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Loving Freud Madly: Surrealism between Hysterical and Paranoid Modernism

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The question of whether Surrealism played a positive or a negative role in the dissemination of Freudian ideas sounds rather blunt or normative, but it is a question I would like to pose less to judge Surrealism by trying to catch it in its distortions and blind spots than to test the validity and relevance of the “compromise formations” that have been produced in quantity during the process of globalization through which Freud’s theories have gone in more than a century. This domain is huge, but happily the axis linking Freud to Breton has been explored,¹ while excellent essays have been recently devoted to the Lacan-Dalí² connection. Popular culture seems to have adopted Surrealism and Freudianism with similarly warping hyperboles. If the jocular “This is hysterical!” may be blamed more on Charcot than on Freud, the phrase “This is Surrealistic” often rings as quasi-equivalent to “This is Freudian.” Beyond a surprising or shocking façade, one expects some readability, plus if not immediately heavy-handed sexual symbols, at least the suggestion that a carefully arranged thematic disorder will be recomposed formally so as to suggest the hidden logic of dream images. In a telling fashion, the 1998 exhibition on “Freud, Conflict and Culture”³ mounted by the Library of Congress, after intense controversy, made much of its display of audio-visual documents; beyond illegible manuscripts in Gothic script and disappointing *realia* — such as a few rings or Freud’s couch floating in the air — these well chosen film excerpts mostly from Hollywood classics made the strong point that Freudianism, although contested, survives thanks to a popular culture which it has literally shaped and permeated. Perhaps, then, the same may

1. See above all David Lomas, *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity* (Yale University Press, 2000).

2. One of the most comprehensive is Hanjo Berressem, “Dalí and Lacan: Painting the Imaginary Landscapes” in *Lacan: Politics, Aesthetics*, ed. Willy Apollon and Richard Feldstein (State University of New York Press, 1996) pp. 263–93. See also Soraya Tlatli, *Le Psychiatre et ses poètes: Essai sur le jeune Lacan* (Paris: Tchou, 2000) and the issue of *Revue des Sciences Humaines* CCLII (2001), *Lire Dalí*, ed. Frédérique Joseph-Lowery.

3. See Michael S. Roth, ed., *Freud, Conflict and Culture: Essays on His Life, Work and Legacy* (Knopf, 1998).

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hold true of Surrealism. It seems that its last public flowering on a large scale was linked to the counter-culture of the 1960s. In France, particularly with May 1968, Surrealism colored a juvenile rebellion creatively in more than one way. Perhaps the hindsight afforded once we have stepped more boldly into this still new century will show that these cultural phenomena converge without completely meeting or that they follow a minimally curving parallax.

Breton and Freud were from the start engaged in a waltz of avoidance and a tango of misunderstandings. These missteps nevertheless disclose a deeper harmony, while Lacan and Dalí, apparently the best of friends until quite late, flaunted ideological overlappings so as to conceal a deeper rift. The first missed encounter between Freudianism and Surrealism was linked to the promotion of concepts such as psychic automatism, unconscious dictation, the “over-determination” of dream images (Freud’s crucial *Ueberdeterminierung*) and also, perhaps more importantly, hysteria taken as a creative manifestation. The second encounter promoting the concept of paranoia seems to have been a more successful endeavor. By narrowing the historical focus on the 1920s and early 1930s, one can observe how suddenly the surrealist theory of Hysteria was transformed into a Surrealist theory of Paranoia.

It looks as if the links between Breton and Freud had been marked from the start by a series of attempts at seduction followed by rejection and absurd bickering, in short, by a movement that might call up the very logic of hysteria. Breton, as is well-known, began by studying psychiatry and it was in this function that he served as a medical intern during the First World War. We know how closely Breton had read Freud at a time when most French schools of psychiatry totally ignored him. Having started his medical studies in the fall of 1913, Breton after the declaration of war was sent to the neuro-psychiatric ward of Saint-Dizier in August 1916. In a ward supervised by a former assistant of Charcot, Breton read voraciously the psychiatric literature available, which included a summary of Freud’s ideas thanks to a compendium provided by Doctor Régis (*Précis de Psychiatrie*) and to *La Psychanalyse*, written by Doctors Régis and Hesnard. Breton copied entire pages from these volumes for his friend Fraenkel, among which one finds a very accurate synthesis of the Freudian system, along with very competent definitions of concepts such as resistance (*Widerstand*), repression (*Verdrängung*), and sublimation (*Sublimierung*).⁴ Even if Freud was not the only thinker discovered by Breton at the time, he felt that it was his duty to defend Freudian ideas against his friend’s skepticism. All this testifies to a moment of glorious discovery, as when Breton exclaims: “I am getting enthusiastic over psychiatry.”⁵ He also dutifully noted the nonsensical tirades which he would hear from certain delirious or psychotic patients. Thus, even though Breton soon after joined the service of Doctor Babinski in 1917 and changed his focus to address hysteria, one can believe his account when he referred to Freud rather than to Myers or Janet in the first manifesto of Surrealism. At least this is the conclusion suggested by Marguerite Bonnet’s close study of Breton’s manuscripts, a study that contradicts an earlier thesis developed by Starobinski and that had been accepted until recently.

On the whole, with a wealth of details culled from the psychiatric literature of the times, Starobinski had tried to show that the concept of “mental automatism” promoted by Surrealism had very little to do with Freud’s theories and is derived more or less directly from Janet or

4. Quoted in Marguerite Bonnet, “La Rencontre d’André Breton avec la Folie: Saint Dizier, août-novembre 1916,” in *Folie et Psychanalyse dans l’expérience surréaliste*, ed. Fabienne Hulak, (Nice: Z’éditions, 1992), pp. 126–27.

