in his article 'On Hedonism',²⁶ Marcuse set out the arguments that would be developed in *Eros and Civilization*: Eros can subvert the order of death; emancipation of the senses and the idea of happiness prepare the revolution; and art has a key role to play. Written as part of a polemic against 'neo-Freudian revisionism',²⁷ *Eros and Civilization* was directly opposed to *Civilization and its Discontents* (1929). For Freud happiness was not a cultural value,²⁸ civilisation needed repression, the sublimation of drives and the channeling of libidinal energy into work. In response, Marcuse rejected the historical inevitability of Freud's theses, because technological progress in industrial societies was modifying the question of scarcity (*Lebensnot*) and could in future free up time for pleasure, despite 'surplus-repression', i.e. 'restrictions imposed by social domination'.²⁹ Marcuse believed in a generalised Eros capable both of undermining the Freudian 'reality principle'³⁰ which had become a 'performance principle', and of producing a non-repressive society. In support of his dream of happiness he invoked major figures from mythology, Orpheus and Narcissus³¹ as the antithesis of Prometheus or Faustus, the tutelary demi-gods of productivity-based societies. The 'rationality of gratification'³² was to replace instrumentalised performance.

It is clear that there was much in Marcuse to attract the Surrealists even if, as Sarane Alexandrian has shown,³³ the notion of Eros rarely figured in their writings before the end of WW2, the word 'sexuality' being

²⁶ His article, in line with the philosophies of antiquity, sought to treat happiness and reason in dialectical terms. Remembering Plato's distinction between true and false, true and false needs, Marcuse inscribed happiness within a collective move for liberation, and extended the notion of the libido to all human activities, including work.

²⁷ Adorno had launched the polemic around this 'neo-Freudian revisionism' – the title of the postface to *Eros and Civilization*, op. cit., p. 209-36 – which was arguing for an adaptive notion of psychoanalysis, promoted by Karen Horney and Erich Fromm. For an in-depth analysis of Marcuse's concept of Eros, and the different positions of the 'Freudo-Marxist' currents of thought, see Alain Giami, 'Éros et civilisation d'Herbert Marcuse', in S. Bateman, ed., *Morale Sexuelle*, vol. 3, Cerses-CNRS, 2002, p. 61-80.

²⁸ Cf. Jean-Michel Palmier, 'Éros et civilisation', *Sur Marcuse*, U.G.E. (10/18), 1969, p. 60-102; and by the same author 'Éros et civilisation ou la possibilité d'une culture non répressive', *Marcuse et la nouvelle gauche*, Éditions Pierre Belfond, 1973, p. 331-35.

²⁹ 'The historical limits of the established reality principle', *Eros and Civilization*.

³⁰ When writing about the conflict between the 'pleasure principle' and the 'reality principle', Marcuse refers to Freud's 'Two principles of mental functioning' (1911).

³¹ *Eros and Civilization*, 'The Images of Orpheus and Narcissus': Marcuse treats these two figures with évident lyricism, referencing Rilke's 'Sonnets to Narcissus', Gide's *Le traité de Narcisse*, Valéry's 'Narcisse parle' and *Cantate du Narcisse*, p. 144-46.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³³ Cf. 'Sexe(s) exquis sans dessus (ni) dessous : érotisme surréaliste', *Mélusine* no. XXXV, 'Éros, c'est la vie!', L'Age d'Homme, 2015.

the most prevalent.³⁴ And if love took on contradictory guises for the Surrealists, from sacred love to untrammelled sexuality,³⁵ we can agree with Xavière Gauthier that their common denominator was 'la force subversive d'Éros'³⁶, as she argued with reference to *Éros et civilisation*:

Dans un monde d'aliénation, la libération d'Éros opérerait inévitablement comme une force destructive, fatale, comme la négation totale du principe qui gouverne la réalité répressive.³⁷

In 1957 the publication of Bataille's *Érotisme*, much appreciated by the 'new' Surrealists³⁸, caused something of a revolution and, thanks to the *Eros* exhibition of 1959, Charles Fourier dethroned Marx and Sartre.³⁹ Breton's discovery of Fourier during his exile in the USA was probably, as Jérôme Duwa argues, a 'juste prélude' to Marcuse's analyses.⁴⁰

The chapter 'Phantasy and Utopia' in *Eros and Civilization*, which justifies the label 'surrealist book'⁴¹ that Richard J. Bernstein has given it, brings out the profound affinity between Marcuse and the Surrealists. Marcuse, following Schiller, insisted on the role of the imagination in order to reconcile sensuousness and reason.⁴² The role of the imaginary was to link the most archaic levels of the unconscious with the higher faculties of consciousness expressed through art. The repressed images of individual and collective memory are witness to a time when conflict between man and Nature did not exist, a time when the 'pleasure principle' had free rein. Influenced also by Carl G. Jung, Marcuse saw in imagination, as the revival of 'temps perdu', the means of future liberation :

³⁴ See *Recherches sur la sexualité* (Jan.1928 – Aug.1932), introduction and notes José Pierre, Collection Archives du surréalisme no. 4, Gallimard, 1990.

