The occultation of Surrealism: a study of the relationship between Bretonian Surrealism and western esotericism

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An extended discussion of the various meanings of ‘occultation’ implied by Breton, in my view and in that of other scholars, as well as which specific occultisms he may be referring to, can be found in the first part of chapter four.

Conley, Robert Desnos, 6; Louis Aragon, cited in Walz, Pulp Surrealism, 2; Harris, Surrealist Art, 1; Short, ‘Dada’, 305; Ellenberger, The Discovery, 834.


While the qualification of Surrealism as modernist is not undisputed, discussions about it pale in comparison to those about Modernism itself, and Modernism’s relation to modernity and modernisation, among other things. For a very brief but clear recap of the issues surrounding Modernism, see Susan Stanford Friedman’s excellent articles ‘Definitional Excursions’ and ‘Periodizing Modernism’. Also, Harrison & Wood, Art, 128-9. The relationship between Surrealism and Modernism specifically is discussed by Harris, Surrealist Art, chapter 1.

I subscribe to the ‘antinominal’ approach to the discourse of modernity and enchantment as delineated by Michael Saler. Modernity can be ‘characterised by fruitful tensions between seemingly irreconcilable forces and ideas.’ Saler, ‘Modernity’, 700 and passim. Modernism, a cultural movement within modernity, made re-enchantment or other responses to a perceived state of dis-enchantment, one of its goals. Cf. Griffin, Modernism, 123-5.
In the words of philosopher Michael Löwy (1938): ‘Surrealism is not, has never been, and will never be a literary or artistic school but is a movement of the human spirit in revolt and an eminently subversive attempt to re-enchant the world: an attempt to re-establish the “enchanted” dimensions at the core of human existence – poetry, passion, mad love, imagination, magic, myth, the marvellous, dreams, revolt, utopian ideals – which have been eradicated by this civilization and its values.’ Löwy, *Morning Star*, 1.

Breton, *Manifestoes*, 26; the second definition provided there will be discussed in chapter two.

Even though a bit dated, the classical source on this topic is still the very appropriately entitled Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*.

My reasoning is based upon that of Norbert Bandier, *Sociologie*, 141. More on the rapport in chapter two.


Breton, *Free Rein*, 81.

In chapter one I will explore this notion of the ‘hermetic tradition’, paying attention to its construction within scholarly works as well.


‘Surrealism was a one-man authoritarianism’; Gay, *Modernism*, 145.

Short, ‘Dada’, 305.

Excellently analysed by Bandier, *Sociologie*.

The classical study of the gatekeeper and his/her role in disseminating news and controlling what becomes known and who knows what, is David Manning White’s ‘The “Gate Keeper”’.

Hopkins, *Duchamp*; Kuni, *Brauner*.

Balakian, *André Breton*.

Bataille has been the recipient of many studies, see for instance Ades, *Undercover*; Bois & Krauss, *Formless*; Hollier, *Against Architecture*; and the special issue on Bataille of *Yale French Studies* 78 (1990), edited by Allan Stoekl. For more on Grand Jeu, a fascinating though short-lived movement in itself, see

24 Although the discussion whether the movement passed with him is still ongoing. Breton’s death is frequently given as the final end of Surrealism, as is the moment it was officially declared dead by Jean Schuster (1929–1995) in 1969. Arguably, the movement continued even then, and some artists today still considered themselves Surrealists. Conley, *Automatic Woman*, 4. Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 624.

25 Nadeau, *The History*.

26 Bourniquel, ‘Magie’, 775.

27 Bate, *Photography*, 6, 7, 252. The first nail in Surrealism’s coffin, in this regard, was the 1936 exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, curated by Barr at New York’s MoMA; Barr, ‘A Brief’. Greenberg considered Surrealism reactionary, and as he was of the opinion that art and politics were two entirely separate spheres, he completely failed to grasp Surrealism, with its strong political motivations; as discussed by Sawin, ‘Aux Etats-Unis’, 113-4 and passim. Also, Auther, ‘The Decorative’, 342, 345, 351, 353ff.


30 I am paraphrasing here the periodical terminology Jules Monnerot used in his history of Surrealism (1945) while changing the periodization significantly. Monnerot distinguished between a ‘phase of gestation’ (the early 1920s) and a ‘phase of decline’ (the late 1930s), with an ‘eruptive and creative’ phase in between; Monnerot, *La poésie*, 71, 74.

31 Suleiman, *Subversive Intent*, 150.


33 These approaches are discussed throughout Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, but see in particular 156-91, 296, 311-3, 334-55.

34 A particularly relevant study in this case, focussing upon the occult conspiracy of modern art, is Robsjohn-Gibbings, *Mona Lisa*.

35 The study of Western esotericism, and currents related to it, is a relatively young field. Important contributions, to both its establishment and terminological definitions, have been made by Antoine Faivre and Wouter Hanegraaff, in the following seminal works: Faivre, *Access*; Faivre, ‘Renaissance Hermeticism’; idem and Voss, ‘Western Esotericism’; van den Broek and Hanegraaff, *Gnosis and Hermeticism*; Hanegraaff, *New Age*; idem, ‘The Study’; and idem, *Esotericism and the Academy*. For a brief and clear overview of the definitions and methodological approach proposed by these and a few other important authors, see Bogdan,
Western Esotericism, chapter 1. For definitions and developments of Western esotericism and occultism specifically, see Hanegraaff, ‘Esotericism’, and idem, ‘Occult/occultism’. Compare Treitel’s definition in A Science. Other recent key-publications that provide a good insight into the field include Hanegraaff et al, Dictionary; Hanegraaff, Western Esotericism; and idem and Pijnenburg, Hermes. Many scholarly issues and biases that still plague this field are pointed out by Hanegraaff in ‘Textbooks’. The foremost journal of the study of esotericism is Aries, published by Brill.

36 In my view historical occultism and Spiritualism are two separate currents, originating in the nineteenth century, which both belong to the overarching category of esotericism. Note that the discussion whether Spiritualism is part of occultism or not is still on going, as is the discussion if occultism is part of esotericism or something separate but alike. Cf. Hanegraaff, ‘Occult/occultism’; Pasi, ‘Occultism’; idem, ‘The Modernity’. Also, Deveney, ‘Spiritualism’; Linse, ‘Spiritism’; Monroe, Laboratories.

37 Looking back later Breton defined the early twenties as the ‘epoch of intuition’, and the late twenties as the ‘epoch of reason’; Breton, What is, 116-7.

38 Breton, Conversations, 217.

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1 Carrouges, Les données fondamentales; idem, Basic Concepts.
3 Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 10-11.
4 Carrouges’s ‘Surréalisme et occultisme’ had appeared in the Cahiers d’Hermès, 1947; Breton referred to it in Conversations, 218 (interview of 1948).
5 On the important difference between influence and appropriation see Mayer, Jena Romanticism, 15-7; and my discussion in the Introduction.
6 In both Manifestoes, for instance, Breton writes about such great surrealist heroes as Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Baudelaire, Novalis, de Nerval, de Sade and Apollinaire; Breton, Manifestoes, 16, 19, 25, 26, 27, 36, 39, 45, 127, 174. With
the expansion of Surrealism to include the visual arts painters and sculptors were added to the list as well, who are all enumerated in Alexandrian, *Surrealist Art*, 9-22.

7 *Littérature* 11-12 (October 1923), 24-5. ‘Erutarettel’ is ‘literature’ spelled backwards. For more see also Cowling, ‘An Other Culture’, 455.

8 See also Matheson, *The Sources*, 292-4.


11 We find furthermore a few (German) philosophers, such as Leibniz and Hegel, a nineteenth century doctor (Charcot), a collection of stories (the Thousand-and-One Nights), and a character from crime novels (Fantômas). Visual artists are notably underrepresented; the Belgian artist and poet Maeterlinck is mentioned, for whom occultism was a very important influence although it is unclear how much of that was known to the proto-Surrealists in 1923. Apuleius is also included, and although there are links between his work and esotericism, I would hazard that he has not been included for that reason specifically.

12 Laurant, ‘Péladan’. For more on the Rose-Croix Salons, see Pincus-Witten, *Occult Symbolism*.

13 For practical reasons, ‘Romanticism’ should be understood to include Symbolism as well.

14 For some general background on the reception of Romanticism in Surrealism, see for instance Hubert, *Surrealism and the Book*, chapter five; or Massoni, ‘Surrealism’.


16 Breton, *Free Rein*, 120; I have paraphrased Breton somewhat here. Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a Christian visionary. For more see Lamm, *Emmanuel Swedenborg*. Furthermore, Rose et al., *Scribe of Heaven*; Larsen et al., *Emmanuel Swedenborg*.

17 Chadwick, ‘Eros or Thanatos’, 52.

18 Breton, O.C., III: 1378. For more on Balzac, occultism and Séraphîta, see for instance Béguin, ‘Poetry’, 13, 17; Blix, ‘The Occult Roots’; McIntosh, *Éliphas Lévi*, 195-99. For a specific study of Balzac and Swedenborg—whose ideas Balzac knew only imperfectly, by the way—see Boyer, ‘Balzac’; and Baron, ‘Le tradition’.

Béguin, ‘L’Androgyne’. The article includes three illustrations. See also Belton, The Beribboned, 213.

