

The doe between two leaps likes to look at me. I keep her company in the clearing. I fall slowly from the heights, I still weigh only the weight you lose at thirty thousand feet. The extinguished chandelier that lights me bares its teeth when I caress the breasts I didn't choose. Great dead branches pierce them. The valves that open and close in a heart which is not mine and which is my heart are everything useless that will be sung in two-four time: I cry, no one hears me, I dream.

This desert is false. The shadows I dig enable the colours to appear like so many useless secrets.

I shall, they say, see. I shall, they see, hear. Silence as far as the eye can see is the keyboard that begins with those twenty fingers that are not. My mother is a spinning top whose whip is my father.

For seducing the weather I have shivers for adornment, and the return of my body back into itself. Ah, to take a bath, a bath of the Romans, a sand bath, an ass's milk sand bath. *To live* as one must know how to knot one's veins in a bath! To travel on the back of a jellyfish, on the surface of the water, then to sink into the depths to get the appetite of blind fish, of blind fish that have the appetite of the birds that howl at life. Has anyone ever seen birds sing around four in the afternoon in April? Those birds are mad. It is I. Has anyone ever before seen the sun cover the night with its dead weight, as the fire covers the ashes? For suns I have flame becoming smoke, the wild moan of a hunted animal, and the first waterdrop of a shower.

Be careful! They are expecting me. Day and night are going to be at the station. I shall never recognise them if I burden myself with the suitcases of justice.

### **Introduction to the Possessions**

The authors are particularly anxious that these essays, intended for the specialist as well as for the lay reader, should be considered as constituting an absolutely sincere enterprise on their part; to suppose them in any way indebted to clinical texts, were it only to the extent of representing a more or less skilful pastiche of such texts, would be to presume them devoid of both necessity and efficacy.

Far from being tempted by the charms of the picturesque into reproducing naively the phraseology that is considered, rightly or wrongly, as the least expressive of the objects to which it is applied; not content with pointing out the authentic curiosity of such a phraseology; the authors, on the contrary, hope to show that, given a state of *poetic* tension, the normal mind is capable of furnishing verbal material of the most profoundly para-

doxical and eccentric nature, and it is possible for such a mind to harbour the main ideas of delirium without being permanently affected thereby or in any way jeopardised in its *faculty* of equilibrium.

What is more, no prejudice can be attached to the plausibility of mental states thus organised, our essential consideration being to suggest that with sufficient training they could be made perfectly plausible. This means the end, then, of the arrogant categories in which one is pleased to confine people seriously concerned with human reasoning, with that very reasoning that denies us daily the right to express ourselves in the way required of us by means which are instinctive. If my voice can lend itself successively to the speech of the most disparate beings, to the speech of the richest and poorest, the blind and the hallucinator, the coward and the aggressor, how then can I possibly admit that this voice, finally mine and mine alone, originates in regions that have, if only for a time, been outlawed – regions to which I, in common with the majority of mankind, cannot hope ever to accede?

Furthermore, we are only too willing that these pages, elaborated under the direction of certain confusional intentions, should be compared with the other pages of this volume and the pages of other books described as surrealist. The concept of simulation holding good in psychiatry only in the event of war, being replaced at other times by that of ‘supersimulation’, we are impatient to know to what morbid basis our structure shall be ascribed by those competent to form a judgment in this matter.

Finally, we declare that we have derived a very special pleasure from this new exercise of our thought. It has enabled us to take cognisance, in ourselves, of hitherto unsuspected resources. And without desiring to invalidate in any way the promise it contains of future achievements in the most absolute liberty of action, we propose it, at least in the domain of modern poetics, as a very notable criterion. We would even go so far as to advocate its generalisation and declare that, in our opinion, the ‘essays of simulation’ of maladies virtual in each one of us could replace most advantageously the ballad, the sonnet, the epic, the poem without head or tail, and other decrepit modes.

### **Simulation of Mental Debility**

I, alone of men, at the age of twenty-four, realised that he who would rise to an honourable position need not be more keenly alive to his worth than I was then to mine. I held, many years ago, that virtue is not valued at its due, but that my father was right when he desired that I should work my way out of the rut of my colleagues. Why foreign personages passing through France should receive the cross of the Legion of Honour is more than

I can understand. It seems to me that this decoration should be reserved for gallant officers and mining engineers on graduation from the Polytechnical School. The Grand Master of the Order of Chivalry must indeed be deficient in common sense to discern merit where merit there is none. Of all distinctions of rank, officer is the most gratifying. Yet one cannot get on without one's diploma. My father gave his five children, both boys and girls, the best instruction and a good education. And it was not in order that they should be satisfied with a nonsalaried position in a public department that does not pay its employees. Here is the proof of what I say: When, as was the case with my elder brother, who entered for newspaper competitions on more than one occasion, one is capable of carrying off the palm in the teeth of bachelors in Arts and Science, then it is a case of a chip off the old block and no error. But sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, says the proverb.