³⁵ J.-B. Pontalis, in the preface to Xavière Gauthier, *Surréalisme et sexualité* (Idées/Gallimard 1971), queried what the following have in common : 'amour fou', the myths on sacred love or the eternal feminine, the claim to untrammelled sexuality, the 'femme unique' and Breton's primordial androgyne, Max Ernst's 'femme 100 têtes', Bellmer's dolls etc.

³⁶ Gauthier, *Surréalisme et sexualité*, pp.31-7.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 50.

³⁸ See e.g. Gérard Legrand, 'Pour Georges Bataille', *La Brèche, action surréaliste*, no.3, Sept. 1962, p. 37-38, ; and the discussion between Alain Joubert and Claire Boustani, in Fabrice Flahutez and Thierry Dufrêne, eds, *Art et Mythe*, Presses Universitaires de Paris Nanterre, 2011, pp. 149-59.

³⁹ Joubert, Ibid.

⁴⁰ Jérôme Duwa, 'Vol au-dessus d'un nid d'ignus : surréalisme et contre-culture', *Contrecultures !*, op. cit., p. 36

⁴¹ He finds *Eros and Civilization* 'le plus pervers, sauvage, fantomatique et surréaliste' of Marcuse's works, as related by Frédéric Vandenberghe, op. cit., p. 64.

⁴² A theory of imagination inspired by Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), largely written under the influence of Kant, *Critique of Judgement* ; see also *Eros and Civilization*, 'The Aesthetic Dimension': imagination is composed of 'sensuous reason' and 'rational sensuousness'. J.-B. Laplanche, in 'Notes sur Marcuse et la psychanalyse', *Marcuse cet inconnu*, La Nef, no 36, Jan.-March 1969, and Jean-Guy Nadeau in *Le rôle révolutionnaire de l'imagination selon la pensée de 'Éros et civilisation' de Herbert Marcuse*, Thesis, Ottawa, 1972, have noted how Marcuse often muddles the concept of imagination found in Kant, Hegel or Freud ('Phantasy').

The truth value of the imagination relates not only to the past but also to the future: the forms of freedom and happiness which it invokes claim to deliver the historical reality.

Myth, Novalis, psychoanalysis or the surrealist programme of the practice of poetry were the stages on the path of the imaginary. Imagination allowed free expression of the perversions of an archaic and polymorphous Eros. 'Subject to the pleasure principle alone', they rebelled against patriarchy and a sexuality focused on reproduction.⁴³ Numerous surrealist texts, analysed by Xavière Gauthier in the light of *Eros and Civilization*, call upon the subversive force of perversions. Their interest in Sade springs from the same source.⁴⁴

In order to define an imagination that was no longer regressive, as it was for Freud, but which had instead a critical, liberating and transformative function, Marcuse analysed the opening pages of Breton's *Manifeste*, which focused precisely on the fundamental notion of what Ferdinand Alquié termed 'philosophie surréaliste'⁴⁵. In the *Manifeste* Breton, acknowledging his debt to Freud, contrasted 'limitless' imagination and the 'lois d'une réalité arbitraire' that individuals accept 'sous couleur de civilisation'. The necessary reconciliation between reason and sensibility, between pleasure and reality principles, is clear in his text. Breton was seeking the possibility of regaining, through the imagination, a lost unity, just as Tzara later sought reconciliation between a 'penser dirigé' and a 'penser non dirigé' in *Grains et issues* (1935). Dream and poetry had their roots in a 'mémoire qui [portait] sur des générations'. 'Surreality', produced by tapping into unconscious layers, was at the heart of his *Manifeste*. This was a political position for Surrealism which was later to be enriched by an analysis of the imagination as a quest for archaic mnemonic traces. And in his essay 'Il y aura une fois' (1930) Breton, like Marcuse, treated this faculty as resolutely forward-looking: 'Imagination n'est pas don, mais par excellence objet de conquête. [...] L'imaginaire est ce qui tend à devenir réel'.⁴⁶

PARIS-PRAGUE, 'A SURREALIST YEAR' : MARCUSE AND THE SURREALISTS OF THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE

It was not until the 1960s that there was a real encounter between Marcuse and Surrealism, at a time when French intellectuals were increasingly interested in the philosopher. *L'Écart absolu* (1965), which was the last surrealist exhibition in André Breton's lifetime, provides evidence of this meeting. Philippe Audoin had

⁴³ Ibid., p. 54.