The ‘Correspondances’ were part of the collection Fleurs du Mal; first edition 1857 and second, censored but also enlarged edition 1861. Blix, ‘The Occult Roots’, 261; Béguin, ‘Poetry’, 14, 17; Gibbons, Spirituality, 15. A good study of Swedenborg’s influence upon the nineteenth century French literary landscape generally is Wilkinson’s The Dream, chapters 4 and 5 specifically for a discussion of Balzac and Baudelaire. Older studies exploring Swedenborgianism and also Illuminism, besides esotericism and mysticism generally, in the work of Baudelaire, are Amiot, Baudelaire; Arnold, Ésotérisme; or Eigeldinger, Le Platonisme. See further Balakian, Literary Origins, 45-61; and idem, The Symbolist, 12-53.

Breton: ‘Rimbaud is Surrealist in the way he lived, and elsewhere’, Manifestoes, 25.

We will come back to it briefly in chapter three.

Béguin, ‘Poetry’, 19-24. Kaplan, ‘L’imagination’; McIntosh, Éliphas Lévi, 204. The pre-eminent study (still) of Rimbaud’s alchemy is Starkie, Arthur Rimbaud. Other relevant works are L’alchemie du verbe, by Jean Richer—who, incidentally, also published a study of de Nerval in 1947, Gérard de Nerval et les doctrines ésotériques, which Breton read—and Guerdon, Rimbaud. See also Wilde, ‘Arthur Rimbaud’.

E.g. Bays, ‘Rimbaud’.

For instance, Breton had considered using de Nerval’s term and concept of ‘supernaturalism’ (‘surnaturalisme’ in French) for his own movement; Breton, Manifestoes, 25. See further Bate, Photography, 98; Cellier, ‘Breton’. Cf. Jouffroy, ‘De l’occultation’, 38.

McIntosh, Éliphas Lévi, 198. Fourier, a utopian socialist, is an interesting character who was added to the surrealist pantheon by Breton during the War; see chapter five.

Breton: ‘Hugo is Surrealist when he isn’t stupid’; Manifestoes, 27, see further 222.

1851-1870. See further Béguin, ‘Poetry’, 18-19; Blix, ‘The Occult Roots’.

Viatte, Victor Hugo.

Cf. also Cellier, ‘Breton’, 55

Viatte, Les sources. See Hanegraaff, Esotericism and the Academy, 338-9. Note that the few references Breton makes to Viatte are all to Victor Hugo, and it is possible that he hardly consulted Les sources occultes.

Saurat, ‘Thèmes’; idem, Le religion; idem, Victor Hugo.

Breton, Arcanum 17, 161, 163; idem, Conversations, 218. Also Cellier, ‘Breton’, 50-51; Hammond, Constellations, 132.
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35 Amadou & Kanters, Anthologie.
37 Cellier, ‘Breton’, 55, 60.
38 Breton, Free Rein, 85.
39 Breton, O.C., III: 349-63; Breton, Anthology, 39-52; Breton cites Viatte directly and refers to Éliphas ‘Lévy’ on 49. See also Polizzotti, ‘Introduction: Laughter’, viii.
40 Lamy, André Breton, 146-7; Fabre d’Olivet (1767-1825) was a philologist and esoteric theosophist. Harvey, Beyond Enlightenment, e.g. 49-58, but very critically; also, McCalla, ‘Fabre d’Olivet’. Lévi (1810-1875) is the father of French occultism and possibly the most influential esoteric figure of the last two centuries. Laurant, ‘Lévi’. Charles Fourier (1772-1837) was a radical philosopher, who developed various theories of utopian socialism.
41 Hubert, ‘Notes’, Breton, O.C., IV: 1229.
42 See also Bergé, ‘Illuminism’; Var, ‘Martinism’. After the War Breton wanted to entitle the new surrealist journal ‘Supérieur Inconnu’, but in the end suggested it to Sarane Alexandrian for his journal, which ran from 1995-2001, 2005-06, and 2007-11. ‘Unknown Superior’ is the third degree of the Martinist order as founded by Papus.
43 Such as Dumas, ‘Notes sur André Breton’, 119.
44 Cellier, ‘Breton’, 55.
45 The 1938 Minotaure article but particularly Béguin, ‘Poetry’.
46 Belton, The Beribboned, 121n147. The androgyne, or hermaphrodite, is also a very important and powerful alchemical symbol. The Surrealists would have been familiar with this, but the sexual element of it, unity of male and female in sex and/or in love, prevailed over, although not eclipsed, the alchemical meaning. See also Chadwick, ‘Eros’, 51-2; Peters, ‘Women’, 467; further discussion in chapter five.
47 Michelet, La sorcière. For a brief analysis and history, see Petitier, La Sorcière, 9-16. For more on Michelet, see Bénichou, Le temps, 497-564.
49 McIntosh, Éliphas Lévi, 206.
50 Bataille wrote a preface to a new edition of La Sorcière (a 1946 edition by Éditions des Quatre Vents) and devoted a chapter to Michelet and his Sorcière in Literature and Evil, 45-57; one can safely assume that this familiarity with Michelet’s works can be extended to the rest of the Bataille group.
51 Häxan, directed by Benjamin Christensen (1922), known in English as Witchcraft
through the Ages. Breton and Aragon, ‘The Fiftieth’.
52 Aragon and Breton, ‘The Fiftieth’, 320. E.g. Michelet, La Sorcière, 186.
53 For more on Häxan, see Milne, ‘Haxan/Witchcraft’, 71-72; and Stevenson, Witchcraft.
54 In ‘The Automatic Message’, see chapter three.
58 See particularly Leiris, ‘À propos’, 111-12. The Livre Thoth is attributed to Court de Gébelin, although it is really by Etteila (Jean-Baptiste Alliette).
59 In Documents 2 (1929): 111.
60 Le Musée can boast 365 (!) illustrations in black and white, and a further ten in colour.
61 Belton, The Beribboned, 207; Warlick, Max Ernst, 94-5. Abraham the Jew and Flamel are discussed in chapter four.
62 Minotaure 6 (1935): 38-44. Breton had had his palm read already in 1917 by bookshop owner Adrienne Monnier, who could ‘see his fascination with madness and insanity’ in his hand; Monnier, The Very Rich, 86-89.
63 Grillot de Givry, Le Musée, 262-279, figures 240-259. Very little research has been done on the visual influence of Le Musée; see Belton, The Beribboned, 207, 210-1. Warlick, Max Ernst, 30-3, 138, 204, 210, is the only one who actually points out iconographical similarities between illustrations from Le Musée and surrealist paintings, specifically by Ernst.
64 For a brief introduction into Surrealism’s primitivism, see Maurer, ‘Dada’; see further Stansell, ‘Surrealist Racial’, 121-6.
66 Leiris wrote a review of Myths of the Origin of Fire in Documents 5 (2nd series): 311; Callois refers to a number of Frazer’s books for instance in Minotaure 5 (1934): 24. See Rabinovitch, Surrealism, e.g. 45-6; and also Maurer, ‘Dada’, 549.
67 Usually these titles occur only once, and often incomplete, in notes, and/or offhand. They may not have been known by anyone other than the author of the article in question. Callois refers in Minotaure 5 (1934): 24 and 24 n11 to La Magie et l’Astrologie dans l’Antiquité et au Moyen Age by A. Maury (1884) and Mythes, cultes et religion (French translation, 1896) by Andrew Lang. Esquisse d’une théorie générale de la Magie (volume VII, 1904) by Hubert & Mauss, in an

68 Breton, ‘The Automatic’. I will discuss this essay at length in chapter three.

69 Flournoy, From India; idem, Nouvelles observations; idem, Esprits et mediums.

70 Cf. Choucha, Surrealism, 84-7, and see also Albers, ‘Mimesis’. He was furthermore a member of the Société de Psychologie Collective, which counted the collective expressions of the sacred, the miraculous and the occult among its topics of interest; Hand, Michel Leiris, 53. Leiris reviewed a French translation of the Monas Hieroglyphica (1564) by John Dee in Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution 9-10 (1927): 61-63. In other places he referred to Dogme et rituel by Lévi and Agrippa’s De occulta philosophia (respectively Documents 7 (1929): 350 and Documents 1 (1929): 51); as well as to De la démonomanie des sorciers (1580) by Jean Bodin (Documents 7 (1929): 350), as did Callois (Minotaure 5 (1934): 25n15).

71 See also Clinton, Mechanical Occult, 58-9. See Hollier, Le Collège, for a selection of texts by Bataille, Callois and Leiris that deal with magic, the sacred and secrecy. For an excellent discussion of Callois’s concept of the sacred, see Brown, Secret Religion, 77-139. See also Hanegraaff, ‘Defining Religion’, 356.

72 Not much is known about Acéphale, but what is, is the importance that was apparently accorded to the Place de la Concorde as a mysterious place. See Jamin, ‘Un sacré collège’, passim, for more on the College of Sociology, Acéphale, and the role of secrecy. For Bataille secrecy was a politically radical tool; he considered secret societies essential to radical social change. See ‘Confréries, ordres, sociétés secrètes, églises’ by Callois, in Hollier, Le Collège, 268-90, the text of a lecture that was in fact given by Bataille and assumed to be in agreement with his thoughts on secret societies. See further Lütticken, Geheime publiciteit, 31, 33, 34.