5. Bonnet, p. 121.

Myers.⁶ However, even if Breton's debt to Babinski and his adherence to Babinskian refutations of Charcot's thesis regarding the reality of hysteria has been abundantly demonstrated, the perusal of Breton's notebooks proves that it was Freud's impact that very early led him to trust the spontaneous production of language as a key to the unconscious. True, Starobinski is perfectly correct when he notes that Freud always limits the "fundamental rule" of psychoanalysis (taking the uninhibited flow of language proffered by the patient to the analyst as material for analysis) to a very preliminary stage and refuses to grant it more than a heuristic value. Nevertheless, it is clear that Breton decided to take this preliminary moment seriously and to endow it with a truth-value in a spontaneous illumination due to Freud, recalling the latter's discovery of the unconscious after listening to hysterics and his own dreams: in both cases, it looks as if a major breakthrough had been produced by something like beginner's luck. Thus, even if the terms used by Breton and his friends refer to French classical (that is pre- or anti-Freudian) psychiatry as represented by Charcot, Janet, or Babinski, a fundamental insight — that these spontaneous utterances disclose material leading to a grasp of actual psychic production — derives from Freud, and Breton always pays this initial debt. Breton's narrative in the *First Manifesto of Surrealism* can on the whole be trusted:

Quite busy as I was then with Freud at that time, and having been familiarized with his examination methods that I had somehow used with patients during the war, I decided to obtain from myself what one tries seeks to obtain from them, that is a monologue flowing as fast as possible and upon which the critical mind of the subject makes no judgment whatever, letting it be unhampered by any reticence so that it may render as exactly as possible *spoken thought*.⁷

If the name of Freud dominates the manifesto written in 1924, Breton's theoretical foundation in psychoanalytic (not psychological) knowledge does not preclude an awareness of all that separates psychoanalysis understood as a clinical practice and rigorous therapy from Surrealist experiments aiming not only at abolishing the borders between sleep and waking life but also between art and life.

Like the *Tel Quel* members — these practitioners of the Parisian avant-garde who decided to visit China in 1974 so as to confront their Maoist utopia with reality, a fateful mistake that led to a subsequent recantation and wholesale abjuration of their radical Marxism — Breton took the initiative to visit Freud in October 1921. As one could have expected, Breton was severely disappointed by the meeting. Under the title of "Interview with Professor Freud" (1922), he published a curt account of the meeting in *Littérature*, later reprinted without modifications in *Les Pas Perdus* (1924). Not wishing to attack Freud's reputation, Breton betrays his bitterness by sticking to a purely exterior description: Freud's appearance is that of "an old man without elegance who receives in the poor consulting room one would expect from a local doctor." The French poet is unable to engage this shabby Viennese MD in any meaningful dialogue; conversely, Freud, no doubt at a loss with this young enthusiast, hides behind polite generalities; throwing a last shaft,

6. I am alluding to the groundbreaking essay by Jean Starobinski, "Freud, Breton, Myers", in *L'Arc: Freud* (Aix-en-Provence: Editions L'ARC, 1968) pp. 87–96.

7. André Breton, "Manifeste du Surréalisme" in *Oeuvres Complètes I*, edited M. Bonnet, P. Bernier, E-A. Hubert and J. Pierre (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade, 1988), p. 326. Translation mine.

Breton concludes the short article tongue-in-cheek by quoting Freud's tepid endorsement: "Happily, we do count a lot upon the young."⁸

This painful sense of a discrepancy between Freud the man and Freudian ideas, or more precisely between the inventor of psychoanalysis caught in all of his human and social limitations and the empowering invention of psychoanalysis itself, will mark Breton's attitude in the following years. The second interaction between them became accordingly more critical and started even less happily, due to Breton's suspicions when he discusses the *Interpretation of Dreams* and launches into meaner accusations: according to him, Freud had plagiarized or stolen from a previous theoretician of dreams. In the Summer of 1931, as he was preparing a draft of *Communicating Vessels*, Breton had re-read the French translation of Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, taking twenty pages of dense notes in a schoolboy's exercise book. The right-hand pages are made up of quotes, while the left hand pages are his personal remarks or associations. It is fascinating to see that on the third of these left-hand pages, Breton jots down, in a series of references to books dealing with dream symbolism, his own equations or different conclusions based on Freud's criticism of the current literature on dreams. For instance, when Freud criticizes Delboeuf in the first pages of the section devoted to "Theories of dreaming" for the idea that everything in dreams derives from the thoughts of the previous day, Breton is attentive to a bold connection between dream activity and paranoia. One reads on the right hand side page:

Theories of dreams.

1. "The whole psychological activity of the waking state continues in dreams." (Delboeuf)
(Very insufficient) Dream = Paranoia.

Breton writes on the left-hand side, among his own remarks:

Theories. Delboeuf. Dream-paranoia. Valéry: "The dream goes on. . . ."

This is followed by the names of Robert and Burdach.⁹ These notes follow what is now section E of the *Interpretation of Dreams*,¹⁰ where Freud makes a connection between dream and paranoia: "If I may venture on a simile from the sphere of psychiatry, the first group of theories construct dreams on the model of paranoia, while the second group makes them resemble mental deficiency or confusional states."¹¹ This insight must have struck Breton, for he writes it a second time, then cancels it before rewriting on the left hand side. The words "Dreams-paranoia" are inserted and then crossed out, having been added by mistake to the theories developed by the second group of writers. One can see that Breton does not merely follow Freud's text, but goes to the end, checks various references to these same authors, and of course, verifies the bibliography. On the same page on which one finds the three notations equating dreams and paranoia, one sees soon after: "Volkelt's remarkable sexual symbolism" and on the left-hand side: "Volkelt, quoted by Freud *without references*."¹²

8. *Les pas Perdus, Oeuvres Complètes* I, p. 256. Translation mine.

9. Facsimile reproduction of Breton's notes in *Folie et Psychanalyse dans l'expérience surréaliste*, ed. Fabienne Hulak (Nice: Z'éditions, 1992), n.p., p. 155, in fact.

10. See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (Science Editions, 1961), pp. 75–78.

11. Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 76.

12. Facsimile reproduction in *Folie et Psychanalyse dans l'expérience surréaliste*, p. 154.

This was the basis for the remark that wounded Freud so much when Breton suggested in writing that Freud has omitted Volkelt's book on symbolism from his bibliography on purpose because he taken from it much more than what the rapid remarks of the *Traumdeutung* imply, namely that Volkelt had inspired the whole theory of sexuality in dreams. Breton writes thus:

Freud himself, who seems, when it concerns the symbolic interpretation of the dream, just to have taken over for himself Volkelt's ideas — Volkelt, an author about whom the definitive bibliography at the end of the book remains significantly mute — Freud, for whom the whole substance of the dream is nevertheless taken from real life, cannot resist the temptation of declaring that “the intimate nature of the subconscious (the essential psychical reality) is as unknown to us as the reality of the exterior world,” giving thereby some support to those whom his method had almost routed.¹³

Breton's attack is double: first Freud stole the idea of sexuality in dreams from an obscure writer who, according to Freud, merely generalized as a “philosopher” the insights of Scherner, a good practitioner who has the defect of writing in a turgid style¹⁴; more damning is the reproach that Freud has forgotten his own monism and fallen into the trap of traditional idealism when he opposes dreams and reality as belonging to radically different realms. Here, Breton not only relies on Lenin whom he quotes frequently; he also alludes *a contrario* to Schopenhauer, who had assumed that dreams could be prophetic in view of the gift of “second sight,” although this theory would postulate a division between reality and appearances. For Breton, indeed, reality is one and this continuum allows for prophecy: “Freud is again quite surely mistaken in concluding that the prophetic dream does not exist — I mean the dream involving the immediate future — since to hold that the dream is exclusively revelatory of the past is to deny the value of motion.”¹⁵ To provide a counter-model, Breton offers his own interpretation of a dream: this is the very frank account of the Dream of 26 August, 1931. No doubt, the dream, in which a tie called “Nosferatu” plays a great role, is all about Surrealism and fellow Surrealists. Against Freud's idea of an “umbilicus” or dark core of unknowability in dreams, Breton wishes to prove that he has “exhausted” the content of the dream by his thorough examination of all the images and associations.¹⁶ He rewrites Freud's principle of condensation and “overdetermination” in a materialistic language inflected by Marx and Lenin.