In the inner pocket of my coat I have the drawings of a submarine that I am anxious to lay at the disposal of the National Defence. The commandant's cabin is marked in red and the torpedo-guns are the latest hydraulic model, with artesian control. The energy of champion cyclists is not greater than mine. I have no hesitation in saying that this invention cannot but prove a success. All men are partisans of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity and, let me add, mutual Solidarity. But that is no reason for not defending ourselves against those who attack us by sea.

I have written a *secret* letter on ministerial paper to the President of the Republic, requesting the favour of an interview. The Mediterranean Squadron is at present cruising off Constantinople, but the admirals leave too freely. However humbly a soldier may kneel before his superior officer, order is order. In the interests of discipline the leader must be just but firm. Stripes are not distributed promiscuously and Marshal Foch was Marshal Foch on his conspicuous merits. It was wrong of free thought not to devote itself to the service of France.

I am also anxious that another name should be found for the Marine Infantry. I have approached the League of the Rights of Man in this connection. Such a title is unworthy of their blue collar. What is more, it is up to themselves to get themselves respected. The pride of the Greece of Sparta was made of sterner stuff. Anyhow, man believes in God and the hardest nuts have been known to ask for extreme unction, and that is something to be going on with.

### **Simulation of General Paralysis**

Thou my great one whom I adore beautiful as the whole earth and in the most beautiful stars of the earth that I adore thou my great woman

adored by all the powers of the stars beautiful with the beauty of the thousands of millions of queens who adorn the earth the adoration that I have for thy beauty brings me to my knees to beg thee to think of me I am brought to my knees I adore thy beauty think of me thou my adorable beauty my great beauty whom I adore I roll the diamonds in the moss loftier than the forest whose most lofty hair of thine think of me – forget me not my little woman when possible at inglenook on the sand of emerald – look at thyself in my hand that keeps me steadfast on the whole world so that thou mayest recognise me for what I am my dark-fair woman my beautiful one my foolish one think of me in paradises my head in my hands.

They were not enough for me the hundred and twenty castles where we were going to love one another tomorrow they shall build me a hundred thousand more I have hunted forests of baobabs from thine eyes peacocks panthers and lyre-birds I will shut them up in my strongholds and we will go and walk together in the forests of Asia Europe Africa America that surround our castles in the admirable forests of thine eyes that are used to my splendour.

Thou hast not to wait for the surprise that I want to give thee for thine anniversary that falls today the same day as mine – I give it to thee at once since I have waited fifteen times for the year one thousand before giving thee the surprise of asking thee to think of me in hide-and-seek – I want thee laughing to think of me my young eternal woman. Before falling to sleep I have counted clouds and clouds of chariots full of beets for the sun and I want to bring thee to the astrakhan shore that is being built on two horizons for thine eyes of gasoline to wage war I will lead thee by paths of diamonds paved with primroses with emeralds and the cloak of ermine that I want to cover thee with is a bird of prey the diamonds that thy feet shall tread I got them cut in the shape of a butterfly.

Think of me whose only thought is the glory wherein the dazzling wealth of an earth and all the skies that I have conquered for thee slumber I adore thee and I adore thine eyes and I have opened thine eyes open to all those whom they have seen and I will give to all the beings whom thine eyes have seen raiment of gold and crystal raiment that they must cast away when thine eyes have tarnished them with their disdain. I bleed in my heart at the very initials of thy name that are all the letters beginning with *z* in the infinity of alphabets and civilisations where I will love thee still since thou art willing to be my woman and to think of me in the countries where there is no mean.