⁴⁴ See Xavière Gauthier, op. cit., p. 49-50 sq.

⁴⁵ Ferdinand Alquié devoted an entire chapter to imagination in *Philosophie du surréalisme*, Flammarion (1955), 1977, pp. 131-69, the year *Eros and Civilization* was published.

⁴⁶ *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution* no. 1, juillet 1930.

proposed the Marcusean theme of merchandise,⁴⁷ while Breton's title was a reference to Charles Fourier.⁴⁸ The Surrealists, who were beginning to take an interest in the mythology of consumer society, as were the Situationists, turned *L'Écart absolu* into a parodic fairground-exhibition. Outlandish objects (*Le Désordinateur, Le Consommateur*) made a mockery of the avatars of consumer society and advertising, 'qui crée sans cesse pour tous les mêmes besoins fictifs et détourne l'homme de ses désirs véritables.'⁴⁹

*L'Archibras*⁵⁰, a periodical launched after Breton's death, at a time when Surrealism's survival was in doubt, was to be the continuation of *L'Écart absolu*. An interview with Marcuse was published in October 1967 on his political ideas, eroticism and the imagination as counter-powers. Issue no.4 of the periodical, on May '68, which was seized by the police, had a specifically Marcusean approach. Jean Schuster's programmatic introduction to the first issue (April 1967), 'À l'ordre de la nuit, au désordre du jour', had set the tone. Schuster, probably the first Surrealist to have taken on board Marcuse's ideas, thanks to *Eros and Civilization* in the journal *Arguments*,⁵¹ set out at length the decisive role of Surrealism in a 'performance-based society':

Le principe de rendement, agent de la domination, ne laisse plus d'espoir de conciliation dialectique avec le principe de plaisir. Les deux termes ne s'affrontent pas à armes égales. Dès lors, la mission surréaliste actuelle est on ne peut plus claire : elle consiste à rassembler, au mépris des divergences secondaires, les énergies qui contribuent à saper le principe de rendement ou à prêter vigueur au principe de plaisir.

To illustrate his argument Schuster used works that exalted the Freudian imaginary, 'linked to the pleasure principle and sheltered from changes brought about by civilisation'. Konrad Klapheck, Enrico Baj, Hervé Télémaque, Matta, Jorge Camacho, Toyen, etc. positioned the oneiric in opposition to merchandise, despite the power of appropriation at work in a society of the image. Joyce Mansour's poetry was 'une émanation consciente du principe de plaisir', an enemy of alienating work and the culture industry, containing the hope that 'la fatalité de la répression [pouvait] être déjouée par les forces anarchiques de la libido'. Schuster's conclusion gave 'la priorité absolue à l'acte d'imagination', backed by a long quotation from the chapter 'Imaginaire et Utopie':

L'art dont parle Marcuse, l'art qui est essence et non expression du réel, l'art qui est 'derrière la forme esthétique', cet art seul nous importe.

⁴⁷ Cf. Alain Joubert, 'Le retour de l'écart absolu', *Le mouvement des surréalistes ou le fin mot de l'histoire*, Maurice Nadeau, 2001, p. 296.

⁴⁸ Cf. André Breton, 'Générique', presentation of the IXth Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme, *Perspective cavalière*, Gallimard, 1970, pp. 256-260.

⁴⁹ Joubert, 'Le retour de l'écart absolu', art. cit., p. 301.

⁵⁰ *L'Archibras. Le Surréalisme*, Jean Schuster, ed., 7 issues between April 1967 and March 1969. Issues 4 and 5 were special issues, one on May 1968, the other on events in *Czechoslovakia*.

⁵¹ See Jérôme Duwa, 'Vol au-dessus d'un nid d'ignus : surréalisme et contre-culture', art. cit., note 15, p. 37.

A year later Bratislava, Brno and Prague saw the opening of 'The Pleasure Principle', the platform for a brief revival of Czech Surrealism in this period of political thaw. Preparatory exchanges had involved the use of questions put by Czech Surrealists to their French counterparts in 'Le téléphone surréaliste Paris-Prague': alongside traditional themes like *humour noir*, eroticism, myth, a fundamentally new issue was introduced by Gérard Legrand: how to 'mettre l'accent sur le principe de plaisir'⁵² in the poetic and visual fields. The exhibition title had been chosen by Vincent Bounoure, José Pierre and Claude Courtot,⁵³ despite a certain reluctance among Czech artists as a result of their internal political debates and the pro-Cuban stance of the French artists.⁵⁴ References to Freud and Marcuse could well be deemed idealistic by purist Marxists, while ideas about the productivity principle could well be deemed misplaced in a country where 'survival' was still paramount.⁵⁵