Freud immediately replied in order to defend himself from insinuations of plagiarism: he pointed out that the omission of Volkelt's name from his book was a mistake in the French translation of 1926 and that the name appeared in the German text. A hastily drafted second letter explained the origin of the mistake: Volkelt's name was dropped for no clear reason after the third original printing and the French version was made from one of the subsequent versions.¹⁷ Freud also put to rest Breton's thesis that he had been prudish on matters of sexuality and that Volkelt had been more explicit about the sexual symbolism of dreams. He added that he refrained from

13. André Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, translated by Mary Ann Caws and Geoffrey T. Harris (University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. 11. See also *Les vases Communicants I*, in André Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes II*, edited M. Bonnet, P. Bernier, E-A Hubert and J. Pierre. (Paris: Gallimard, Pléiade, 1992), p. 109.

14. Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, pp. 83–84.

15. Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, p. 13.

16. Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, p. 45.

17. See the Appendix with Freud's letters and Breton's response in *Communicating Vessels*, pp. 149–55.

mentioning his father, who has just died, but otherwise did not censor himself. The third letter acknowledging Breton's reply ends with a little barb, since Freud pretends not to understand what Surrealism is about, and above all "what it wants": "Although I have received many testimonies of the interest that you and your friend show for my research, I am not able to clarify for myself what Surrealism is and what it wants. Perhaps I am not destined to understand it, I who am so distant from art."¹⁸ Freud is clearly trying to reduce Breton's paranoid criticism to hysteria ("What do you want from me?") while echoing his current preoccupation about the riddle of femininity; parading his incomprehension, his petty bourgeois philistinism and lack of esthetic sense, Freud sends back to Surrealism a feminized version of itself, a sort of Gallic version of *Was will das Weib?* On the other end, Breton wishes to keep the clash at the level of a male confrontation, of rival theories and conflicting power games. He notes gleefully Freud's obvious agitation, his contradictions in the flurry of successive letters, and finally his desire to pay back in kind by denying any valid aim to Surrealism. He quotes Fritz Wittels' book on Freud's pugnacious and jealous style in a footnote: "I knocked him to the ground because he knocked me to the ground."¹⁹ Breton may have indeed "touched on a rather sensitive point."²⁰

Thus one might say that after the failure of hysterical seduction, *Communicating Vessels* engages Freud in a paranoid logic hinging around annotations, bibliographies, appropriations, issues of literary ownership and intellectual propriety, male domination games, not to mention accusations of dissimulation and squeamishness. This time, it seems, Breton's strategy works: whereas Freud could say to Jung (in reference to the Schreber case) that he had succeeded where the paranoiac failed, Breton proves that the paranoiac succeeds where Freud fails. When the earlier hysterical seduction attempt had failed, Freud is now caught up in the net, writes apologetically, fights back and explains. No doubt that when Salvador Dalí met him in London in 1938, Freud was more receptive to "the young". Dalí had been named in *Communicating Vessels*, a text written in 1932, which, even when it returns to issues of dreams, the unconscious and automatism, does so in manner totally different from the texts published in 1924. And so we may wonder how Surrealism can have moved so abruptly from a strategy that promoted hysteria to a strategy that took paranoia as its main weapon and mode of vision.

* * * *

If one takes a good look at the issues of *La Révolution Surréaliste* from the late 1920s, a solution may emerge. In the 1927 issue, Freud's text on lay analysis is published in a translation by Marie Bonaparte. As the only text by Freud directly published in the review, it plays an important role in the global strategy of de-medicalization of psychoanalysis, which the Surrealists could only applaud. Ironically, Freud seems to anticipate the forthcoming debate with Breton when he imagines an opponent who thinks that he has touched a sensitive point because Freud becomes aggressive: "And if I look aggressive, this is only to defend myself. But when I think of the fuss certain analysts have made about the interpretation of dreams, I could despair and agree with Nestroy's pessimistic outcry: 'Progress is only half as great as it seems.'"²¹ It is rather amusing to find this rather conservative extract (in view of the more radical theses on education and medicine

18. Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, p. 152.

19. Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, p. 154, n. 7.

20. Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, p. 155.

21. *La Révolution Surréaliste*, IX-X (Octobre 1927), p. 26.

that follow in the complete text on lay analysis) followed on the next page by “Corps à Corps,” a prose poem by Benjamin Peret beginning: “To wake up at the bottom of a carafe, haggard like a fly, here’s an adventure that will incite you to kill your mother five minutes after you escape from the carafe.”²²

André Breton’s and Louis Aragon’s joint manifesto praising the “Invention of Hysteria” was published in *La Révolution Surréaliste* (XI [March 1928]) to celebrate the “fiftieth anniversary of the invention of hysteria”, an invention which they thus date from 1878, and so sends us back to Charcot. They call hysteria “the greatest poetic discovery of the latter part of the century, and we do this at a time when the dismemberment of the concept of hysteria appears to be complete.”²³ In this lyrical homage to hysteria Breton and Aragon take some distance from Babinski who had reduced hysteria to suggestion, believing that Charcot was a master hypnotizer (by implication, he had hypnotized Freud as well) as well as from Freud in so far as he remains a doctor who claims that he will “cure” hysterical patients. Although he is called “the most intelligent man who has engaged this issue,” Babinski is criticized and his negation of hysteria violently rejected. Charcot is praised less for the fact that the amphitheatre of La Salpêtrière was a theatrical scene in which he exhibited female patients in front of a fashionable crowd than for having created the conditions for its disclosure and propagation. As for Freud, he is not spared: Breton and Aragon oppose his conservatism to what they find truly admirable, the fact that La Salpêtrière’s interns would regularly sleep with their beautiful hysterical patients. “Does Freud, who owes so much to Charcot, remember the time when, according to the survivors’ account, the interns of La Salpêtrière refused to separate their professional duty and their taste for love, and when night fell, the patients would either visit them outside or they would meet the patients in their beds?”²⁴ No doubt, Freud would have been horrified by the insinuation that he too might have belonged to that unruly crowd. The living poetry invented by the sick women and the doctors when sleeping together culminates in these “passionate attitudes” photographed by Charcot, in which one sees stunning half-dressed women in curious poses that express a convulsive but otherworldly ecstasy.