My heart bleeds on thy mouth and closes on thy mouth on all the red chestnut-trees of the avenue of thy mouth where we are on our way through the shining dust to lie us down amidst the meteors of thy beauty that I adore my great one who art so beautiful that I am happy to adorn my

treasures with thy presence with thy thought and with thy name that multiplies the facets of the ecstasy of my treasures with thy name that I adore because it wakes an echo in all the mirrors of beauty of my splendour my original woman my scaffolding of rosewood thou art the fault of my fault of my very great fault as Jesus Christ is the woman of my cross – twelve times twelve thousand one hundred and forty-nine times I have loved thee with passion on the way and I am crucified to north east west and north for thy kiss of radium and I want thee and in my mirror of pearls thou art the breath of him who shall not rise again to the surface and who loves thee in adoration my woman lying upright when thou art seated combing thyself.

Thou art coming thou thinkest of me thou art coming on thy thirteen full legs and on all thine empty legs that beat the air with the swaying of thine arms a multitude of arms that want to clasp me kneeling between thy legs and thine arms to clasp me without fear lest my locomotives should prevent thee from coming to me and I am thou and I am before thee to stop thee to give thee all the stars of the sky in one kiss on thine eyes all the kisses of the world in one star on thy mouth.

Thine in flames.

PS. – I would like a Street Directory for mass a Street Directory with a knotted cord to mark the place. Bring also a Franco-German flag that I may plant it in No Man's Land. And a pound of that chocolate with the little girl who sticks the placards (I forget). And then again nine of those little girls with their lawyers and their judges and come in the special train with the speed of light and the outlaws of the Far West to distract me for a moment who am popping here unfortunately like champagne corks. The left strap of my braces has just broken I was lifting the world as though it were a feather. Canst thou do something for me buy a tank I want to see thee coming like fairies.

### **Simulation of Delirium of Interpretation**

When that love was over, I felt as homeless *as the bird on the branch*. I was no longer fit for anything. Nevertheless I observed that the patches of oil on the water reflected my image and I noticed that the *Pont-au-Change*, near the bird market, was becoming more and more arclike in form.

And that is how, one fine day, I crossed over forever to the other side of the rainbow through looking at the iridescent birds. Now there is nothing for me to do on earth. No more than other birds do I say that I no longer have to commit myself to earth, *to put in a winged appearance on earth*. I

refuse to repeat with you the slang song: 'We die for the little birds, come and feast your little birds.'<sup>1</sup>

The shower's dazzling colours speak parrot language. They hatch the wind that emerges from its shell with seeds in its eyes. The sun's double eyelid rises and falls on life. The birds' feet on the windowpane of the sky are what I used to call the stars. The earth itself, whose motion seems so inexplicable as long as one remains beneath the vault, the earth with its *webfeet* of deserts is itself obedient to the laws of migration.

Feather summer is not yet over. The trapdoors have been opened, and the harvest of down is being thrust inside. The weather is *moulting*.

The cock on the steeple ornaments the smoke from the guns while the orange-breasted widow hies herself to the cemetery whose crosses are tiny flashes of diamonds of the Southern Cross, and man continues to *imagine himself* on earth like the blackbird on the buffalo's back, on the sea like the gull on the crest of the waves: the solid blackbird and the liquid seagull.

Horus, finger at lips, is the avalanche. I hadn't before seen those birdcatchers who hunt for men in the sky and drive themselves from their nests with the stones they toss in the air.

The phoenixes come, bringing me my ration of glowworms, and their wings which they constantly dip in the gold of the earth are the sea and the sky which glow only on stormy days and which hide their lightning-tufted heads in their feathers when they fall asleep on the air's one foot.

The lightning mills have broken out of their shells and are flying swiftly away. The sand consumes the dunes. The horizon tries to avoid the clouds.

You must admit that your *bed-cages*, and your twisted bars, and your gnawed floors, and your nutmegs, and your latest-style scarecrows, and your train trips in a pigeonhole compartment, and your *hedgerow races* in the twilight of robins flying away, and the hours and the minutes and the seconds in your woodpecker heads, and your glorious conquests – what about them, your glorious conquests of cuckoos! All those traps of grace were never there for any other purpose than to get me past the barriers of danger, the barriers that separate fear from courage. Don't count anymore on me to help you forget that your phantoms wear the bustles of birds of paradise.

In the beginning was the song. Everybody to the windows! From one side to the other you can see nothing but Leda. My whirling wings are the doors through which she enters the swan's neck, on the enormous deserted square which is the heart of the bird of night.

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1. This passage contains a number of untranslatable plays on words. The reference here is to a Paris street cry, 'Du mouron pour les petits oiseaux' ('Chickweed for the little birds'), which is here transformed to 'Nous mourons pour les petits oiseaux' ('We die for the little birds'). – Translator.