It is clear now that the texts of the four French Surrealists had a Marcusean tone.⁵⁶ Claude Courtot's paper adopted a Marcusean approach when looking back over the theses of *Civilization and its Discontents*: the achievements of 'civilisation', worldwide hunger on one side, the domination of the superfluous on the other, could not justify the sacrifices made in the name of the reality principle touted by a 'canaille tonsurée':

Voici trop longtemps que l'histoire se confond avec celle de sa répression, trop longtemps que le principe de réalité opprime le principe de plaisir. Le surréalisme somme la civilisation d'avoir à renoncer immédiatement à son intolérable tyrannie.

Claude Courtot called on Freud, Rousseau and Fourier in 'Désir' when attacking individual happiness and the authoritarian family and dreaming of a free-flowing childhood of free love. He thundered against the excesses of 'exploits techniques' and 'loisirs dirigés'. Underlying all this was Marcuse's notion of 'repressive desublimation':

La liberté authentique ne saurait s'accommoder de ces tolérances suspectes [les loisirs dirigés].
Le principe de plaisir ne peut composer.

⁵² Gérard Legrand, 'Le téléphone surréaliste Paris-Prague', 1968, *année surréaliste*, op. cit., p. 112.

⁵³ See the account in Claude Courtot, Marie-Claire Dumas and Petr Kral, 'Le Principe de Plaisir, exposition surréaliste en Tchécoslovaquie, 1968', *Du Surréalisme et du Plaisir*, Corti, 1987, pp. 261-275.

⁵⁴ Cf. 'Pour Cuba', *L'Archibras*, no. 3, March 1968.

⁵⁵ For details of the Prague disagreement see Jérôme Duwa, 1968, *année surréaliste*, op. cit., pp. 98-99, 102; and Vincent Bounoure, op.cit., p. 100, note 10, on the idea of 'survive first' of the socialist countries. See also Claude Courtot's account, 'Le Principe de Plaisir, exposition surréaliste en Tchécoslovaquie, 1968', art. cit., pp. 262-265 et 269-271.

⁵⁶ These papers, reproduced in the exhibition catalogue, can be found in Jérôme Duwa, 1968, *année surréaliste*, op. cit., pp. 132-144. Cf. also commentary by Marie-Claire Dumas, 'Le Principe de Plaisir, exposition surréaliste en Tchécoslovaquie, 1968', art. cit., pp. 266-69.

Vincent Bounoure argued in favour of political utopia in the face of the 'règne incontesté du principe de rendement', and put his faith in anti-repressive revolutionary aspirations to 'définir les principes d'une civilisation compatible avec le Désir' and Fourier's New World of love. Philippe Audoin, for his part, called on Bataille's Pleasure Principle at work in the 'mouvement vers l'être' of surrealist thought, 'wild', 'primitive', 'oneiric'. Pleasure Principle and Reality Principle were linked 'comme l'eau et le feu des alchimistes'. José Pierre, finally, read Marcuse in relation to Marcel Mauss, Caillois and Bataille's *Érotisme*, a work seen to draw from the Kinsey Report proof that time taken up by work was stealing time from sex. He argued that the repressive order had to be opposed by the transgressive celebrations described in Caillois's *L'Homme et le sacré* (1939), liberating the archaic drives thwarted by work and consumerism. Freudian sublimation, which postponed pleasure in the name of civilisation, was to be jettisoned in favour of Breton's instruction to 'repassionner la vie'. This was precisely the undertaking of the young who were gratuitously looting the iconic spaces of consumerism, confronting established authority with violence, overturning sexual rules. The drives thus liberated appear forcefully in the surrealist work of Toyen and Štyrský :

Leur œuvre se situe donc sans la moindre équivoque dans cette volonté, qu'est avant tout le surréalisme, d'imposer à la réalité contraignante les lois du 'principe de plaisir'.

José Pierre rejected the acceptance of the performance principle displayed in Warhol's soup cans and Restany's New Realism, but treated as exceptions a few dissidents (Niki de Saint-Phalle, Jim Dine, Tinguely) who were seeking to 'jeter du sable dans les rouages de la machine à exploiter le travail humain'. The end of the conflict between 'temps de travail' and 'temps du sacré' allowed them to dream of the 'véritable société communiste de demain' !