After alluding more positively to the Nancy school, Breton and Aragon provide their own definition of a state which had so far eluded medical categorization:

Hysteria is a more or less irreducible mental state characterized by a subversion of the relations between the subject and the ethical universe by which the subject feels determined in practice, outside any system of delirium. This mental state is based on the need for a reciprocal seduction, which explains the hastily accepted miracles of medical suggestion (or counter-suggestion). Hysteria is not a pathological phenomenon and can in every respect be considered a supreme vehicle of expression.²⁵

What is crucial for our discussion is that in 1928, Breton and Aragon insist upon the quasi-normalcy of a state which is seen as a limit-experience, since for them hysteria rules out any “system

22. *La Révolution Surréaliste*, p. 33.

23. André Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes* I, p. 948. Note that the text is written in small capitals throughout. One finds a good English translation of parts of this manifesto in Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925–1985*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 6–7.

24. Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes* I, p. 949.

25. Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes* I, p. 950. My translation modifies slightly that of Mehlman.

of delirium” (*en dehors de tout système délirant*). When they praise the four phases of the classical hysterical crisis, Aragon and Breton describe the way in which the initial emission of a “superb aura” leads to a magnificent theatricalization before finally subsiding and finding a “simple resolution in everyday life.”²⁶ In a clear foreshadowing of Lacan’s notion of feminine *jouissance* of the 1970s, hysteria is here identified with mystical and erotic ecstasy. It appears also as the radicalization of a movement that merges poetry with everyday life.

In this provocative commendation of hysteria, Breton and Aragon bid farewell to their former master Babinski, without fully endorsing Charcot’s attempts at medical localization: for Babinski, hysteria was a purely imaginary or mimetic disease, and it could be eradicated by strong counter-suggestion. His harsh treatment of male hysterics during the First World War had led to medical abuse, including gruesome electrical therapy. Yet the idea of simulation, although leading to a positive mode of expression, looms large in the text written by Breton with Eluard in 1930, *The Immaculate Conception*. There one finds a section entitled “Possessions,” in which the two poets successively attempt to reproduce the discourses of debility, of mania, of general paralysis, of interpretive delirium, and of precocious dementia.²⁷ The ironical Introduction to this section, written by Breton only, alludes to the technical meaning of “simulation” in psychiatry, especially in the psychiatry of war neuroses, and concludes with a critique of traditional poetic forms, which could easily be replaced by imitations of the various types of psychotic speech: “This is to say that we offer the generalization of this device and that in our eyes, the ‘attempts at simulation’ of diseases that land you in a jail might advantageously replace the ballad, the sonnet, the epic, the nonsense rhyme and other genres now totally obsolete.”²⁸

This was written in 1930, just after the first great divide in the Surrealist group that has been analyzed in Breton’s *Second Manifesto of Surrealism* (dated 15 December 1929). A new name has been added to the list of prestigious painters whose works regularly adorn the pages of the review, among them Ernst, De Chirico, Miro, Picasso, Arp, Picabia, Masson, Ray, Tanguy: it is a young Catalan painter and poet who will have an important impact on the group, Salvador Dalí. One may say that Dalí starts replacing de Chirico in 1929 (the *Second Manifesto* is followed by two paintings, a de Chirico and a Dalí). In 1929, de Chirico is denounced as having gone astray and condemned by Breton, anticipating what will take place with Dalí a few years later when the same pattern of seduction, disappointment, and rejection is reenacted. The *Second Manifesto* still quotes Freud but rather distantly and with critical asides about the term of “sublimation,” — while reasserting a materialist philosophy, but the political reference has shifted to Trotsky this time. Freud is suspected of lending some arguments to Georges Bataille’s non-dialectical materialism.

It is in the context of the struggle between Breton and Bataille that Dalí makes his entrance into the Surrealist whirlpool. As some critics have noted, Dalí should logically have joined Bataille’s camp, given his insistence on images of bodily decomposition, his perverse eroticism linked with death and animals, his provocative way of flaunting masturbation. As is well-known, Dalí chose Breton instead, perhaps because he was in quest of legitimacy within what he saw as a powerful movement. It was Bataille who initially took to Dalí and wrote a very passionate piece of criticism of the “Lugubrious Game,” a painting done in 1929 for his first Paris exhibition, as Camille

26. Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes* I, p. 949.

27. See Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes* I, pp. 848–63.

28. Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes* I, p. 849.

Goermans was devoting a show to Dalí's work. But in his catalogue essay written for the exhibition, Breton praised the "hallucinatory" quality of the painting while settling his accounts with the deluded "materialists" who had tried to corner Dalí.²⁹ Bataille had indeed expressed some interest in Dalí, and the December 1929 issue of *Documents* published Bataille's essay entitled simply, "The Lugubrious Game." In this brilliant reading, Bataille insisted upon the idea of castration, emasculation being presented according to him as a parody, with the shocking figure of a man with shitty breeches. Dalí, perhaps to make a show of his allegiance to Breton, refused to allow Bataille to reproduce the painting and then attacked Bataille directly in "The Rotting Donkey" (July 1930).

There, Bataille's ideas are called "cretinous" and "senile"; their main mistake derives from a wrong interpretation of Freud, a "gratuitous use of modern psychology."³⁰ Again, one can witness that Bataille, Breton and Dalí reproached one another for having badly assimilated or applied Freudian ideas. All this is a footnote in what appears as Dalí's main object, the definition of his paranoid-critical method. The Freudian source of these ideas is more obvious in the first text in which Dalí exposes this discovery, "The Moral Position of Surrealism" (22 March 1930). Aligning himself with Breton's program as outlined in the *Second Manifesto*, Dalí explains that next to going into the street with a revolver in hand and shooting people at random (as Breton said, the purest Surrealist act), his proselytizing activity aimed at propagating the "violently paranoid will to systematize confusion."³¹ Dalí adds that since Freudian ideas had been watered down he meant to give them back their "rabid and dazzling clarity." He provides a few cases of neurotic behavior and mentions that he had written under a painting of the Sacré-Coeur, "I spat on my mother", explaining that this was not a mere private provocation but came from a systematic attempt at demoralization close to that of Sade. He then launches into a description of the method he devised to see reality differently, a method that took its bearings in paranoia:

Above all, the birth of these new Surrealist images must be considered as the birth of images of demoralization. The particular perspicacity of attention in the paranoiac state must be insisted upon; paranoia being recognized, moreover, by all psychologists as a form of mental illness which consists in organizing reality in such a way as to utilize it to control an imaginative construction. The paranoiac who believes himself to be poisoned discovers in everything that surrounds him, right up to the most imperceptible and subtle details, preparations for his own death. Recently, through a decidedly paranoiac process, I obtained an image of a woman whose position, shadow and morphology, without altering or deforming anything of her real appearance, are also, at the same time, those of a horse.³²

We need to consider this passage carefully because it contains a redoubtable ambiguity: if the exposition of paranoid mechanisms in the case of the man who imagines himself poisoned is

29. Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes* II, pp. 308–09.