## Surrealism and the Treatment of Mental Illness

*This remarkable polemic is one of the earliest denunciations of the use of psychiatry as an aid in enforcing bourgeois standards of conformity, by which a branch of medicine is made into an arm of the police. First published in Le Surréalisme ASDLR, No.2 (October 1930), it was reprinted in Point du jour.*



‘. . . But I shall protest, but I shall call down infamy on the witness for the prosecution, I shall cover him with shame! Can one imagine a witness for the prosecution? . . . How horrible! Only among humanity are there such examples of monstrosity! Can there be a more refined, a more civilised barbarism than giving evidence for the prosecution? . . .

‘In Paris there are two caves, one of robbers and the other of murderers; the robbers’ cave is the stock exchange, the murderers’ cave is the courts of justice.’

- PETRUS BOREL

To my knowledge ten newspapers, *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, *L’Oeuvre*, *Paris-Midi*, *Le Soir*, *Le Canard Enchaîné*, *Le Progrès Médical*, the *Vossische Zeitung*, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, *La Gazette de Bruxelles* and *Le Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme*, have reported the controversy started by the Medico-Psychological Society concerning the passage from my book *Nadja*: ‘I know that if I were mad, after several days of confinement I should take advantage of any lapses in my madness to murder anyone, preferably a doctor, who came near me. At least this would permit me, like the violent, to be confined in a private room. Perhaps they’d leave me alone.’

Most of these newspapers wished to make fun of the incident, and they were content to comment upon M. Pierre Janet’s ridiculous statement, ‘The surrealists’ writings are chiefly the confessions of obsessed persons and doubters’, and to serve up again the jokes which are indeed suitable each time the alienist claims to find fault with the lunatic, the colonist with the colonised, and the detective with him whom by chance or otherwise he arrests. But nobody has appeared to do justice to Dr de Clérambault’s amazing pretension. Not content with invoking the surrealists, a set of people who, according to him, bother only about ‘saving themselves the trouble of thinking’ (*sic*), this doctor has not hesitated to contend that the alienist should be protected against the risk of being made to retire prematurely . . . if he so little as kills an escaped or freed patient by whom he considers he is threatened. In such a case, some solid pecuniary compensation should, it

seems, be made.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that psychiatrists, being accustomed to treat lunatics like dogs, are surprised to find that they are not allowed, even when not on duty, to shoot them down.

One can easily conceive, following his assertions, how M. de Clérambault has not found any better way of giving scope to his brilliant faculties than within the framework of prisons, and it becomes obvious why he bears the title of physician-in-chief to the special infirmary of the receiving prison close to the *préfecture* of police. It would be strange if a conscience of this mettle, a mind of this quality, had not found the means of placing himself entirely at the disposal of the bourgeois police and bourgeois justice. May I say, however, that in the eyes of some people such a post is sufficiently compromising for it to be impossible, without insulting science, to consider as *scientists* men who, in the same way as the scandalous M. Amy, of the Alma-zian affair, function above all as instruments of social repression? Indeed, I maintain that a man must have lost all sense of human dignity (indignity) to dare to appear in court in the role of *expert*. Who does not remember the edifying controversy which took place between expert alienists during the trial of the criminal mother-in-law, Mme. Lefèvre, at Lille? During the war, I was able to see what account the military courts took of the medico-legal reports – I mean, what account the alienist experts put up with seeing taken of their reports, since they continued to give their opinions even when the severest sentences sometimes reprimanded their rare applications for acquittal, applications based on their recognition of the ‘total’ irresponsibility of the accused.

How can one believe that civil law is any more enlightened and the experts morally in any better position? Witness: (1) that article 64 of the French penal code allows the accused to be regarded as innocent only in the event it is shown that he ‘was demented at the time of his act, or that he was compelled to perform this act by a force he was unable to resist’ (a wording philosophically incomprehensible); (2) that scientific ‘objectivity’, which is described as ancillary to the law’s illusory ‘impartiality’, is (in the realm with which we are dealing) in itself merely utopian; (3) that since society does not really seek to strike at the guilty, but at the antisocial person, what has to be done above all is to satisfy public opinion, a foul beast incapable of seeing that a breach of the law should not be punished because he who committed it was ill only during this breach, so that confinement on medical grounds, which may be admissible if absolutely necessary as a punishment, is no longer defensible.<sup>2</sup>

1. Cf. *Annales médico-psychologiques* (November 1929).

2. Hence the totally unjustified, the Jesuitical, the sickening notion of ‘diminished responsibility’.



So I maintain that the doctor who in such circumstances consents to give his opinion in court must, unless he appears regularly to assert the complete irresponsibility of accused persons, be either a cretin or miserable scum – i.e. the same thing.