A 'Journal parlé surréaliste' was broadcast to accompany the end of the exhibition on 2 May 1968; it included both 'une minute de cris contre le principe de rendement', and a sequence entitled 'Lisez, Ne lisez pas'. First among the 23 authors 'to read': Teige, Freud and Marcuse.⁵⁷

The exhibition in Czechoslovakia was followed by two articles in *Archibras* (no.5) : 'On n'arrête pas le printemps'⁵⁸ and 'La Plate-Forme de Prague'⁵⁹. The first, by Czech Surrealists exiled after the repression, harked back to the broken dream of what Marcuse called 'non-repressive tolerance', glimpsed during the thaw. 'La Plate-Forme de Prague', signed by 28 French Surrealists, reiterated the new specific demands of Surrealism in a period of the Marcusean 'performance principle', with the aim of renewing a stagnant communism. Revolution was no longer to come from the latter, but from the student minorities of dream and love who had risen against the mercantile forms of a de-sublimation seeking to 'dévier le principe de

⁵⁷ List reproduced in 'Le Principe de Plaisir, exposition surréaliste en Tchécoslovaquie, 1968', art. cit., p. 273.

⁵⁸ 12 Sept. 1968, reprinted in 1968, *année surréaliste*, op. cit., pp. 157-61.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 147-155.

plaisir vers un hédonisme sans mystère et sans danger'. 'Poetic thinking' became 'practical thinking' when, 'formulant l'imaginaire', its objective was to 'transformer en réel'. Breton and Marcuse thus met on the issues of the rejection of both art for art's sake and committed art, recourse to the 'zones les plus obscures de la réalité psychique', and the 'immanent' autonomy of art.

In *L'Archibras* no. 6 (31 August 1968) Philippe Audoin's article 'Singes de nature'⁶⁰ set up a dialogue between Rousseau, Marcuse and the situationist Raoul Vaneigem in order to examine our relations with Nature. A text by Marcuse on the happiness involved in a forest walk, when cut short by a motorway, bemoaned the contiguity of nature with the artificial world of industrialisation, symbol of a faked Real, now become a screen. In the 'Entretiens sur le Surréalisme' (Cerisy, July 68), chaired by Ferdinand Alquié, Jean Schuster called on the revolutionary and perverse sexuality of Sade in the light of *Eros and Civilization*,⁶¹ while Philippe Audoin referred to Freud, as reread by Marcuse, when calling for a Surrealism of both the 'satisfaction illimitée du désir' and rebellion, and of revolt against 'sur-répression'.⁶²

MARCUSE AFTER '68 : CENTRALITY OF SURREALISM AND DISAGREEMENTS

Post-1968, Surrealism's central position is confirmed in Marcuse's last texts. *An Essay on Liberation* (1969) is very positive about the events of May, seen as having allowed 'le passage de Marx à Fourier et le passage du réalisme au surréalisme'. Marx and Breton come together :

Les graffiti de la 'jeunesse en colère' joignaient Karl Marx et André Breton ; le slogan 'L'imagination au pouvoir' répondait à 'Les comités partout' ; la nouvelle sensibilité est devenue une force politique, elle dépasse les frontières entre les blocs socialiste et capitaliste.

Marcuse noted that the 'hasard objectif' in *Nadja* was a perfect match for his own theory on imagination. The new non-instrumental language of *Le Déshonneur des poètes* was the current key question. A few years later, in *Counter-Revolution and Revolt* Marcuse reiterated his trust in Surrealism :

La réalisation du rêve par la révolution doit être possible – le programme surréaliste doit avoir gardé sa valeur.

However, some of the philosopher's positions on bourgeois culture and the avant-gardes were to have a negative impact on his surrealist ideal and distance him from certain French and American friends. Although he was an iconic figure in the student struggle, Marcuse, somewhat paradoxically, did not share the condemnation of so-called bourgeois works. He had never relinquished his notion of the importance of

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 219-23.

⁶¹ 'Le Surréalisme et la liberté', *Archives 57/68, Batailles pour le surréalisme*, Éric Losfeld, Le Terrain vague, 1969, p. 94.

⁶² *Entretiens sur le Surréalisme*, <https://books.google.fr/books?isbn=3111410153>, p. 476 et sq. 548.

Form, as seen in 1945, capable of transcending through beauty the horrors of the world, in a spirit close to Kant or Hegel. True revolution is to be found in Greek tragedy, in a Renaissance crucifixion, in Beethoven's quartets or Cézanne's paintings. Here again Marcuse is close to Breton who, in *Position politique du surréalisme*, saw Courbet's political sensibility 'dans la lumière qu'il faisait descendre sur l'horizon ou sur un ventre de chevreuil'. For Marcuse, Beauty was not outdated, just as love was not reactionary. Countless bourgeois works dealt with 'la qualité de Beauté sous sa forme peut-être la plus sublimée : l'Éros politique'. Hamlet, Phaedra, Madame Bovary, Julien Sorel, Don Juan, were rebels, lovers and dissidents, victims of the crushing order that aesthetic form both embodied and denied. The cultural revolution had to take these works into account for, while marked by class, they also transcended it. The revolution had also to stop treating the 'masses' as always right since they were no longer revolutionary⁶³ : that mission was now in the hands of new forces of resistance, the populations of Black ghettos, people of the Third World left without hope, or the young middle-class intelligentsia⁶⁴.