73 It is at this point impossible to say what would have fascinated the Surrealists (whether Bretonian or Bataillian) more: Seabrook’s wild travelling adventures, his knowledge and practice of occultism, his (personally experienced) knowledge of and writings about tribal magical and religious practices, his understanding and practice of sadomasochism, or just his eccentric persona generally. See Mileaf, Please Touch, 75-84; idem, ‘Between You’.
Arturo Schwarz and John Moffit have written several books and articles about esoteric aspects of Duchamp's works. For example, Schwarz, The Complete Works; Moffit, Alchemist. Both authors are problematic; Moffit’s arguments are regularly based on quicksand, while Schwarz has been hoodwinked by Duchamp on multiple occasions and may have based much of his analysis on (Duchamp endorsed) misinterpretations, see also Shattuck, ‘The D-S Expedition’, part II. The best study by far is David Hopkins, Marcel Duchamp, chapters 1 and 2, where the various approaches to Duchamp’s possible alchemical pursuits are discussed as well. Hopkins has made a very convincing case for an exchange of specific ideas between Ernst and Duchamp, showing in the process that Duchamp’s ideas were far too idiosyncratic to have transferred easily to the surrealist group generally.

Laville, Pierre Mabille.


Mabille, ‘L’Oeuil’; further discussed in chapter four.

Mabille, Mirror.

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


Arcq, ‘Mirrors’, 102, 105.

Discussed in chapter five.

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

Again, discussed in chapter five.

As far as scholarly studies go—instead of rather speculative popular writings—the pickings are limited to, for example: Amate, ‘Lam’; Clébert, Mythologie; Golan, ‘Matta, Duchamp’; Leiris, Wilfredo Lam. All remark on esotericism only in passing, however.

One scholar has dared broach this topic, Verena Kuni. In Victor Brauner she carefully traces the influence of Spiritualism and Occultism upon Brauner’s thought and in his work during the 1940s and later. See Kuni, Victor Brauner, passim but specifically part III; also idem, ‘Von der Magie’.

See Aberth, Leonora Carrington; Arcq, ‘Mirrors’; Ferentinou, Women Surrealists. See the comments in chapter four.

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

91 Caron, ‘Alchemy V’, 54-5; idem, ‘Canseliet’. Szulakowska, Alchemy, 38; Warlick, Max Ernst, 33.

92 On his ‘hermetical lectures’, see Alleau, ‘Les conférences’.

93 Caron, ‘Canseliet’, 238. According to Canseliet these dinners only took place on three occasions, and D’Ygé, whom Breton apparently did not like, attended only once. Most of Canseliet’s contact with Surrealists took place via an exchange of letters. Letter by Canseliet to the author, Van Lennep, Alchemie, 419.

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


96 Amadou & Kanters, Anthologie, 10-1. Amadou, L’Occultisme, 93-4, and 193, in both cases a citation. See also the notes, where he refers to several of Breton’s publications (chiefly Arcanum 17): 220n77, 220n83, 221-2n85, 231n133, 241n200.


98 D’Ygé’s anthology of ‘hermetic poetry’, Anthologie, consists of excerpts of alchemical manuscripts by (pseudo-) Flamel, Maier and Valentin Basile presented as poetry. In the preface Canseliet positions them as ‘poètes maudits’, an epithet traditionally bestowed upon such poets as Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud and Lautréamont; d’Ygé, Anthologie, 12. Canseliet, meanwhile, was publishing his discovery of alchemical metaphors in the books of Rabelais and Swift, and his reading of Rimbaud’s Voyelles as an alchemical text. Canseliet, ‘Introduction’ to Alchimie. Caron, ‘Canseliet’, 239. Vadé, L’enchantement, 460.

99 Murat, André Breton, 135-7.

100 Lists that are unfortunately unavailable to me.

101 Murat, André Breton, 135-7.

102 Murat, André Breton, 135-7.

103 Dion Fortune (pseudonym of Violet Mary Firth Evans, 1890-1946). Le Cabbale mystique. Paris, 1937. This is a translation of The Mystical Qabalah.

104 Lotus de Païni (pseudonym of Elvezia Gazzotti, 1862-1953), La Magie; idem, Les trois totémisations. In his essay ‘Fronton Virage’ Breton mentioned the ‘old
Rosicrucian tradition’ that the Phrygian red cap symbolises bloody foreskin, a notion taken from Les trois totémisations: Breton, Free Rein, 194 and 288n31.

105 Adamowicz, ‘Hats or Jellyfish’, 83.


107 E.g., Choucha, Surrealism, 24; Szulakowska, Alchemy, 35.


109 It also probably fostered mistakes, such as Breton’s incorrect attribution of various studies by Paracelsus; Breton and Éluard, Dictionnaire, 13ff.


111 Breton first explicitly mentioned this point, as the sublime point, in Mad Love, although he had alluded to it earlier; Breton, Mad Love, 114. See further the discussion in chapter four.

112 Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 12.

113 Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 39.

114 Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 11. He continues, ‘This essential idea of surrealism [the supreme point] comes from the hermetic tradition; it can be found in the Cabal and plays an essential role in Le Zohar, in whose metaphysics it is creation’s point of origin, the point of action in which God created the world and in which everything is contained ab ovo.’ Moreover, ‘[t]he essential role of religion and of hermeticism is to repair the consequence of [the] fall [of mankind from grace] and to reintroduce man into a definitive wonderland [Carrouges, Les données fondamentales, 31: ‘un wonderland définitif’, possibly a reference to Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland, a novel cherished by the Surrealists]. The particular task which hermeticism assigns itself is to allow certain initiates to anticipate the moment of this regaining of the lost powers.’ Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 14, 21.

115 Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 39.

116 Lavergne, André Breton, 21. One notable exception is Alquié, The Philosophy, particularly chapters 2 and 3.


118 Shattuck, ‘The D-S Expedition’, part I. This essay was published in 1972.

119 Monnerot later fell out with Bataille, although contact between them continued. He was successful as a journalist and sociologist. See also Heimonet, Jules Monnerot.

120 Breton, Conversations, 56, 193, 202-3. Cf. Breton, Manifestoes, 114.

121 Lavergne, André Breton, 21, considered La poésie just as ‘suspect’ as Basic Concepts. Stone-Richards( ‘Failure’, 307) heralds it as a ‘great’ book; see his
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article for further analysis.

122 Audoin, Breton, e.g. 106-16, 150-1, 174.
123 Audoin, Les surréalistes, 129; 164.
124 Audoin, Les surréalistes, 165.
125 Chapter four.

126 Balakian, André Breton. Note that Maurice Nadeau, Surrealism’s alleged ‘official biographer’, had already named Breton a ‘magus’ just after the War; Nadeau, ‘Breton, mage du possible’. Balakian’s book was critically reviewed by Shattuck in the same essay where he mentions Carrouges et alia, Shattuck, ‘The D-S Expedition’, part II; and see also Balakian’s (angry) response in Balakian & Shattuck, ‘The Breton Expedition’.

127 Balakian, Literary Origins. Balakian, ‘André Breton et l’hermétisme’, with comments about Carrouges on 9-10; idem, André Breton.
128 See also Balakian & Shattuck, ‘The Breton Expedition’.

130 For more on esotericism and tradition, see Hanegraaff, ‘Tradition’; as well as various studies in Kilcher, Constructing Tradition: in particular idem, ‘Introduction’ and ‘Das Verspätene Wissen’.
131 Yates, Giordano Bruno. On this book’s academic importance, see Hanegraaff, ‘Beyond’; and idem, Esotericism and the Academy, 324-34.
133 Mentioned in André Breton are furthermore, among others, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Hugo, de Nerval, Achim von Arnim, Lautréamont and Valéry.
134 After the War Blake was added to the canon of Great Precursors of Surrealism, specifically for his qualities as a visual artist.
135 See also Balakian, Literary Origins.
136 Laurant, ‘Lévi’.
137 Balakian, André Breton, 35.
138 Monnerot, La Poésie, 86 and chapter IV generally. Monnerot had compared the surrealist group (of Bataille), which he characterised by the German term ‘Bund’, with secret Christian Gnostic movements; both were secretive because of political reasons, just as Bataille’s actual secret revolutionary society ‘Acéphale’ in fact was.
139 My discussion of approaches and strategies is inspired by Surette, The Birth, 9.
140 Balakian, André Breton, 35; idem, ‘Reminiscences’, 23.
141 Cf. Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 3.
142 Hanegraaff, Esotericism and the Academy, chapter 1, 240-52; idem, ‘Tradition’; idem, New Age Religion, 327-30. Laurant, L’Ésotérisme, 37-41. Cf. for instance
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Versluis, *Restoring Paradise*, 137-8, as an example of universalist thinking. For an interesting and brief overview of ‘all’ the esoteric tradition, see Godwin, *The Golden Thread*.


144 Nevertheless many French authors use the term to refer to (non-Guénonian) esoteric thought, such as Dumas, ‘Notes sur André Breton et la pensée “traditionelle”’. Compare Béguin, ‘Poetry’.

145 Batache, *Surréalisme*. Batache has an earlier book to his name: *La mysticité charnelle de René Crevel* (1977), but no more about him is known.


148 Guénon praised Daumal, a prominent member of Grand Jeu, who, with other Grand Jeu-members, had been reading Guénon’s writings since 1924, and had been much taken with it. Kathleen Rosenblatt has written an excellent study of Daumal, in which Guénon’s role as his teacher is also discussed: Rosenblatt, *René Daumal*. See also Accart, Guénon, e.g. 603-15; Sedgwick, *Against*, 37.