On the other hand, considering from a purely psychological point of view the recent evolution in the treatment of mental illnesses, it is evident that the main development has been the increasingly abusive condemnation of what, following Bleuler, has been called *autism* (egocentrism), a condemnation most convenient for the bourgeoisie, since it enables one to regard as pathological everything in man which is not his pure and simple adaptation to the external conditions of life, since its purpose is to secretly exhaust all cases of disobedience, insubordination, or desertion, which have or have not so far appeared worthy of respect (poetry, art, passionate love, revolutionary action, etc.). Accordingly, for M. Janet, and no doubt for M. Claude too, it is today the surrealists who must be autists. And just yesterday, another autist: that young professor of physics who was examined at the Val-de-Grâce (the military hospital in Paris) because, having been posted to the *n*th Aviation Regiment, he 'had very soon manifested his lack of interest in the army and had told his fellow soldiers that he looked on war as horrible, since in his eyes it was but organised murder'. (The case, according to Professor Fribourg-Blanc, who gives the results of his study of it in the *Annales de médecine légale* for February 1930, presented 'marked schizoid tendencies'. As to that, please note that the case was found to display 'a desire to be alone, interiorisation, a disinclination for all practical activities, a morbid individualism, and idealist conceptions of universal brotherhood'.) And, on these gentlemen's vile testimony, autists tomorrow – i.e. liable to be turned aside at any moment from the road their conscience alone has led them to take; i.e. liable to be *confiscated at will* – will be all who insist on not adopting the watchwords behind which society lurks trying to force everybody, without exception, to participate in its misdeeds.

We consider it our honour to be the first to call attention to this danger and to take a stand against the unbearable, increasing abuse of power by people whom we are inclined to look upon as being not so much doctors as jailers and indeed as purveyors of penal settlements and scaffolds. *Because* they are doctors, we hold them to be less excusable than others when they proceed indirectly with their low executioner's business. Surrealists or 'processists' though we may be in their eyes, we cannot urge them too strongly, even if some of them are doomed to be struck down accidentally by the blows of those whom they seek arbitrarily to control, to have the decency to shut up.

thing that is not freedom, rebels of every sort, prisoners of common law), let them never forget that the idea of revolution is the best and most effective safeguard of the individual.

## The Fiftieth Anniversary of Hysteria

*This editorial, published in La Révolution Surréaliste, No.11 (1928), shows how little the surrealists' conception of 'expression' relies on traditional aesthetic categories.*



We surrealists insist on celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of hysteria, the greatest poetic discovery of the latter nineteenth century, and on celebrating it at the very moment when the dismembering of the concept of hysteria seems complete. Preferring above all the hysterical young, the perfect type of whom is furnished in the study of the delightful X.L. (Augustine), who entered the Salpêtrière Hospital (in Dr Charcot's wards) on 21 October 1875, aged fifteen and a half years, how could we be affected by the laborious refutation of organic disturbances, the indictment of which will never be, except in the eyes of doctors alone, the indictment of hysteria? What a pity! M. Babinski, the most intelligent man who has tackled this question, dared to publish in 1913 the following: 'When an emotion is sincere and profound, and it stirs the human soul, there is no room for hysteria.' And in that we have the best we have so far been given to learn.

Does Freud, who owes so much to Charcot, remember the time when, according to the survivors, the resident doctors at the Salpêtrière mixed up their professional duty with their taste for sex, and when at dusk the patients either met these doctors outside the hospital or admitted them to their own beds? Later these resident doctors would carefully enumerate, in the interests of (self-evidently justified) medical science, the passionate and so-called pathological attitudes which were to them, and are still humanly to us, so precious. Can it be that fifty years later the Nancy School is no more? If Dr Luys is still alive, has he forgotten? But, then, what has become of Néri's notes on the Messina earthquake? And what has happened to the Zouaves torpedoed by the Raymond Roussel of science, Clovis Vincent?