30. Salvador Dalí, "The Rotting Donkey", in *Oui: The Paranoid-Critical Revolution: Writings 1927–1933*, ed. Robert Descharnes, trans. Yvonne Shafir (Exact Change, 1998), p. 117. For all this, see the excellent essay by Félix Fanès, "Une toile à destination secrète: *Le Jeu lugubre*" in *Revue des Sciences Humaines: Lire Dalí*, pp. 163–85.

31. *Oui*, p. 110.

32. *Oui*, p. 112.

rigorous enough, one may wonder what the practice of guided hallucination has to do with it. This seems to recall Rimbaud's program of a "systematic deregulating of all senses" leading to the habit of spontaneous hallucination. Even if Dalí adds that the process can become more "violent" or "intense" and yield three, four, or why not thirty different images, it seems very revealing that he is still talking about the production of images, still anchored in reality while unleashing his images from conventional systems of representation.

In "The Rotting Donkey," Dalí, no doubt stung by Bataille's admiring but nevertheless critical account of his work in terms of castration anxiety, pushes his thesis further by radically collapsing conventional systems of representation and paranoid delirium. He goes back to his example of a woman who is at the same time a horse, and possibly a lion's head, to explain:

I challenge materialists to examine the kind of mental crisis that such an image may provoke, I challenge them to examine the even more complex problem of knowing which one of these images has a greater number of possibilities for existence if the intervention of desire is taken into consideration, and also to investigate the more serious and more general problem of knowing whether the series of representations has a limit or whether, as we have every reason to believe, such a limit does not exist, or rather, exists solely as a function of each individual's paranoid capacity. . . . [O]ur images of reality themselves depend upon the degree of our paranoid faculty.³³

The reversal of perspective is obvious: whereas paranoia seemed first to open a door into another kind of visual perception, it now turns into a regulating principle that replaces completely any idea of a "material world." The material world is just one species of simulacrum, and this is why Bataille's materialism is refuted: "The paranoid mechanism, through which the image with multiple figurations is born, supplies the understanding with the key to the birth and origin of the nature of simulacra, whose fury dominates the horizon beneath which the multiple aspects of the concrete are hidden."³⁴

One can grasp why Dalí had chosen Breton's rather than Bataille's camp: both sides criticize Freud's dualism while rewriting his insights in a monist discourse. But the first camp (Bataille's) stresses the materiality of the body leading to notions of excess, waste, and excrement, while the second camp (Breton's and Dalí's) sees reality as a series of simulacra underpinned by a universally productive Desire. We know how influential this debate was for Lacan, who came in contact with it just as he was completing his doctoral dissertation on paranoia. As Roudinesco shows convincingly in her historical and biographical accounts, it was the impact of Dalí's "Rotting Donkey" that allowed Lacan to break with classical psychiatric theories of personality and constitution and to revisit Freudian meta-psychology with a vengeance.³⁵ For at that time Lacan was busy translating Freud's 1922 article on "Certain Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality" into French, a text in which Freud restates the main thesis that had underlain his analysis of the Schreber case, namely that the root of paranoia is the return of repressed homosexuality. Even

33. *Oui*, pp. 116–17.

34. *Oui*, p. 117.

35. See Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925–1985*, pp. 110–12, for an account of their meeting, which had been instigated by Lacan, and *Jacques Lacan* trans. Barbara Bray (Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 31–32, for a more general assessment.

in a case of a jealous delirium observed in a heterosexual patient, delusional attacks would follow successful sexual rapports between the man and his wife: by inventing imaginary male lovers and creating delirious recriminations, the husband facilitated the projection of his own desires facing these men. It is also at that time that Lacan contributed to a collective essay on "Inspired Writings" of 1931: there, with two other authors, he analyzes closely the psychotic ramblings of a young teacher who had been hospitalized at Sainte-Anne; the description of the formal components of a grammar of mad utterance is marked by a deep awareness of Surrealism. Symptomatically, in their analysis of a real-life case, the authors quote Breton's first *Manifesto of Surrealism* and look for a model of interpretation in Breton's and Eluard's imitations of individual styles of typical delirium in *The Immaculate Conception* (it had had been published only one year earlier, in 1930, thus showing how rapid the exchange of ideas and texts has been).³⁶

This was before Lacan had treated the young woman whom he was to call "Aimée" and who became the focus of the thesis which he completed in 1932. When "Aimée" was brought to Lacan in April 1931, he immediately diagnosed a paranoid psychosis, with delusions leading to the attempted murder on a famous Parisian actress who had become a dangerous double. Even if Lacan's thesis has received some critical attention,³⁷ one may regret that it has not yet been translated into English. By a neat reciprocity, the Surrealists were the first to greet Lacan's thesis with exuberant praise: Crevel's 1933 "Notes toward a psycho-dialectic"³⁸ express the hope that Lacan will provide a new foundation of psychoanalysis at a time when Freud appears definitively too reactionary or at least pusillanimous. It is not only that Lacan dares to treat psychosis directly but also that his work is more firmly grounded in the social world and therefore seems to allow for a Marxist approach. In spite of himself, Lacan was thus enlisted in the cause of a Surrealist Freudo-Marxism. As Dalí always insisted,³⁹ Crevel's suicide in 1935, partly brought about by his inability to reconcile Surrealism and Communism, was one of the bad omens that announced the untimely demise of the movement. It may not have helped that Dalí was investing more and more paranoiac activity into fantasies about Hitler on the one hand, high fashion on the other. Conversely, Lacan had already taken some distance with the avant-garde and its political factions. He only elaborated his own version of Freudo-Marxism in the late 1960s. It would take too long to demonstrate that Lacan's theory of paranoia has very little to do with Dalí's concept of a beautiful and stunning hallucination.⁴⁰ What can be stressed is that in 1932, Lacan does not have at his disposal the critical vocabulary needed to go beyond Freud's homosexual thesis, even if his inroads into the mirror stage complex and its attendant release of aggression soon provide a first bridge leading to the construction of the alter-ego as a dangerous rival and the discovery of the symbolic caught in the fabrication of delirious paternity systems.