149 Van Lennep relates how in 1924 Breton, at the instigation of Artaud, Leiris and Naville, considered some sort of collaboration with Guénon. Van Lennep, ‘L’art alchimique’, 303; idem, *Alchimie*, 417-8. Naville was in fact sent as an emissary, but both Breton and Guénon felt that there were too many differences, and nothing came of it; Accart, Guénon, 114-23. On Grand Jeu and its brief association with Surrealism see the catalogue *Grand Jeu et Surréalisme* of 2003; Couillard, ‘Aux frontières’ and ‘Une revue’; Faivre, ‘Grand Jeu’. Also, Duplessis, *Surréalisme*, 123-25; Barry, ‘Matérialisme’. The differences between Surrealism and Grand Jeu were quite persistent and often proved insurmountable.


152 This agenda as well as the author’s admiration for Guénon are clear in a brief and rather weak essay, Batache, ‘André Breton’. See also Accart’s critique of Batache, in Guénon, 25.

153 For example, Breton’s name is included in lists of authors and thinkers

154 Hanegraaff, ‘Tradition’, 1132-3. Rosenblatt, René Daumal, 106-09. Sedgwick, Against, 37. For one thing, Traditionalism usually accords wisdom from the East an important role. Surrealism took hardly anything from the East, let alone from Eastern wisdom traditions; they looked resolutely to the West (France specifically). In this context, compare also Biès, ‘André Breton’, 36-46, who takes Breton to task for not sufficiently grounding his movement in Eastern tradition; a misunderstanding of Surrealism entirely. Primitivism was of course very important in Surrealism, but here the Surrealists looked predominantly to French Polynesia: a source of many a fascinating carved statue, but no particular esoteric wisdom traditions attractive to the West.


156 Obviously Guénon’s disdain for Freud presented another and equally insurmountable obstacle. The politic situation of Guénon and of Traditionalism is somewhat more complex than I have represented it here. See Accart, Guénon, passim and particularly book III; Sedgwick, Against, part I.

157 Godwin, The Theosophical, 204; and Hanegraaff, Esotericism and the Academy, 243-4.

158 See for instance Laurant, L’Ésotérisme, 17-8.

159 Godwin, The Theosophical, passim.

160 Adorno, ‘Theses’.

161 Laurant, ‘Politics’; idem, L’Ésotérisme; Goodrick-Clarke, The Occult; Hanegraaff, Esotericism and the Academy, 243-4, also 350-1; Pasi, ‘The Modernity’, 59-62; For an approach aligning esotericism with fascism, see Harvey, Beyond Enlightenment.

162 Godwin, The Theosophical, 204.

163 I am not quite sure why Audoin’s books were side lined.

164 Alexandrian in fact served as Breton’s private secretary for some time. Alexandrian has written many books on Surrealism and Surrealists, and on the occult besides (Histoire de la philosophie occulte). Later in life Alexandrian headed the journal Supérieur Inconnu (see above). Alexandrian is considered a bit of a dilettante writer, unjustly. See also his obituary: Marcus Williamson. ‘Sarane Alexandrian: French art historian, poet and right-hand man to André Breton’. The Independent, Wednesday 28 October 2009. Waldberg fraternized with Surrealists such as Ernst, Masson, Tanguy and Tanning both before and after the Second World War.

165 Alexandrian for instance in André Breton, in the brief chapter ‘The sacred and the occult’, 158-65; Waldberg, Surrealism, e.g. 43, 44.

166 Held, L’Oeil, 94 (my emphasis).
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168 Auther, ‘The Decorative’.


170 Béhar, Mélusine II: Occulte-Occultation.


173 Held, L’Oeil, 95 (my emphasis). One author in the N.R.F. homage to Breton after his death took him to task, quite sternly, for loving the tarot, engaging occult sciences, and generally meddling with all manner of ‘hurluberlus’, or strange chaps. Etiemble, ‘Breton?’ 842-7.

174 Many psychologists (of whom Held is one) have tried to cleanse dynamic psychiatry, psychology and psychoanalysis from the supposed ‘taint’ of what was later termed parapsychology, and from Spiritualism particularly, see Méheust, Somnambulisme, vol. II for the French, and Wolfram, The Stepchildren for the German situation. This issue will be further explored in chapter two.

175 Find a description of this type of milieu in Hanegraaff, Esotericism and the Academy, 295-313, 334-50.

176 Massoni, ‘Surrealism’, 196 (italics mine).

177 Kanters, ‘Ésotérisme’, 16.


179 Including one book which Kanters co-edited; relations between all these authors and sources are quite convoluted.


184 In the 1947 essay ‘Ascendant Sign’, Breton argues for the prevalence of analogical thinking over ‘discursive thinking’, because it allows for greater complexity, more dynamics, is more empirical (!) and provides an ‘infinitely richer network of relations’; Breton, Free Rein, 104-7. See furthermore the comments in chapter five.

185 Caron, ‘Canseliet’, 239.

186 Carrouges, ‘Le dynamique’.

187 Lamy, ‘Le lexique’; based upon her 1977 book André Breton. Note again the use of ‘traditional’ for something which is esoteric but certainly not Traditionalist.
Breton, *Arcanum 17*. See also Matheson, *Sources*, 745. *Arcanum 17* is further discussed in chapter five.

Lamy, *André Breton*, passim.

Breton, *Arcanum 17*, passim (less so in *Apertures*).

Mitchel, *Secrets*; Rabinovitch, *Surrealism*.

Choucha, *Surrealism*.

Hilke, *L’écriture*.

See also Barry, ‘Matérialisme’.


Hinton, ‘Max Ernst’.

Balakian is a historian of literature, not art.


Silberer, *Probleme*. Warlick, *Max Ernst*, e.g. 27-9, 45-7, 51-6.


The first study by Caws, renowned expert on Surrealism, features a chapter on alchemy in the poetry of Breton and Bachelard, and is one of the first English works to address this issue: Caws, *Surrealism and the Literary Imagination*, 37-50.

Only Warlick mentions Lennep, and then just sparingly. Lennep, ‘L’Art alchimique’; note that this article is included in the French translation of Holmyard’s *Alchemy* only and is not part of the English original. Lennep, *Alchimie*.


Art critics from the *October* school in particular have been much taken with Bataille, sometimes at the expense of Breton. Main proponents are Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Denis Holier and Hal Foster. For instance, Krauss, *The Originality*; Bois & Krauss, *Informe*; Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*. A very recent critical discussion of *October* and the (relevance of the) art criticism produced under its banner is reproduced in Elkins, *The State*, specifically the ‘Second Roundtable’, 181-230.

Gauthier, *Surréalisme*.


For example, the more or less esoteric category Gauthier distinguishes is woman as instrument of the devil, which includes the ‘voyante’ (seer), and the sorceress. The latter woman can be good, the ‘femme-fée’ (fairy), or bad, the ‘magicienne’ (sorceress). Gauthier, *Surréalisme*, 182-5.

Belton, *The Beribboned*.

Ferentinou, *Women Surrealists*. On Varo, see also Kaplan, *Unexpected*
Journeys.

210 Aberth, Leonora Carrington. Arcq, ‘Mirrors’.

211 See further chapter five.

212 Breton, Trajectoire.

213 See also Breton, Manifestoes, 26-7, which is a list of Precursors detailing the discipline in which they are surrealist; e.g., ‘Swift is Surrealist in malice. Sade is Surrealist in sadism’, ‘Baudelaire is Surrealist in morality. Rimbaud is Surrealist in the way he lived, and elsewhere.’


216 The term ‘Surrealists despite themselves’ was an invention of Breton’s for the 1947 exhibition; chapter five; and Mundy, Surrealism, 283.

217 Breton, Manifestoes, 153.

218 Cf. Cunningham, ‘The Futures’; and Massoni, ‘Surrealism’. Besides in these two sources, the relationship between Surrealism and Romanticism has been further explored by Balakian, Literary Origins; idem, André Breton; Bonnet, André Breton; Clair, ‘Le surréalisme’; Gille, Trajectoire; LaCoss, ‘Introduction’; Löwy, ‘Explosive Charge’; idem, Morning Star. For an excellent analysis of Surrealism’s roots in German Romanticism—which became increasingly important by the end of the 1930s, as I will explore in chapter five—see Mitchell, Secrets, 61-74; further also Béguin, L’Ame, 387-94.

219 Chapter four.


221 Hanegraaff, ‘Tradition’.

222 Amadou and Kanters, Anthologie, see above.

223 But see Poulat, ‘Ésotérisme’; Hanegraaff, ‘Romanticism’.

224 Compare Veselay: ‘Surrealism does not begin in 1919 or 1924, but much earlier, in the Romanticism of the nineteenth century, and, to some extent, even earlier in the esoteric and hermetic traditions of the Renaissance.’ Veseley, ‘Surrealism’, 87.


226 See for instance Ferentinou’s investigation of the occult work of Ithell Colquhoun, who was a member of several ritual magical orders; Ferentinou, ‘Ithell Colquhoun’; idem, Women Surrealists.

227 Ringbom, The Sounding.

228 One of the interesting thing about the politics of Surrealism is that while the Surrealists were very left-wing, radical and progressive where political issues were concerned, they were at the same time rather conservative with regards to other issues, not least women’s rights and the rights of the peoples of France’s (former)

229 Even though I distinguish between historical Occultism on the one hand, and Spiritualism on the other, that is an opinion, one not necessarily shared by all scholars either now or at the time of Surrealism; see also the difference between Hanegraaff, ‘Occult/Occultism’ and Pasi, ‘Occultism’.


231 Benjamin, ‘Surrealism’, 49.

232 I will discuss Surrealism’s relation to dynamic psychiatry and the role of mesmerism and hypnotism in the following chapter, while the surrealist obsession with mediums, including those who foretell futures, will be discussed in chapter three.