For similar reasons Marcuse had reservations about the avant-gardes, despite their praiseworthy efforts to renew ways of seeing or their challenge to reality. It was illusory to believe that the dismantling of aesthetic forms was always associated with revolutionary forces. In this respect Marcuse was far removed from the theory of the avant-garde promoted by Peter Bürger at the time⁶⁵. As for Artaud, Marcuse rejected his programme for the 'abolition of art', trance and Cruelty, too close to the real violence of the 20th century. Counter-cultural movements like the Beat Generation, Living Theatre, happenings, hippie culture and 'Black sub-culture' were all accused of 'mystifying desublimation', because they failed to cut themselves off adequately from the System that they opposed.⁶⁶ Rock concerts were a 'totalitarian' art for the masses, no less despicable than Debord's 'société du spectacle'. Warhol's soup can and action painting belonged merely to a form of mimesis without transformation. Sexual liberation was producing a pornographic and consumerist Eros that was incapable of challenging the Romantic love poem, by its very nature revolutionary.⁶⁷

⁶³ *The Aesthetic Dimension*.

⁶⁴ Cf. in particular chapters III and IV of *An Essay on Liberation*.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974). Peter Bürger, in the context of a radical Marxist challenge to the autonomy of art, saw in the hybrid works and collages of the Dadaists, Constructivists or Surrealists a reflection of the repressed bourgeois unconscious. These works constituted the highest form of subversion, in the wake of Bloch, Benjamin or Adorno.

⁶⁶ Marcuse seemed forgetful of the strong links between Surrealism and American counter-culture, the Beat Generation in particular. See the detailed analyses by Jérôme Duwa, 'Vol au-dessus d'un nid d'ignus', art. cit., p. 41-46 ; or his comments on Ted Joans and Surrealism, p. 39.

⁶⁷ See Marcuse's masterful analyses of Brecht's 'Lovers' in *Counter-Revolution and Revolt*.

Marcuse's aesthetic idealism was often criticised, even as early as 1937 : his 'Affirmative Character of Culture' had provoked a reaction from both Adorno and Walter Benjamin⁶⁸, because Marcuse, while wishing to distance himself from the idealism of Kant and Hegel, incorporated signs of his adherence to bourgeois culture ... the very year that Goebbels was to attack 'degenerate art' ! Additionally, when compared to the innovative essay by Walter Benjamin published the same year, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', Marcuse's ideas might well seem a little retrograde.

This unrepentant idealism was to lead Marcuse to attack Surrealism itself in a 1973 article for the *Bulletin de Liaison Surréaliste* (no. 6) 'Sur le surréalisme et la révolution'⁶⁹, written at the request of Franklin Rosemont who wanted him to clarify certain aspects of his theories on aesthetics. Arguing in favour of an 'irreducible contradiction between art and politics', Marcuse maintained that Surrealism had failed in seeking to side with a working class that no longer satisfied the sine qua non requirement of a revolutionary vocation : to uphold the 'propriétés transcendantes de l'art'. The industrial working class had become 'petite bourgeoisie', 'immanente au système', and the Surrealists' interest in the masses had led them into giving up art's radical demands. *Nadja*, *L'Amour fou*, *Arcane 17* or the œuvre of Julien Gracq were now established works, while the claim of 'l'imagination au pouvoir' had lost its vigour during the political compromises of '68. In stressing the two inalienable conditions for art, 'transformation and sublimation', Marcuse deemed exaggerated the Surrealists' valorisation of dream, the unconscious, automatic writing and spontaneity. Being now little more than the expression of a narcissistic subjectivity, these were no longer subject to a transcendent and universal form of rationality, hence colluded with corrupt forms of counterculture. The defence of Desire was a 'mystification' that was incompatible with dialectic materialism, as was the notion of 'poetry made by all'. Rock music and street theatre were art forms that had their origins in the 'people', but were not 'subjects' – in the Marxist sense – of a society rebuilt by an art that liberates. In the same vein, Marcuse distanced himself from the antibourgeois 'scandal' valorised by Walter Benjamin, the imagined revolutionary character thereof having faded with fascism and genocide. Marcuse was well aware of the elitist nature of his position, but continued to argue that it was the only progressive position...to save art after Auschwitz or Vietnam, in a 'historical situation where destruction of the aesthetic [was] too linked to the violence and destruction that [characterised] established society'.