To the various definitions of hysteria so far put forward, of divine hysteria in antiquity, of infernal in the Middle Ages, from the possessed of Loudun to the flagellants of Our Lady of Sorrows (long life Mme. Chantelouve!), to the mythical, erotic or merely lyrical definitions, and to the social and learned definitions, how obviously superior are Bernheim's words, 'that complex and proteiform disease called hysteria and defying all definition'.

Those who have seen the splendid film, *Witchcraft Through the Ages*, must remember having drawn from either the screen or their fellow spectators more vivid instruction than is contained in the writings of Hippocrates, of Plato (in the latter the womb leaps like a kid), of Galen (who treats the kid as stationary), or of Fernel (who sets the kid going again in the sixteenth century and feels it beneath his hand rising as high as the stomach); they have seen the horns of the Beast grow and grow until they became the horns of the devil, and then in turn the devil failed. His heritage the positivist hypotheses were to divide up among themselves. The hysterical crisis took shape at the expense of hysteria proper, with its wonderful aura, and its four stages, the third of which is as fascinating as the most expressive and pure *tableaux vivants*, i.e. its perfectly simple resolution in normal existence. In 1906, traditional hysteria sheds its symptoms. 'Hysteria,' says Babinski, 'is a pathological condition manifested by disturbances which in certain subjects can be reproduced with complete exactness and are apt to vanish under the influence of persuasion (countersuggestion) alone.'

For us, however, this definition defines only a moment in the becoming of hysteria. The dialectical process which produced it is still going on. Ten years later, deplorably disguised as pithiatism, hysteria tends to regain its prerogatives. The doctor is surprised. He seeks to deny a thing outside his province.

Accordingly, in 1928, we propose a fresh definition of hysteria, as follows:

'Hysteria is a more or less irreducible mental condition, marked by the subversion, quite apart from any delirium-system, of the relations established between the subject and the moral world under whose authority he believes himself, practically, to be. This mental condition is based on the need of a reciprocal seduction, which explains the hastily accepted miracles of medical suggestion (or countersuggestion). Hysteria is not a pathological phenomenon and may in all respects be considered as a supreme means of expression.'

Louis ARAGON

André BRETON

the priests. The anti-religious front is the essential front in the present stage of the Spanish revolution.

In France, amplification of the anti-religious struggle will support the Spanish revolution.

French atheists! Do not – in the name of an absolutely fallacious right of sanctuary, in spite of the separation of church and state proclaimed in 1905 – tolerate the establishment in France of congregations fleeing the Spanish revolution. (It is enough that there be disgusting manifestations in Paris on the arrival of King Alfonso!) By agitation befitting the magnificent bouquet of sparks appearing over the Pyrenees, drive the clericals back to the borders where the tribunals of public safety await them. Demand at the same time the repatriation of the royal bandits with their confessors, to be judged by their subjects of yesterday, their victims from time immemorial. Affirm your solidarity with the armed workers and peasants of Spain as a stage in your struggle for the seizure of power in France by the proletariat, which alone will be able to sweep God off the face of the earth.

Benjamin PERET René CHAR Yves TANGUY ARAGON  
 Georges SADOUL Georges MALKINE André BRETON René CREVEL  
 André THIRION Paul ELUARD Pierre UNIK Maxime ALEXANDRE  
 (and ten signatures of foreign comrades).

## **Murderous Humanitarianism**

*This important statement on racism and colonialism, evidently written in 1932, appeared in English in Nancy Cunard's Negro Anthology, published in London, 1934. It seems never to have been published in French.*



For centuries the soldiers, priests and civil agents of imperialism, in a welter of looting, outrage and wholesale murder, have with impunity grown fat off the coloured races. Now it is the turn of the demagogues, with their counterfeit liberalism.

But the proletariat of today, whether metropolitan or colonial, is no longer to be fooled by fine words as to the real end in view, which is still, as it always was, the exploitation of the greatest number for the benefit of a few slavers. Now these slavers, knowing their days to be numbered and reading the doom of their system in the world crisis, fall back on a gospel of mercy, whereas in reality they rely more than ever on their traditional methods of slaughter to enforce their tyranny.

No great penetration is required to read between the lines of the news, whether in print or on the screen: punitive expeditions, blacks lynched in America, the white scourge devastating town and country in our parliamentary kingdoms and bourgeois republics.

War, that reliable colonial endemic, receives fresh impulse in the name of 'pacification'. France may well be proud of having launched this Godsent euphemism at the precise moment when, in throes of pacifism, she sent forth her tried and trusty thugs with instructions to plunder all those distant and defenceless peoples from whom the intercapitalistic butchery had distracted her attentions for a space.