233 Bauduin & Kokkinnen, ‘Introduction to occulture’ (forthcoming); Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment I & II*.


235 Since the outset of Surrealism (or more properly, since the days of Dada) Breton connected his movement to anarchism in one way or other, not frequently but still recurrently. In the 1950s and 60s the Bretonian circle in Paris did have some ties to anarchist movements, although the interest in anarchy remained more a literary than actual element in Surrealism. Nevertheless, the interest in anarchism shows which (almost extreme) side of the political spectrum the Surrealists were oriented upon. See Löwy, *Morning Star*, 25-6, 46, 52, passim; and LaCoss, ‘Introduction’. Further, Spiteri and LaCoss, ‘Introduction’, 12; and Papanikolas, ‘Towards’.


238 Laurant, ‘Politics’, 965-6; and see also idem, *L’Esotérisme*.

239 Or, ‘One finds in esotericism often in very disparate forms, the manifestation of a spirit of constant opposition against traditional norms of reason, of knowledge, of religion, etc.’, Bédouin, *André Breton*, 17 (my emphasis and translation). For more on the construction of esotericism as countercultural, see Hanegraaff, ‘Beyond’; for more on occultism as revolutionary, see Pasi, ‘Occultism’, 3. Cf.
Tiryakian, ‘Towards’.

240 See also Pasi, ‘The Modernity’, 60-1.

241 A well-known example is the conspiracy theory of abbé Augustin Barruel (1741-1820), a Jesuit, which ascribes the French Revolution to a secret alliance of Illuminati and Freemasons and Jacobins: Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism. London: Hudson & Goodwin, 1798-1799 (1797-1798). The four-part book has been the cornerstone of subsequent right-wing interpretations of the French Revolution, and furthermore the basis of a great many politically motivated conspiracy theories whereby esoteric groups are painted as the dangerous culprits. It also immediately spawned anti-Catholic conspiracy theories from the side of esoteric groups. See also Godwin, The Theosophical, 115, 167; Surrette, The Birth, 41-50, 88-90, and passim. The conspiracy theories of both camps play an important part in Umberto Eco’s novel The Prague Cemetery (2010), while the construction of such esoteric conspiracy theories, whether fraudulent or not, is one of the main themes in Foucault’s Pendulum (1988).

242 Laurant, L’Ésotérisme, passim; Rabinovitch, Surrealism, 59.

243 Eliade, Occultism, Witchcraft, 152.

244 Gracq, André Breton, 42; Similar points are made by Clinton and Choucha; Clinton, Mechanical Occultism, 43; Choucha, Surrealism, 3.

245 See also Saurat, Literature, 62-63.

246 Hanegraaff, Esotericism and the Academy.

247 McIntosh, Éliphas Lévi, 195.

248 Saurat, Literature, 62.

249 The politics possibly underlying this aim were that he perceived French Catholicism and Surrealism to have a common enemy: modernity’s rationalism and positivism, and perhaps ‘bourgeois smugness’ too. Gershman, ‘L’Affaire’, 156.

250 In Kanters’s opinion esotericism, under the influence of the ‘programmatic ideas of occidental esotericism’ [read, Guénonian Traditionalism] is about redemption and sin; in Surrealism, on the other hand, man must regain his lost powers without any ‘recourse’ to ‘grace’ or trajectories of ‘initiation’; Kanters, ‘Ésotérisme’, 19. See also his argument that Surrealism is in fact a strand of historical materialism based upon the thought of Hegel and Marx, and therefore resistant towards any spirituality. Kanters, ‘Ésotérisme’, 12. Interestingly, Carrouges makes the same point, Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 11.

251 See also chapter two; cf. Walz, Pulp Surrealism, 10.

252 See chapter four.

253 Breton, Free Rein, 85.

254 Breton, Ode.
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1 Breton, The Lost Steps, 95.
3 Polizzotti, Revolution, 184.

4 Aragon: ‘Those who submit themselves to these incessant experiments endure a constant state of appalling agitation, become increasingly manic. They grow thin. Their trances last longer and longer. They don’t want anyone to bring them round any more. They go into trances to meet one another and converse like people in a faraway world where everyone is blind, they quarrel and sometimes knives have to be snatched from their hands. The very evident physical ravages suffered by the subjects of this extraordinary experiment, as well as frequent difficulties in wrenching them from a cataleptic death-like state, will soon force them to give in to the entreaties of the onlookers leaning on the parapet of wakefulness, and suspend the activities which neither laughter nor misgivings have hitherto interrupted.’ Aragon, ‘A Wave’, 6-7. Find descriptions of the sleeping sessions in Durozoi, The History, 38-41; Hilke, L’écriture automatique, 63-7; Polizzotti, Revolution, 178-88; Scopelliti, L’Influence, 48-58. Compare Jean, The Autobiography, 100-7.

5 Ades, Dada, 177.

6 Nadeau, History, 79, 83.

7 Nadeau, Histoire, 45. Breton, Nadja, 31. Howard has translated it as ‘the Nap Period’, a bit of an unfortunate term. I prefer Polizzotti’s term ‘slumbers’; Polizzotti: ‘Preface: Steps Meandering’, xix. The designation ‘time of slumbers’ is sometimes mistakenly used to refer to the entire undefined pre-Surrealism period that ranges from 1922 (the dissolution of Paris Dada) to 1924 (the publication of the first Manifesto), but that is properly called ‘l’époque flou’; Ades, ‘Between Dada’, 24.

8 Breton, O.C., I: 276; the English translation in Breton, The Lost Steps reads ‘hypnotic slumber’ (92). Nadeau, Histoire, 49; Ades, Dada, 177.

9 ‘Entrée des médiums’, Littérature (new series) 6 (November 1922); later included in Breton, The Lost Steps, 89-95. Cf. Breton, Conversations, 59-78. A few transcripts of the sessions were published in Littérature 6 as well; Jean, The Autobiography, 103-5.


12 Breton, Manifestoes, 26. Rainey, Modernism, 717.

13 Breton, Free Rein, 81.
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16 Breton, The Lost Steps, 92. ‘Madame D.’ was a certain Mrs. Dante, regular practitioner of spiritualist séances; see also Conley, ‘Not a Nervous Woman’, 114; Polizzotti, Revolution, 178-9.
17 Breton, The Lost Steps, 92.
19 Aragon, ‘A Wave’, 6 (my emphasis). ‘René Crevel rencontra une dame qui lui apprit à dormir d’un sommeil hypnotique particulier, qui ressemble plutôt à l’état somnambulique.’ Aragon, Oeuvres poétiques, i: 89 (my emphasis).
20 Crabtree, From Mesmer, 86-8, 289-91.
22 For lack of a better term for the companion of the somnambulist, I prefer to use the term ‘magnetiser’. Although it is hardly neutral, ‘mesmeriser’ or ‘hypnotiser’ is similarly problematic. I understand the ‘magnetiser’ as the authority figure, not entranced, who is essential to the functioning of the entranced person and who directs her/him by means of suggestion, either by design or involuntarily.
23 Crabtree, From Mesmer, 86-8, 283, 289-91; Crabtree, ‘Automatism’, 51. Preceding the alternate-consciousness paradigm are the ‘intrusion paradigm’ and the ‘organic paradigm’; in the one consciousness is influenced by something external, and in the other by something biological-physical. Crabtree, From Mesmer, vii.
24 Ellenberger, The Discovery.
25 Barušš, Alterations of Consciousness, Introduction and spec. 9-10. As Barušš has argued, ‘alterations of consciousness’ is the most neutral designation for the subjective state whose relation to the ‘ordinary’ consciousness is not always easy to define, not least because it is impossible to define ‘ordinary consciousness’. ‘Alterations of consciousness’ does not necessarily imply a pathological condition, nor the use of psychoactive substances. In line with Crabtree I will refer to the non-normal state as alternate (rather than altered), as I think this term better expresses the dynamic relation with ‘normal’ consciousness; a relation the Surrealists, and the psychiatrists on whose works they based themselves, considered essential.
26 Crabtree, From Mesmer, 39-45, 159; Méheust, Somnambulisme, i: 156-216; Monroe, Laboratories, 68-9. Note that for the sake of brevity and clarity this list
of characteristics include some that were formulated not by de Puységur but over half a century later, by the inventor of hypnotism James Braid (1795-1860).