⁶⁸ Article published in *Culture et Société*, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1970, p. 103-148. For critical views on this article see Marc Jimenez, 'Herbert Marcuse. Éros et culture', *Qu'est-ce que l'esthétique*, Folio/Gallimard, 1997, p. 370; and the letter from Adorno to Horkheimer dated 12 May 1937, reproduced in part in Gérard Raulet, op. cit., note 1, p. 227-228.

⁶⁹ *Bulletin de liaison surréaliste* n°6, p. 21-29.

In issue no.7 of the *Bulletin de liaison surréaliste* a 'Libre échange avec Herbert Marcuse' published the reactions of Jacques Abeille, Vincent Bounoure and Robert Guyon⁷⁰. Jacques Abeille rebuked Marcuse for judging Surrealism solely on the political compromises of May '68 and for enclosing it 'tout entier dans l'art'. As though art and revolution were watertight compartments ! True art, argued Jacques Abeille, had always been surrealist, whereas art-as-simulacrum and academic art had been dead since the day the first Surrealists declared they were, something that Marcuse seemed to forget... Surrealist games and automatic writing were subversive practices which were still destabilising art from the inside and holding out against external pressure. A non-representational art did indeed exist : Rimbaud's cry, the break caused by Artaud or Bataille, *Nadja's* 'droit au délire', all of which confirmed that Surrealism was a new 'anthropologie de l'incertitude' in occult communication with 'un âge pré-politique', pre-rationalist and mythical. Surrealism was not art in the restricted sense but a mode of being and thinking, central to '68. He exhorted Marcuse to break out of the 'clôture politique', out of the classical tradition and the notion of a reactionary art. Surrealist art was anchored in a new civilisation and its 'cultures du jeu' would subvert the alienating law of labour. Surrealism could not be limited to May '68 ; it had a long history rich in both texts and practices that Marcuse seemed to be unaware of. Surrealism was an authentic 'minorité agissante', as was the Internationale Situationniste, a workshop for the 'élaboration des désirs' : that was what made it political and appealed to the people, because it was anything but transcendental.

In opposing Marcuse Bounoure proposed an extended concept of the work of art, including the new ways of 'being in the world' of *Nadja*, the *Vases communicants* or *Amour fou*. Henceforth everything could be art ! The tension between content and form had gone, but anti-art still existed. The criteria that grounded philosophical authority no longer had any value. Universality was just a 'historico-sociological' category that failed to account for the absolute legitimacy of the creative self that Breton had launched : 'Nos classiques ne sont pas ceux de la bourgeoisie'. Like Marcuse, Bounoure both rejected proletarian literature and acknowledged the intrinsically revolutionary dimension of art. But in the light of the 'écart absolu', surrealist art was not obliged to be 'en rapport avec la conscience révolutionnaire'. Finally, in direct opposition to Marcuse, Bounoure argued in favour of counter-cultural artistic forms.

Robert Guyon, for his part, attacked the *a priori* and muddle of Marcuse's ideas on an art whose multiple contemporary forms (Duchamp, Klein, happenings) made definition as difficult as trying to define revolution (and which revolution ?). He criticised the philosopher for underestimating what was involved in automatism, which was not to be reduced to a simple question of spontaneity but was undertaken in the

⁷⁰ French poet, essayist and painter. After meeting Breton in 1964, he wrote for *La Brèche* and *L'Archibras*. Founded the group *L'Ékart* in Lyon in 1966.

spirit of the 'Bureau de recherches surréalistes'. Surrealism went further than Marcuse's rationalisation of art ; it was 'energy'. Poetry made by all allowed 'une contagion de désirs' which would eventually overturn repressive rationality. The issue was wider than the fracturing of the working class and the dialectic of bourgeois–antibourgeois art. Surrealism dealt with 'la vie et la mort, l'éphémère et l'éternel...'. It was a cultural revolution transforming individuals into seers or 'voyants', thanks to the subversive force that art had always contained. Artistic heterogeneity was the hallmark of artists whose quest for the Grail, radically individual, linked them to earlier creations, far from political directives.