The most scandalous of these wars, that against the Riffians in 1925, stimulated a number of intellectuals, investors in militarism, to assert their complicity with the hangmen of jingo and capital.

Responding to the appeal of the Communist Party, we protested against the war in Morocco and made our declaration in *Revolution Now and Forever!*

In a France hideously inflated from having dismembered Europe, made mincemeat of Africa, polluted Oceania and ravaged whole tracts of Asia, we surrealists pronounced ourselves in favour of changing the imperialist war, in its chronic and colonial form, into a civil war. Thus we placed our energies in the service of the revolution – of the proletariat and its struggles – and defined our attitude towards the colonial problem, and hence towards the colour question.

Gone were the days when the delegates of this snivelling capitalism might screen themselves in those abstractions which, in both secular and religious mode, were invariably inspired by the Christian ignominy and which strove on the most grossly interested grounds to masochise whatever people had not yet been contaminated by the sordid moral and religious codes in which men feign to find authority for the exploitation of their fellows.

When whole peoples had been decimated with fire and sword it became necessary to round up the survivors and domesticate them in such a cult of labour as could only proceed from the notions of original sin and atonement. The clergy and professional philanthropists have always collaborated with the army in this bloody exploitation. The colonial machinery that extracts the last penny from natural advantages hammers away with the joyful regularity of a poleaxe. The white man preaches, doses, vaccinates, assassinates and (from himself) receives absolution. With his psalms, his speeches, his guarantees of liberty, equality and fraternity, he seeks to drown the noise of his machine guns.

It is no good objecting that these periods of rapine are only a

necessary phase and pave the way, in the words of the time-honoured formula, 'for an era of prosperity founded on a close and intelligent collaboration between the natives and the metropolis'! It is no good trying to palliate collective outrage and butchery by jury in the new colonies by inviting us to consider the old, and the peace and prosperity they have so long enjoyed. It is no good blustering about the Antilles and the 'happy evolution' that has enabled them to be assimilated, or very nearly, by France.

In the Antilles, as in America, the fun began with the total extermination of the natives, in spite of their having extended a most cordial reception to the Christopher Columbian invaders. Were they now – in the hour of triumph, and having come so far – to set out emptyhanded for home? Never! So they sailed on to Africa and stole men. These were in due course promoted by our humanists to the ranks of slavery, but were more or less exempted from the sadism of their masters by virtue of the fact that they represented a capital which had to be safeguarded like any other capital. Their descendants, long since reduced to destitution (in the French Antilles they live on vegetables and salt cod and are dependent in the matter of clothing on whatever old guano sacks they are lucky enough to steal), constitute a black proletariat whose conditions of life are even more wretched than those of its European equivalent and which is exploited by a coloured bourgeoisie quite as ferocious as any other. This bourgeoisie, covered by the machine guns of culture, 'elects' such perfectly adequate representatives as 'Hard Labour' Diagne and 'Twister' Delmont.

The intellectuals of this new bourgeoisie, though they may not all be specialists in parliamentary abuse, are no better than the experts when they proclaim their devotion to the Spirit. The value of this idealism is precisely given by the manoeuvres of its doctrinaires who, in their paradise of comfortable iniquity, have organised a system of poltroonery proof against all the necessities of life and the urgent consequences of dream. These gentlemen, votaries of corpses and theosophies, go to ground in the past, vanish down the warrens of Himalayan monasteries. Even for those whom a few last shreds of shame and intelligence dissuade from invoking those current religions whose God is too frankly a God of cash, there is the call of some 'mystic Orient' or other. Our gallant sailors, policemen and agents of imperialist thought, in league with opium and literature, have swamped us with their irretentions of nostalgia; the function of all these idyllic alarms among the dead and gone being to distract our thoughts from the present, the abominations of the present.

A holy-saint-faced *international* of hypocrites deprecates the material progress foisted on the blacks; protests, courteously, against the importation not only of alcohol, syphilis and field artillery but also of railways

and printing. This comes well after the former rejoicings of its evangelical spirit at the idea that the 'spiritual values' current in capitalist societies, and notably respect for human life and property, would devolve naturally from enforced familiarity with fermented drinks, firearms and disease. It is scarcely necessary to add that the colonist demands this respect for property without reciprocity.