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36. See Jacques Lacan (with J. Lévy-Valensi and P. Migault) "Ecrits 'Inspirés': Schizographie" in Jacques Lacan, *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité* suivi de *Premiers écrits sur la paranoïa* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), pp. 379–80.

37. See above all Jean Allouch's thorough examination in *Marguerite ou l'Aimée de Lacan* (Paris: EPEL, 1990).

38. René Crevel, "Notes en vue d'une psycho-dialectique," in *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution V* (15 May 1933), pp. 48–52.

39. See for instance Dalí's Foreword to René Crevel, *Difficult Death*, trans. David Rattray (North Point Press, 1986), pp. vii–xiv.

40. See Berressem's article, "Dalí and Lacan: Painting the Imaginary Landscapes," pp. 275–90.

What remains indisputable is that, thanks to the convergence of interests among Bataille, Dalí, Breton, Lacan, Crevel, and a few others, the second decade of Surrealism was dominated by the concept of paranoia, much as the first had been by automatism and hysteria. And this was not a passing fashion: Breton's most comprehensive prose synthesis, his 1937 *Mad Love* still affirms his belief in desire as the mainspring of all our dreams and actions while making an important place for paranoia. Desire is no longer structured by hysteria but follows the lead of paranoia. In the fifth section, Breton reopens Freud's *A Childhood Memory of Leonardo da Vinci* before expounding the principle of paranoiac criticism or critical paranoia. The vulture hidden in the Virgin's dress may have been Pfister's hallucination more than the product of Freud's meditations;⁴¹ once an interpretation produces another image in a previous one, it remains there, hovering between objectivity and subjectivity, as Breton shrewdly notes.⁴² Breton refrains from claiming Leonardo as one of the precursors, if not the real inventor of Surrealism — it is nevertheless true that he had recommended the systematic practice of imagining shapes in old walls, clouds or landscapes. What Leonardo had stumbled upon is the principle of “objective chance” following which any artist, any man will learn to read the half-erased letters of a text written by desire. Breton continues his musings:

The purely visual exercise of this faculty which has at times been called “paranoiac” has led to conclude that if a single spot on a wall or elsewhere will almost always be interpreted differently by different individuals acted upon by distinct desires, this does not imply that one will not manage to make the other see what he has perceived. One does not see *a priori* what would prevent this illusion to go round the earth.⁴³

Even if Polonius is merely humoring Hamlet's real or feigned madness when he agrees to see a whale in the clouds, this calculated acceptance suggests a basic communicability of the hallucination. Visual hallucinations can be shared, whatever one's opinions about the divide between madness and sanity may be. But whereas hysteria counts upon mutual seduction in order to reach the truth of desire, paranoia articulates a system of signs whose pseudo-objectivity soon discloses dangerously flimsy foundations. Then the force of desire appears as the source of what had been shared, even momentarily. In more banal terms, the extravagant gestures that were enacted by hysteria as pathetic attempts at aesthetic expression are staged by paranoia as a violently asserted discourse that aims at being shared not by a desired master but by a dialogical community, in a movement that lends itself more fully to political confrontation.

Hysteria would be embodied by Nadja, the beautiful but lost soul who wanders in the streets until she finds her poet and “master”; typically, this master (Breton) misreads her pathological state in order to transform her into an *anima inspiratrix* until the symptoms become so worrying that he has to abandon her to her forced institutionalization. In the process, she has turned into the Hegelian “beautiful soul” and has transformed the master into a *salaud* (bastard), to use Sartre's term. Or precisely, the hidden truth that neither Nadja or Breton could see was the latent psychosis that erupted soon afterwards and engulfed the young woman. In its delirious creations, paranoia flirts more radically with psychosis and thus cannot be turned so easily into allegory, unless one

41. I have tried to analyze the performative power of such an error of interpretation in *The Ghosts of Modernity* (University of Florida Press, 1996), pp. 27–41.

42. *L'Amour Fou* in *Oeuvres Complètes* II, p. 753.

43. *L'Amour Fou* in *Oeuvres Complètes* II, p. 754.

looks at historical figures such as Hitler (as Elias Canetti does, in the notorious conclusion of *Crowds and Power*, when he forcibly points out the connection between Schreber and Hitler). But this move looks a little cheap today, at least opens a limited point of view on paranoia, one that has been partly disqualified by David Trotter (besides, without the help of Dalí's insights) in his excellent *Paranoid Modernism*.⁴⁴

Breton accordingly refuses to allegorize paranoia in *Mad Love*, but his narrative provides a good example of the positive use of guided and experimental paranoia. He describes how one summer day of 1936, he and his young wife, Jacqueline, were taking an afternoon walk along the sea in Brittany, not far from Lorient, more precisely close to Fort-Bloqué. The weather being gray and sultry, the tide at low ebb, they had nothing to do but follow the shore and gaze at dull debris left by the sea. Breton and his wife felt more and more ill at ease; a sense of separation seemed to push them apart; and when they saw a little fort they ended up choosing different paths and walking far from one another. Breton was even wishing that he would go back immediately or simply leave his wife in order to relieve the tension. Back in Lorient, when he described their excursion to his family, everyone asked whether they had seen the "Villa of the Loch." The place they had passed when they felt most oppressed was a house in which a few years earlier a man had savagely killed his wife for sordid calculations. The garden along which they had walked when they had felt their love wither was the place where the murderer had raised silver foxes. Breton calls up several paintings describing scenes of murders and then concludes that something of the place's bad aura must have influenced their strange behavior. A few other coincidences are adduced: he and his wife were precisely reading books with "foxes" in their titles. The worst feeling of despondency occurred when they were closest to the wall where the foxes' cages had been; Breton adds that it was as if the wall had been transparent! What had been experienced as a "living nightmare" of one afternoon could not be due to chance: "Everything happened as if one had been the victim of a most cunning machination from powers that remain until now quite obscure."⁴⁵ The formulation is most vague, and Breton despairs of convincing a skeptical reader. On the surface, his point is not to demonstrate the workings of paranoia but to elaborate a theory of love and its contingencies.