27 Crabtree, From Mesmer, 41-2.
28 Crabtree, From Mesmer, 43-5; 172-8.
29 Crabtree, From Mesmer, 171-2.
30 See also Hanegraaff, New Age Religion, 433.
32 Monroe, Laboratories, 70-1.
34 See also Edelman, Voyantes, 19ff.
35 Baier, Meditation, spec. chapter IV. See also Monroe, Laboratories, 233ff; Owen, The Place, e.g. 6.
36 In 1848 in upstate New York (US), the two sisters Kate (1837-1892) and Margaret Fox (1833-1893) started to communicate with a spirit through rapping. Leah Fox (1814-1890) joined and the three of them rose to fame as mediums. See further Braude, Radical Spirits, Chapter One; and Isaacs, ‘The Fox Sisters’.
37 See Monroe, Laboratories, 67-94, 95-149, for in-depth discussion of the development of Spiritualism out of mesmerism in France.
38 Hanegraaff, ‘Magnetic Gnosis’, 121.
40 Brower, Unruly Spirits, 4. Monroe, Laboratories, 67 and passim for the connection of mesmeric magnetic fluid with electricity.
41 See also Monroe, Laboratories, 15; Taves, Fits, Trances, 172-3.
43 For more on spirit photography, see Chéroux, The Perfect Medium.
45 Sword, Ghostwriting, 35-6.
46 See also Shamdasani, ‘Automatic Writing’, 102.
47 Deveney, ‘Spiritualism’; and see in particular Braude, Radical Spirits.
48 Monroe, Laboratories, passim; Chéroux, ‘Ghost Dialectics’; During, Modern Enchantments, particularly chapters 4 and 8; Shamdasani, ‘Automatic Writing’, 102.
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50 Owen, The Darkened Room, 4-5; idem, The Place, 18.
51 And when Race was healed, he was no longer able to enter a state of artificial somnambulism; at this stage at least healing was still the defining factor of somnambulism. Crabtree, From Mesmer, 42. See also Ellenberger, The Discovery, 65-6.
52 E.g. Crabtree, From Mesmer; Gauld, A History; Ellenberger, The Discovery; Méheust, Somnambulisme I & II.
53 Crabtree, From Mesmer, 160, 162. The inventor of hypnotism (both the term and the practice) is the British physician James Braid, already mentioned above. Crabtree, From Mesmer, 155-62; Baier, Meditation, 246-52; Gauld, A History, 279-87.
54 Herman, Trauma, 12; Taves, Fits, Trances, 255. Note that during the 1890s, when he formulated this idea, Freud collaborated closely with the Viennese physician Joseph Breuer (1842-1925). The Frenchman Richet and the Genevan Flournoy are discussed at length in Ellenberger, The Discovery. Also, Carroy, Jacqueline. ‘Playing with Signatures: The Young Charles Richet’, in Micale, The Mind, 217-49.
55 See also Shamdasani, ‘Automatic Writing’, 105-8.
56 Ellenberger, The Discovery, 358-60.
59 Myers, Human Personality, I: 14.
60 Crabtree, ‘Automatism’, 63. See Ellenberger, The Discovery, for the history and precise meaning of subliminal, unconscious and subconscious; here they are understood as roughly interchangeable, as per the surrealist understanding of them.
61 Myers, Human Personality, I: 222 (italics original).
62 Not least among them in France was the astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842-1925), for instance, whose work the Surrealists followed.
63 See also Myers’s division between the objects of research for the psychical researcher, Shamdasani, ‘Automatic Writing’, 112. The history of psychical research is discussed in Asprem, ‘Parapsychology’; Brower, Unruly Spirits; Lachapelle, Investigating; Méheust, Somnambulisme II; Oppenheim, The Other World; Soubiran & Wandhammer, ‘Quand le science’; Treitel, A Science; Wolfrram, The Stepchildren.
66 Flournoy, From India. Flournoy’s methods of participant observation are frowned
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68 Shamdasani, ‘Encountering Hélène’, xiii.

69 Flournoy, *From India*; Shamdasani, ‘Encountering Hélène’. To be fair, ‘dissociation’ and ‘speaking in tongues’ are medically biased phrases; from her own spiritualist perspective, Smith communicated with various spirit controls, who also guided her in her astral journeys and recovery of her past lives.

70 Shamdasani, ‘Encountering Hélène’, xix.

71 See also Ellenberger, *The Discovery*, 315-318. Smith’s astral journeys to Mars were probably inspired by a popular craze for Mars at the time; Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, 278.

72 Flournoy, *From India*, 101-6, 129-34.


78 Ellenberger, *The Discovery*, 89-101. Charcot was not unchallenged in his own time. The opponents of Charcot’s practice are collectively known as the Nancy School, whose main proponent, Hippolyte Bernheim (1837-1919), argued that Charcot’s practice was based primarily upon suggestion. See also Crabtree, *From Mesmer*, 164-5.


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83 Ellenberger, The Discovery, 95; Herman, Trauma, 15-6. Such neurological/psychiatric interpretation of art has now become an entire genre in itself. A classic is Sass, Madness and Modernism; a recent example is McGilchrist, The Master (part II specifically).

84 Gordon, Why the French, 51ff.

85 Ellenberger, The Discovery, 100. Somnambulists abounded in literature; well-known are for instance Edgar Allen Poe’s stories about somnambulism: Faivre, ‘Borrowings’; Warner, Phantasmagoria, 52; Winter, Mesmerized, 121. Spiritualism and artificial somnambulism in literature are further discussed in Edelman, Voyantes.


87 Gordon, Why the French, 51ff; Grimes, ‘Power in Flux’, 76-80. Other sources discussing the prevalence of somnambulism and related phenomena in late nineteenth and early twentieth century (popular) culture are: Andriopoulos, Possessed; Pick, Svengali’s Web; Tatar, Spellbound; Winter, Mesmerized.


89 Gordon, Why the French, 136. See also Magistrale, Abject Terrors, 21-3. In Dr. Caligari the alternate states visualised in the film’s decors are those of narrator Francis whose fiancé Jane is kidnapped by Césare on Caligari’s orders. Only at the end of the film is it revealed that he is a resident of a mental institution, i.e. mad (or so it is suggested), which throws a whole other light on the film’s events. Caligari turns out to be the chief psychiatrist at this institute—or is he mad too?

90 Andriopoulos, ‘Suggestion’, 16; Warner, Phantasmagoria, 212.

91 The legendary Alexis Didier started when he was fourteen, for instance, and was famous at the age of sixteen; Méheust, ‘A Historical Approach’, 3-4.

92 Warner, Phantasmagoria, 52.

93 For instance, Race is described in the sources as an illiterate, patois-speaking, simple peasant, indentured to the wealthy, educated and landed marquis de Puységur; e.g., Ellenberger, The Discovery, 70-1.

94 Micale, Hysterical Men, passim but chapters 1 and 4 in particular, e.g. 132-6.

95 Braude, Radical Spirits; D’Andrea, ‘Feminisme et Spiritualisme’; Owen, The Darkened Room. Also, Deveney, Pascal Beverly Randolph; Monroe, Laboratories.

Other films of the time, such as *Dr. Mabuse der Spieler* by Fritz Lang (1922), explored the same motifs; see further Andriopoulos, *Possessed*, 91-126.

See also Cousins, *Coloured Inklings*, 288.

Unfortunately space is lacking here to explore this fascinating angle further, but without a doubt performing physicians merged in the popular imagination with such characters as ‘Cagliostro the magician’, who was an immensely popular film character after 1910, but already subject of numerous novels, plays, operas, etc., at that time, but earlier too, almost since the death of the original Cagliostro (Joseph Balsamo, 1743-1795). Warner, *Phantasmagoria*, 211; see also Introvigne, M. ‘Cagliostro, Alessandro di’. Hanegraaff et al., *Dictionary*, 225-7. The conflation of real and fictional stage magicians with other stage performers, medical, spiritualist and otherwise, in the popular imagination is also discussed in During, *Modern Enchantments*.

See Clément, ‘Charlatans’.

A number of Charcot’s students and employees at the Salpêtrière did engage in deception and manipulation, but without, or so scholars assume, Charcot’s knowledge; Ellenberger, *The Discovery*, 97-8.

Lomas, ‘Omnipotence’, 62. The suggestion-theory was put forward first by Charcot’s rival Bernheim (see above), who further theorised that the very idea of being free to simulate could also be planted by the hypnotiser; Andriopoulos, ‘Suggestion’, 21.

Grimes, ‘Power in Flux’.


Andriopoulos, ‘Suggestion’, 14ff.

Warner, *Phantasmagoria*.


Textbooks such as *Précis de psychiatrie* by Régis and *La Psychanalyse* by Régis and Hesnard; Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, 22. See Bonnet, ‘Le rencontre’ for an exploration of the extent of Breton’s (quite considerable) studies in dynamic psychiatry and early psychoanalysis. Breton did not read German and had to make do with French abridged editions of Freud’s work for a long time; for an overview of the French publications of Freud’s books see Mundy, *Surrealism*, 58.
See Breton’s references in Manifestoes, e.g. 10-14, 22.

109 Roudinesco, Jacques Lacan, 22. See Starobinski, ‘Freud, Breton, Myers’, for a convincing argument in favour of Myers’ influence upon Breton. Breton’s 1933 essay ‘The Automatic Message’ references Myers in the text but in the title too, as it is Myers who explicitly wrote of the subliminal sending messages to the supraliminal. Compare Lomas, The Haunted Self, 67, who argues against an influential role on the part of Myers. The involvement of Myers (and others) in parapsychology is the major bone of contention in the discussion of psychodynamic influences on Bretonian Surrealism; find an overview of the relevant publications and arguments in Hilke, L’écriture automatique, 87-119. For the parapsychological exploits of Myers, see for instance Owen, The Place, 174-80; Oppenheim, The Other World, e.g. 122, 128, 264-6; Shamdasani, ‘Automatic Writing’; compare Kripal, Authors, 36-91. The psychodynamic sources of Bretonian Surrealism are further discussed in Bonnet, André Breton; idem, ‘Le rencontre’; Chevrier, ‘André Breton’; Chénieux-Gendron, ‘Towards a New’; Melville, ‘Introduction’, 222n2; Polizzotti, Revolution; Shamdasani, ‘Encountering Hélène’, xliii-xiv; and idem, Automatic Writing’, 118-22; see further Amiot, Mélusine XII.

110 Bate, Photography, 58; Legge, Max Ernst, 11ff; Roudinesco, Jacques Lacan, 5. Breton and Aragon had even trained at the same hospital, Val-de-Grâce in Paris, in 1914-15.