Those blacks who have merely been compelled to distort in terms of fashionable jazz the natural expression of their joy at finding themselves partakers of a universe from which Western peoples have wilfully withdrawn may consider themselves lucky to have suffered nothing worse than degradation. The eighteenth century derived nothing from China except a repertoire of frivolities to grace the alcove. In the same way the whole object of our romantic exoticism and modern travel lust is of use only in entertaining that class of blasé client sly enough to see an interest in deflecting to his own advantage the torrent of those energies which soon – much sooner than he thinks – will close over his head.

André BRETON Roger CAILLOIS René CHAR René CREVEL  
Paul ELUARD J.-M. MONNEROT Benjamin PERET Yves TANGUY  
André THIRION Pierre UNIK Pierre YOYOTTE

## Manifesto on 'L'Age d'or'

(*excerpts*)

*A showing in 1931 of Luis Buñuel's surrealist film L'Age d'or was broken up by the League of Anti-Jewish Youth and other fascist gangs. When the police proceeded to outlaw the film, on the pretext that it was 'provocative', the surrealists issued a pamphlet, from which the following is excerpted.*



The day will soon come when we realise that, in spite of the wear and tear of life that bites like acid into our flesh, the very cornerstone of that violent liberation which reaches out for a better life in the heart of the technological age that corrupts our cities is

LOVE.

Only love remains beyond the realm of that which our imagination can grasp, dominating the deepness of the wind, the well full of diamonds, the constructions of the spirit and the logic of the flesh.

The problem created by the bankruptcy of our emotions, intimately linked with the problem of capitalism, has not yet been resolved . . .

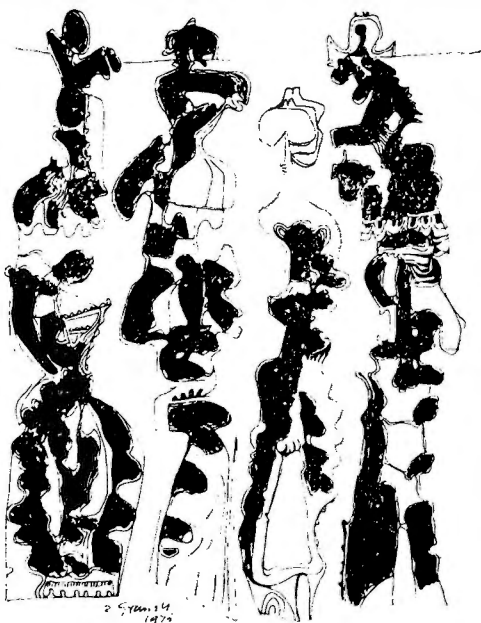
Buñuel has formulated a theory of revolution and love which goes to the very core of human nature; that most tragic of all debates, gal-

# André Breton

# What is Surrealism?

## Selected Writings

Edited and introduced by  
**Franklin Rosemont**





*This edition first published 1978  
by Monad Press for the Anchor Foundation Inc.  
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*Distributed by Pathfinder Press  
410 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014*

*Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 71 - 186691  
ISBN 0-913460-59-1 (cloth); 0-913460-60-5 (paper)*

*Manufactured in Great Britain by Latimer Trend & Company Ltd, Plymouth  
Designed by Richard Hollis, GrR*

# Translators

**John Ashbery:** Intra-Uterine Life / Nothing is Incomprehensible / The Original Judgment

**Samuel Beckett:** Simulation of Mental Debility / Simulation of General Paralysis / Simulation of Delirium of Interpretation / Introduction to the Possessions / Surrealism and the Treatment of Mental Illness / The 50th Anniversary of Hysteria / Murderous Humanitarianism

**Robert Greer Cohn:** Situation of Surrealism Between the Two Wars

**Guy Ducornet:** The Relationship Between Intellectual Work and Capital / The Automatic Message / On Proletarian Literature / Far from Orly

**David Gascoyne:** Exhibition X...Y... / The First Dali Exhibition / Force of Habit / Preface to the Catalogue of International Surrealist Exhibition / Limits Not Frontiers of Surrealism / *Mad Love* (first excerpt)

**Richard Howard:** Open the Prisons! Disband the Army! / *The Poverty of Poetry* / Declaration of 27 January 1925 / *Legitimate Defence*

**Louise Hudson:** Art Poétique

**Bravig Imbs:** Foreword to *Yves Tanguy* / *Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality*

**Maria Jolas:** *Mad Love* (second excerpt)

**Ralph Manheim:** For Dada / Max Ernst / After Dada / Marcel Duchamp