It seems that Breton believed his own theory. Whether one accepts the idea that the scene of a murder will affect innocent tourists two years after the fact is immaterial. Breton's suggestion that he has been the plaything of occult forces for a few hours follows the structure of paranoia more than that of superstition. In such a pattern, nothing is left to chance: sudden mood swings can be explained by rays, ghosts, emanations, the most archaic contaminations implying dead people and even animals. It is a world full of magical meaning, precisely because in it everything has to be meaningful. The main issue is not reality and surreality but rationality and surrationality. Paranoia maintains strong echoes of its association with the *nous*. A more dispassionate approach, such as that of Freud himself — who hated any suggestion of occultism (although he believed in telepathy⁴⁶) — might limit itself to observing that the curious incident took place on 20 July 1936 and that on 6 September 1936, Jacqueline suddenly left Breton after a violent marital crisis. Jacqueline went away for a whole month, leaving him to care for their young daughter without giving

44. David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism: Literary Experiment, Psychosis and the Professionalization of English Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

45. *Oeuvres Complètes* II, pp. 776–77.

46. See John Forrester, "Psychoanalysis: Gossip, Telepathy and/or Science," in *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 243–59.

any news of her whereabouts. Breton wrote the account of their walk and momentary estrangement that seems to announce potential rifts between 28 August and 1 September, which was also the time when he put together various pieces to make up the book he called *Mad Love*. In a very Freudian manner, the account of the doomed walk functioned as a symptom of a deeper “disturbance of love” rather than of memory. It was necessary for a recapitulation that wished to make sense of a strange event and may even have functioned as a performative action precipitating another crisis, if not one more outspoken, at least acted out this time. The composition of the whole book was also a way of probing the madness of his love and perhaps the madness of mourning it (in case Jacqueline had decided not to come back). From the basic facts of life — and it is obvious that Breton did not invent these incidents — what emerges is less a totally irrational belief in auras or vibrations linked to certain places than the idea that all of these facts and factors can be organized in a productive paranoia by the act of writing.

Through the transformation of Surrealist doctrine and practice from a praise of hysteria disclosing the irresistible of universal Desire based on seduction to a practice of guided paranoia making sense of the world but differently, we return to what David Trotter has called “paranoid modernism.” We touch here one of the most powerful mainsprings of the evolution of Modernism as a whole. Trotter has a very good chapter on paranoia in Wyndham Lewis,⁴⁷ but he does not stress that this is a theme developed relatively late, and that *Tarr* (a novel he does not examine, in conformity with his thesis) is above all dedicated to exploiting the subversive forces of hysteria to the full. In its revisions between the 1918 and the 1928 versions, the novel systematically takes stock of the modes of hysteria available to the artists and *déclassés* who interact so curiously and violently in the pre-war Paris called up by Lewis. The fact that it is a German, Kreissler, who rapes another German, a woman named Bertha, before shooting a Russian Jew in a grotesquely climactic duel, shows how far hysteria can go before leading one almost logically to the murderous logic of exclusion and persecution often disclosed in paranoia. *Tarr*’s complex textual evolution announces the profound shift in values that marks the end of the 1920s and confirms that the evolution analyzed in French surrealism had a counterpart in Anglo-Saxon high modernism.

* * * *

As we have seen, through the issue of seduction, the hysterical style of Modernism poses the question of woman, or rather of femininity and masculinity, an issue which can generate panic for men and women alike. Hysteria’s main question according to Lacan (“Am I a man or a woman?”) leads to a troubling and productive doubt — since, indeed, it took two sides, the seduced interns and the enraptured hysterics, to produce the ecstasies so much admired by the Surrealists. This has had important consequences for what is commonly called “high” Modernism, a Modernism which wishes to distinguish itself from a commodified mass culture. I am, of course, alluding to Andreas Huyssen’s objections to a Modernism identified with literary or artistic experimentation, neo-fascistic a-historicism and a male dominated authoritarian culture of elitism.⁴⁸ On this view, Modernism would be a male hysteria compulsively rejecting any suspicion of femininity in the name of a new “hardness” and poetic specialization: as Pound and Eliot wanted it, the new poet

47. David Trotter, *Paranoid Modernism*, pp. 284–325.

48. Andreas Huyssen, “Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism’s Other” in *After the Great Divide* (Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 45.

is a “professional” and not a feminized dilettante who dabbles in versifying. For Huyssen, the Modernist as “serious artist” chooses as his most threatening enemy the specter of a Victorian culture identified with a “bitch” and a botched civilization that had given birth to the Great War. But such a perspective should be qualified if not resisted, and the example of Surrealism confirms certain of these reservations. The role of the War is clearly crucial but the main divide is not before and after 1914 or even 1918, but before and after 1929–30. Or rather, it was the need to assert a discourse about the war as hysteria (such as one sees it in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*) that seems to have retarded the possibilities implied by paranoid readings.

It would be tempting to see a confirmation of this idea in the first text by André Breton in which he mimes automatic writing and psychotic speech, all at once. Before Breton worked with Babinski and was forced to confront hysteria, at least through a direct refutation of it, he had a previous encounter with psychotic delusion. At the time of the Saint-Dizier discoveries of Freud and of psychotic discourse, Breton encountered a particular type of delirium: it was a soldier who had been traumatized by the battle and who henceforth had stopped believing in the reality of war. For this shell-shocked patient, the only way to survive psychically was to believe that the whole battle had been a simulacrum: the bloody fields, ruins and corpses were an illusion manipulated by occult powers. Moreover, it was an esthetic illusion aiming at creating the “sublime.” This delirious discourse had such a powerful effect on Breton that he decided to copy it and transform it into a prose poem, his first prose piece in fact, simply entitled: “Subject.” There he simply let the soldier speak in a sort of dramatic monologue. He begins with a wonderfully well chosen double entendre on becoming a warrior of madness: “How I wish I could harden myself (*m’aguerrir*) one day, with the help of God.”⁴⁹ The speaking subject announces that he feels that all of humanity watches him and that he is ready to become an experimenter who will sacrifice his reason for the good of all. He cannot refuse this call: “To what would my refusal serve. — Exploring the so-called murderous zone, it became child’s play for me to denounce blatant imposture.”⁵⁰ The denunciation of such “imposture” takes on epic proportions when he evokes his past experience during a battle:

Knocked out by gypsies, lost between ramps, a waltzer would fall once in a while, lifting his hand to his vermilion rose. Using the maximum of art, they have maintained me all that time under the empire of the sublime. And the apparatus of death has not been able to awe me as they thought. I have walked over corpses it is true. One can see such as these in any dissecting room. Quite a number could have been made in wax. Most of the “wounded” looked happy. As to the illusion of spilled blood, you see as well this in any province town when they produce Dumas’s plays. . . . What does it cost to make a whole company disappear little by little?⁵¹

The mechanism of paranoid interpretation of the world follows the most perfect logic: how could the spectacle of frenzied mass-slaughter and mechanized destruction be believable? Of course, for Babinski, this “subject” would have been called a simulator, and treated as such, but he is clearly not a hysteric. Breton’s clever title stresses the ambiguity of a “subject” who will never be objecti-

49. “Sujet,” in *Nord-Sud*, April 1918, *Oeuvres Complètes I*, p. 24.

50. Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes I*, p. 24.

51. Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes I*, p. 25.

fied by medical knowledge. The subject's refusal of the reality of war is radical and goes much further than the logics of persecution displayed by Yossarian in Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*. When the whole world has become a simulacrum, it demonstrates how "little of reality" it contains. Similarly, Breton's 1934 "Introduction to the Discourse on the Scarcity of Reality" refuses to believe in the tyranny of reality. He writes: "In reality, am I sleeping in a bed made up of elder marrow? Enough! I don't know: this must be true in some way since I am saying it."⁵²

We can understand why "Subject," this amazingly powerful prose text of 1918, immediately caught the attention of Paul Valéry and Jean Paulhan. However, both seem to believe that Breton invented it from several patients, whereas it is likely that he just transcribed one monologue. Here the idea that the whole world is a simulacrum generates a paranoid interpretation reshaping reality but also producing a sharp critique of what is taken as "real" by people who have blindly accepted it. Indeed, a little later, Breton would quote Kraepelin and Freud together⁵³: here they merge. It is as if Freud presented us a President Schreber who would not stop at transforming homosexual fantasies into a cosmic struggle against an evil God, but would show the whole war as an improbable sick joke, a trick put on for his unique esthetic delectation. As Pascal would say, there are situations when one would be very insane not to become insane — and it is from this awareness that the text derives both its subversive power and its sombre beauty.

The "paranoid style" that Modernism develops in the 1930s shifts this very same ground by multiplying levels of reality while posing the question of the big Other, whether the Other be situated as the "enemy" that Lewis was so fond of creating for his own endless execration, or for an Other that, as with Joyce, forces writing to descend into the deepest recesses of female schizophrenia. Thus *Finnegans Wake* was in great part written for a "hebephrenic" Lucia Joyce, a psychotic daughter who can be seen as Joyce's "ideal reader" and main dialogical interlocutor of the book.⁵⁴ In fact, Lucia simply acted out Joyce's most paranoid delusions of grandeur. Curiously, paranoia might have been the answer to the quandary in which hysterical high Modernism had found itself: for, as both Salvador Dalí and Thomas Pynchon have shown, paranoia is one concept that can bridge effortlessly the old gap between high and low culture. Dalí's solution has been to project his archaic phobias (his fear of grasshoppers and rotting donkeys for instance) into images that would acquire a universal validity. They even seduced Freud, who could remark in 1938 that Dalí showed an obvious talent (an admission he never made facing Breton's poetry). Perhaps, it is true, he merely reacted to Dalí's incipient academism. Whatever the motivation, he could finally see that this paranoid style was reshaping a world teeming with wild fantasies while reinterpreting it with a semblance of rational order.

Closer to us, a (very) late Modernist such as Pynchon has learned to tap the inexhaustible American idea of a "paranoid style" in politics, tracing the movement further back in time; to a Puritan heritage obsessed with ideas of predestination or the new purity found again in the wilderness. Again, the main danger lies in a feared but desired and necessary encounter with the Other. Oedipa Maas discovers another America through creative paranoia in *The Crying of Lot 49*, while her psychoanalyst is a former Nazi whose job in death camps was to render Jews catatonic. His name, Doctor Hilarius, shows that we should not take him too seriously, no more than the pyro-

52. "Introduction au discours sur le peu de réalité" in Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes* II, p. 278.

53. In a letter to Tzara from 1919, quoted in Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes* I, p. 1105.

54. I have tried to develop this point in *James Joyce and the Politics of Egoism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 19–23.

technics of paper rockets launched from Nazi Germany that are still hovering above our heads in *Gravity's Rainbow*.

In this context, it cannot be a coincidence that Aragon should have tried to define Modernism in the twelfth issue of the *Surrealist Revolution*, the first issue to be illustrated (and abundantly so) by Dalí, a modernism he sees hesitating between hysteria and paranoia. In an essay written in 1929 and devoted to the new decade, "Introduction to 1930," Aragon writes:

You will not see, behind what constitutes the modernity of a period, the fever it generates, a fever which merits the name of modernism and needs a definition. Modernism is the acceptance of concrete watchwords made up of these modern words, objects and ideas whose evocation implies a number of particular claims, among which those of individuals who first feel their force and launch them first.⁵⁵

If the definition is fuzzy, it has the merit of positing a bridge between the avant-garde constituted by Surrealism and the poetologic sense of Modernism, which is in fact the meaning institutionalized in current academic discussions. Thus, Aragon concludes his hesitant definition with: "Poets are closer to seismographers than to citizens. . . . [T]o analyze modernism is to analyze the rapport between poetry and its time."⁵⁶ Nevertheless, a sweeping avant-gardist discourse reasserts a political urge once more at the end of the section — the modern is called the "raw nerve" of an epoch's consciousness, and it has to be hit hard by "armed people who know where to wound it best." The longish essay concludes on the notion that the modern is now in the hand of the police, not of poets — Aragon sees around him the "teeming signs of a new violence."⁵⁷ If this confirms the emergence of a new paranoid Modernism, in its paranoia such aggressiveness remains Modernist in the sense that it does want to abolish everything or create a *tabula rasa* of values and doctrines. Just a little before this, Aragon had asserted that Surrealism and Modernism had always gone hand in hand and still would, and that all the "precursors" the Surrealists had claimed for themselves — a practice which, as he notes, elicited some sneers from the Dadaists and other avant-gardists — would evince in one way or another the qualities of a fundamental Modernism.⁵⁸ This tends to confirm that the Surrealists (some of them at least; it is no doubt Aragon who was closest to Anglo-Saxon writers and artists, from Peggy Guggenheim to Pound) were aware of the fact that their avant-garde movement had already turned into Modernism, high or low; it confirms also that their ambivalence facing this inevitable historicization, doubled by an eternizing enshrining in culture, would be translated into the choice between the provocations of a seductive hysteria and a paranoid criticism hitting the Other just where it hurts. Hurting and loving grandpapa Freud was just one step in that direction.

55. Aragon, "Introduction à 1930," in *La Révolution Surréaliste* XII (15 December 1929), p. 58.

56. Aragon, "Introduction à 1930," p. 58.

57. Aragon, "Introduction à 1930," p. 64.

58. Aragon, "Introduction à 1930," p. 62.