112 Bonnet, ‘Le rencontre’, 116, 125, passim.


114 Ellenberger, The Discovery, 837.


116 Myers, Human Personality, I: 222.


119 More on Augustine in Didi-Huberman, Invention, part II.

120 Aragon & Breton, ‘The Fiftieth Anniversary’, 320.
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121 Didi-Huberman, Invention, 170-1; Micale, Hysterical Men, 144; Rabaté, ‘Loving Freud’, 64-5. One can image that Aragon and Breton’s description of seducing hysterics was perhaps partly wishful thinking too—during their own medical internship they had been faced with shell-shocked (male) soldiers rather than beautiful female hysterics.


123 Flournoy, From India; idem, Nouvelles observations.


125 Shamdasani, ‘Encountering Hélène’, xix.


127 For instance, Breton, ‘The Automatic Message’, passim; and idem, Conversations, 60. His comments show that besides Flournoy’s second study of Smith, Nouvelles observations, and another work, Flournoy, Esprits et mediums, he was furthermore familiar with the 1932 study of Smith’s art by the art historian Waldemar Deonna, De la Planète. See further the following chapter.

128 Breton, The Lost Steps, 91-2.

129 Ellenberger, The Discovery, 835.

130 Breton & Éluard, ‘The Immaculate’, 175.

131 Breton, The Lost Steps, 90.


133 Cited in McNab, Ghost Ships, 21.

134 Automatic writing is ‘the cornerstone upon which Surrealism was built’; Polizzotti, ‘Introduction: Phrases’, 18.

135 See Myers, Human Personality, I: 222.


137 Ellenberger, The Discovery, 835; and see also Gee, ‘Max Ernst’.

138 Gee, ‘Max Ernst’, 85-6. Ernst’s psychoanalytical sources, interests and exploits are discussed by Legge, Max Ernst.

139 Breton, The Lost Steps, 91-2. Breton was well versed in unedited dream-description, but still he distrusted his own efforts, let alone those of others.

140 Ades, ‘Between Dada’, 36.

141 This largely parallels the argument of Carr and Zanelli, ‘The Emergence’, 893. I might add that the Surrealists’ attempt to manifest dreams as creative products in themselves runs rather counter to Freud’s notion of dream-work. As I will discuss in chapter four, Freud and the Surrealists were at odds where it regards dreams—and many other things too, despite scholars’ constant repetition of the notion that Freud greatly influenced Surrealism. With the exception of Ernst, the
Surrealists did not really understand Freud’s work, and this includes Breton. The same is true for Freud, who failed to grasp the objective of Surrealism entirely; Rabaté, ‘Loving Freud’, 59. See also the letters exchanged by Freud and Breton reproduced in Breton, Communicating Vessels, 149-55.

Aragon, ‘A Wave’. 
Breton, The Lost Steps, 90. 
Breton, Manifestoes, 29. 
Breton, The Lost Steps, 92.

Gordon, Why the French, passim. 
Andriopoulos, ‘Suggestion,’ , 16; Warner, Phantasmagoria, 212.

The incident was recounted in Le Journal du Peuple of September 21, 1922. Desnos ‘considered himself the least prone to such demonstrations [entering a trance state], fortified in his opinion by his defeat he had inflicted in my [Breton’s] company several days before on two public hypnotists, Mssrs. Donato and Bénévol.’ This note is not reproduced in Breton, The Lost Steps, but is in another translation of ‘The Mediums Enter’ in Rainey, Modernism, 742-46, 744n9.

Béhar, Mélusine XXVII; Lomas, ‘Modest Recording’; Parkinson, Surrealism.


Richet was part of a generation of psychologist who broadened their study of the mind to also include certain metaphysical assumptions, see further Lachapelle, Investigating, 88-91.

Richet, Traité de métapsychique.

Breton, Manifestoes, 178; Breton, Conversations, 60; Richet, Traité, chapter 2. Polizzotti, Revolution, 179; Pouget, ‘La seduction’, 164.

Albach, Léona, 183-7; Méheust, ‘Où Breton puisa’, 1. Both authors have independently discovered in archival documents of the Institut Métapsychique that Breton attended at least one session with the medium Pascal Forthuny in 1927.


Ellenberger, The Discovery, 315-318. While the Surrealists were less attracted to the ‘protective’ and ‘compensatory’ aspects of the unconscious, they were still impressed with the accounts of hidden lives Smith recounted during those
phases. For more on surrealist games see Brotchie & Gooding, A Book. As will be detailed in Chapters 5 and 6, myth and mythopoeia became increasingly important in Surrealism during the 1930s and 40s.

160 Breton, The Lost Steps, 92.
161 Breton, The Lost Steps, 90.
162 Breton, The Lost Steps, 92; Aragon, ‘A Wave’, 7
163 Duplessis, Surréalisme, 60; Clair, ‘Le surréalisme’.
164 See Polizzotti, ‘Preface: Steps Meandering’, xix. For instance, Desnos predicted the death of almost everybody who attended the sessions.
165 Note that it was furthermore solicited, as he was asked while entranced to create a ‘Rrose Sélavy-type poem’. Conley, Robert Desnos, 29, 31. The first eight pages of spoonerisms by Desnos-as-Rose were published in Littérature (December 1922), which only a couple of months earlier had published poems by Duchamp-as-Rose. See also Breton, The Lost Steps, 101-2.
167 Conley, Robert Desnos, 30-1. I will come back to the perception of automatism as feminine and its subsequent problematic nature within the all-male context of early Surrealism later.
168 Breton, The Lost Steps, 102.
169 Conley, Robert Desnos, 94-5.
170 Winter, Sites of Memory, chapter 3. In fact the revivals of Spiritualism and psychical research were sides of the same coin, as one sparked the other.
171 One example: turning tables were a topic of humour in Roger Vitrac’s play The Mysteries of Love (1924): ‘Patrick: It turns, it turns. / Lea: What turns? / Patrick: Not the table, certainly.’ Cited in Cottom, Abyss of Reason, 8.
172 Breton, Nadja, 79-81; see also Breton, Manifestoes, 201. Polizzotti, Revolution, 244.
173 Clair, ‘Le surréalisme’; Idem, Du Surréalisme. Clair is outspoken and very controversial, as I have pointed out in the previous chapter.
174 Ellenberger, The Discovery, 837 (my emphasis).
176 Breton, Surrealism and Painting, 68.
177 Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 120; cf. Choucha, Surrealism, 52.
178 Monroe, Laboratories, 257. Compare Choucha, Surrealism, 49; see also Clébert, Dictionnaire, 543ff.
179 Similarly ‘séance’ should not be connected with Spiritualism alone. Contrary to the English use it means ‘session’ in a broader sense in French; psychoanalytical sessions are also called séances, for instance; see further Ronell, The Telephone Book, 99.
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180 Kripal, Authors, 7-8.
181 Méheust, Somnambulisme, II: 322.
182 Announcement in LRS 2 (1925), 31; I have taken the English translation from Lomas, ‘Recording Instruments’, 637.
184 LRS 1 (1924) - 12 (1929); Ades, Dada, 189-203.
185 Conésa, ‘Photographie’; Poivert, ‘Images’; idem, ‘Le rayogramme’. The camera was often employed in psychical research, although the scandals caused by the exposure of the fraudulent practices of certain spirit photographers had already cast doubt upon those using it (though not upon the objectivity of the camera itself). Chéroux, ‘Ghost Dialectics’, 46-53.
186 See also Conley, Robert Desnos, 18.
187 Clair, Du surréalisme, 77.
188 Beaujour, ‘From Text’, 868.
189 Breton, Manifestoes, 27-8.
190 It paraphrases the method for mental dissociation provided in Régis’s Précis de Psychiatrie, see Bonnet, André Breton, 104. See also Clinton, The Mechanical Occult, 13.
191 Letter from Smith to Flournoy, 1901, see Shamdasani, ‘Encountering Hélène’, xxxiv. It is unknown if Breton knew of this letter.
192 Winter, Mesmerized, 60-78.
193 For instance, doctors demonstrated only too gladly that patients could be hypnotised to carry out criminal acts they would not remember afterward; which is also the premise of Dr. Caligari. Andriopoulos, Possessed, 66-90; Gordon, Why the French, 128.
194 Breton, Manifestoes, 44.
195 See further Andriopoulos, Possessed, 158. True psychic automatism was ‘exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern’; Breton, Manifestoes, 26.
196 See also Beaujour, ‘From Text’, 869.
199 Both Crevel and Desnos admired Breton with an adulation bordering on worship, because he—Polizzotti suggests—functioned as a stand-in father figure for both. Polizzotti, Revolution, 180-1.
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202 For more on their relationship, see also Conley, *Robert Desnos*.
203 ‘[O]ne had to have been there to know that sometimes he [Desnos] came very close to the abyss’; Breton cited in Matthews, *Surrealism, Insanity*, 47.
204 Warlick, *Max Ernst*, 65.
206 See also Edelman, *Voyantes*, 90.
207 To give but one example: for all that Desnos passed his spoonerisms off as if by Rrose/Duchamp, he was widely known, acknowledged and also acclaimed as their author. Of course Breton devoted an essay to them, ‘Words without Wrinkles’, *The Lost Steps*, 100-2.
208 Cited in Taves, *Fits, Trances*, 255; and see Ades, ‘Between Dada’, 36.
211 Letter by Kahn-Breton, cited above (n2).
212 Gordon, *Why the French*, 31. Cinema in particular appeared to induce a sort of conscious hallucination, a state halfway between dream and waking; one could perhaps say that the audience, turned very passive and submitted to the light and (later) sound of the film, was experiencing sensory automatism. Short, *The Age of Gold*, 9.
213 Lachapelle, *Investigating*.
215 Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 182. One must keep in mind that Breton had excommunicated some Surrealists at one point or another, and they may have had some bones to pick with him. Some who insisted later that Desnos had cheated had not even participated in the sessions; Conley, *Robert Desnos*, 21.
216 Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 180-1: ‘The two men soon found themselves competing for Breton’s approval, engaging in parapsychological one-upmanship that quickly erupted into outright hostility: Desnos openly accused Crevel of cheating, while Crevel was not above jostling Desnos “by accident” once so violently that Desnos’ head struck the mantelpiece.’ Matthews, *Surrealism, Insanity*, 45, cites Crevel’s later comments upon the affair. The turn towards violence is also described by Aragon, ‘A Wave’, 6-7.
220 Aragon and Breton were certainly familiar with the simulation theory of Babinski, with whom Breton briefly trained after all; the presence of the ‘doctor’s club’
within Surrealism makes it very probable that the theory was generally known. Babinski argued that ‘actual’ attacks and simulation of hysteria should be treated as one and the same thing, and recommended strong counter-suggestion as the solution to hysteria. Rabaté, ‘Loving Freud’, 65.