Sixteen years later Rosemont's article 'Marcuse and Surrealism' put a retrospective gloss on these disagreements despite the underlying complicity between the Chicago Surrealists and Marcuse on the major issues which, he noted, had led the philosopher to Surrealism in his earliest texts and, in particular, his thesis of 1932, the critique of the *Manuscripts* in 1944 and his 1960 preface to *Reason and Revolution*. Marcuse had an expansive view of Surrealism, seeing it as a – politically committed – global vision of existence, and not merely as a movement. But Rosemont took issue with his concept of the aesthetic as developed in his letters of the 1970s, which took up the ideas expressed in the *Bulletin de Liaison Surréaliste* (no.6). The American Surrealists also diverged on the challenge to Marxism, which Marcuse at that point deemed obsolescent : in the philosopher's later texts, Rosemont wrote, Surrealism functioned as a critical vector for Marxist ideas on art. Young American Surrealists, meanwhile, were linking up with the labour movement, dissident popular culture and counter-cultures (marijuana, Black power). Rosemont was well aware that while Marcuse and the Surrealists sought to work on Surrealism and Marxism they had followed opposite paths : Marcuse's reflections on Surrealism, now part of their heritage, harked back to peripheral debates born within the German Communist Party and the Frankfurt School, rather than from in-depth knowledge of the movement. For their part, as recent converts to Marxism, they had read Surrealism as the necessary extension of the permanent revolution, but were largely unaware of the underpinnings of German philosophy, intoxicated as they were by the culture of the '70s, including Bugs Bunny... Rosemont was clearly caught up in a mix of admiration, rivalry and the influence his more contemporary Surrealism might have had on Marcuse.

CONCLUSION : DIALECTICS TO THE END

One has to be grateful to Marcuse for his rich syntheses and for the complex rigour of his theory of aesthetics, which has been condemned as reactionary, wrongfully caricatured, as we see in a review article

by Douglas Kellner⁷¹ of some important recent essays on this aspect of his work : as though, towards the end of his life, Marcuse had detached art from its revolutionary base, falling victim to a 'withdrawal' and a 'collapse' into unreconciled dualism⁷² ! But what is remarkable, on the contrary, was his unfaltering drive to apply dialectical method to all his sources (in Kant, Hegel, Freudo-Marxism) in the name of a revolutionary art theory, despite the wavering in his last essays, analysed by Frédéric Vandenberghe, regarding bourgeois art and anti-art, Adorno's 'affirmative' art and 'negative' art (to whom *The Aesthetic Dimension* owed so much)⁷³. In *An Essay on Liberation and Counter-Revolution and Revolt*, Marcuse, who remained faithful to the young Marx, analysed the aesthetic as a productive and political force destined to shape reality. But little by little, and quite openly in *The Aesthetic Dimension* (his final statement), he developed the idea of a distance vis-à-vis Marxism. That last work even includes an 'element of despair', acknowledged by the author, in a society where the gap between art and reality, aesthetics and political practice had widened. His analysis finally led Marcuse to assimilate neo-totalitarianism and the counterculture that he had appreciated earlier (blues, jazz or rock), along with the attacks against bourgeois culture. As G. Raulet has demonstrated, Marcuse had come back, step by step, to the idea of the transcendence of art and artistic form as the supreme achievement, on the strength of transhistorical artistic criteria set out as early as 1969 :

[C'est] en vertu de la Forme [comme Contenu] que l'art transcende la Réalité donnée, et travaille, à l'intérieur de la réalité établie, contre la réalité établie⁷⁴.

Form, as a basis for beauty, justice and harmony, in keeping with the Hegelian tradition, was perhaps never more than a beautiful illusion, but in distancing itself (in a Brechtian sense) from 'an alienated Real', it generated an art that called society into question and opened onto possibilities 'more [real] than reality itself'⁷⁵. If art was unable to reconcile the irredeemably divided, at least it preserved, through imagination, the memory of a lost happiness and the promise of future happiness.

La force sensuelle de la beauté maintient la promesse vivante – mémoire du bonheur qui fut jadis, et qui aspire à y retourner.

The most seductive thing about Marcuse is, no doubt, this sensitive approach, the unflinching obsession with happiness, in harmony with the first generation of Surrealists, the lyrical and combative theory of an imagination in unison with the May '68 revolution. A magnificent line on Mallarmé in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, leaves us the essence of both Marcuse's Freudo-Marxist thinking and his conception of

⁷¹ Marcuse, 'Art and liberation', *Collected Papers*, vol.4, *op. cit.*, p. 8-10.

⁷² Cf. Raulet, *op. cit.*, p. 225-226.

⁷³ Marcuse's 'Acknowledgements' in this text and on his 'debt to Theodor W. Adorno's aesthetic theory' , p. 8.

⁷⁴ *Essay on Liberation*.

⁷⁵ *The Aesthetic Dimension*.

surrealist art, seen as generating 'des modes de perception, d'imagination, des gestes, une fête sensuelle qui réduit en miettes l'expérience quotidienne et annonce un principe de réalité différent'.