221 See also Lomas, ‘The Omnipotence’, 62.

222 Cited in Conley, Robert Desnos, 21.

223 Breton & Éluard, ‘The Immaculate’. On the various automatisms in The Immaculate Conception, see Chénieux-Gendron, ‘Towards a New Definition’.


226 The important points of this discussion are summarised by Chénieux-Gendron in ‘Towards a New Definition’, 85-6. She highlights in particular the works of Emil Kraepelin, the discoverer of manic depression and schizophrenia, as relevant for The Immaculate Conception; Chénieux-Gendron, ‘Towards a New Definition’, 86-7.

227 Foster, Compulsive Beauty, 2, 50.

228 For those of abnormal mind, such as mental patients, assuming and discarding of mental illnesses at will is not the case, which shows that for all that the Surrealists conflated subject and object in many instances, they never considered themselves to be patients. Actual mental instability was not tolerated at all within Surrealism, see further Matthews, Surrealism, Insanity.


230 Compare also Foster, Compulsive Beauty, 50.

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1 Breton, Nadja, 64-5 (my emphasis).

2 Breton, Nadja. The story of the real woman behind the character has been told recently by Albach in Léona. Here I will primarily discuss Nadja the novel-character. I will refer to Breton’s supposed alter-ego in the novel as ‘André’, as he is called in Nadja

3 For a summary that highlights many other points see Bate, Photography, 88-91.

4 ‘I see you house. Your wife. She is dark, of course.’ Breton, Nadja, 74. The wife in question is Simone Kahn.

5 Breton, Nadja, 80-7.

6 Breton, Nadja, 91.

7 Breton, Nadja, 99: ‘She knows her powers over certain men, for example over
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Negroes [sic] who, wherever she may be, are compelled to come and talk to her.’
8 Breton, Nadja, 94.
9 Breton, Nadja, 129. See Hinton, ‘Max Ernst’, 292, for this dedication and translation.
10 Breton, Nadja, 136.
13 Breton, Conversations, 108.
15 Breton, Nadja, 136.
16 Albach, Léona, passim, e.g. 33-7.
18 Breton, Nadja, 11.
19 See also Conley, Automatic Woman, 9.
21 Breton, Nadja, 81, plate 19.
22 Breton, Nadja, 93 (note).
23 Breton, Nadja, 105.
24 Polizzotti, Revolution, 244. His swift death did not happen, nor the visit to China. Whether things changed around 1931 is open for discussion. Many scholars consider the last prediction to have come true, in fact, with Surrealism functioning as Breton’s political party.
25 Benjamin, ‘Surrealism’.
26 Breton, Manifestoes, 201 (my emphasis).
27 Breton, Manifestoes, 201.
29 See Chapter Two; Breton & Éluard, The Immaculate.
30 Sheringham, ‘Le Paradoxe’, 274.
31 Breton, Manifestoes, 201.
33 Sheringham, ‘Le Paradoxe’, 275-6, 278.
34 Bandier, Sociologie, 343.
35 Breton, Nadja, 144.
37 Guerlac, ‘Phantom Rights’. Also, Matlock, ‘Ghostly Politics’, passim; Thévoz,
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Art Brut, 128-32.

38 The four cahiers with Hugo’s spiritualist writings were not part of the accepted Hugo canon in the nineteenth century—nor are they really today, it must be said. Substantial parts were published in 1923 in Simon: Chez Victor Hugo. Matlock, ‘Ghostly Politics’, 55-6.

39 See Breton, The Lost Steps, 91; and further Breton, ‘The Mediums Enter’ in Rainey, Modernism, 743n8 (editor’s note).

40 Breton’s reference to the ‘Mouth (or Voice) of Shadow’ means he must have read Simon’s book on Hugo as soon as it came out, as it was the sole source of that ‘poem’ at that time. See also Matlock, ‘Ghostly Politics’, 55-6. Massoni, in a total misunderstanding of the context that is typical of other scholars as well, has identified the ‘mouth of shadow’ as a poetical construct; Massoni, ‘Surrealism’, 194. We find a misunderstanding of the opposite kind in Jean Clair’s work, who argues that the Surrealists’ reverence for the known spiritualist material of Hugo is only more evidence of their own ‘salon-spiritism’. Clair, ‘Le surréalisme’, 77.


42 Breton, ‘The Automatic’, 24: ‘But it is above all in writing that this pathetic joke [guidance by spirits] has followed its degrading course, bolstered by the unthinking support it was given by the Hugo family with the story of the “turning tables of Guernsey”’. The last bit directly quotes the title of Simon’s Chez Victor Hugo.


44 Breton, Manifestoes, 195-203.

45 Breton, Manifestoes, 199.

46 Breton, Manifestoes, 200

47 Breton, Manifestoes, 202-3.


50 Morise, ‘Enchanted Eyes’, 479. ‘Painting’ should be understood here as a general category of visual art, i.e. including drawing, sculpture, etc.


52 This is true for Ernst in particular, who had already an impressive oeuvres de collages, drawings and paintings to his name in 1925. Years later (1941) Breton wrote: ‘At the beginning of 1926… the question of whether painting could possibly comply with surrealism’s imperatives was still being debated. … [I]t is obvious now, looking back, that it was already fully in evidence in the work of Max Ernst.’ Breton, Surrealism and Painting, 64.

53 This essay, appearing in LRS 4 (1925), 6 (1926), 7 (1926) and 9-10 (1927), was
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published as *Surrealism and Painting* in 1928. As Cardinal has suggested, the issue of Surrealism and the visual arts must have been Breton’s mind already by the time of Naville’s 1925 essay, as the first instalment of ‘Surrealism and Painting’ appeared in the very next issue of LRS. Cardinal, ‘André Masson’, 90-1n8.


For instance, Brotchie & Gooding, A Book, 25. For an in-depth study of exquisite corpse-techniques, see Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage*; also, Foster, ‘Exquisite Corpses’.


Breton, *Surrealism and Painting* 1.

Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 1, paraphrased. Same page: ‘Auditive [sic] images’ are ‘inferior to visual images’. Breton made similar comments elsewhere, and no other sense even came close to the superiority of the eye in Surrealism. In fact, apart from hearing no other sense is even acknowledged. Surrealism’s favouritism of the eye is discussed for instance by Le Gall, ‘Voir’


Breton, *Manifestoes*, 273 (emphasis original).

Morise’s essay celebrating the ‘madmen and mediums’ is entitled ‘Enchanted Eyes’.


Recent discussions of the influence of asylum art in general and the Prinzhorn Collection in particular upon surrealist art are von Beyme, ‘Asylum Art’ (162 for Ernst and Natterer); Röske, ‘Max Ernst’; and idem, ‘Inspiration’, generally.


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

Breton, ‘The Automatic’, 13, 26-9, 34. Sardou (1831-1908) was a symbolist
French writer, dramatist and medium, communicating with composers and
drawing automatically under their influence. Smith has been discussed already in
the previous chapter; see further Shamdasani’s ‘Encountering Hélène’. Dichter et
al, The Message, 103-4 and 159 (Sardou); 92-3 and 157-8 (Smith).

71 These are: two anonymous fragments of ink drawing, one of automatic writing
and one of automatic drawing; a drawing of Martians by a certain ‘Mme Smead’;
two drawings by Léon Petitjean; a drawing by August Machner; and drawings by
a certain ‘X’ and by ‘Mme A.’; Breton, ‘The Automatic’, passim. Machner (1866-?)
was a German mediumistic artist and tanner. Petitjean (unknown) was a Spiritualist


73 Breton, ‘The Automatic’, 21, 25. Lesage (1876-1954) was a French miner, who
during his lifetime created over 800 large mediumistic paintings of very precise
de Tromelin (1786-1867) was a French naval hero who drew automatically for a
while.

74 Such as a plate showing incubi and succubi from Jules Bois’ book Le Satanisme
et la magie [fig 3], and a detail of Gustave Moreau’s painting Les Chimères [fig 29]
Breton, ‘The Automatic’, 16, 31. Both Bois and Moreau are Symbolists too, and it
is evident that there is a subtext relating to Symbolism present in ‘The Automatic
Message’. This may be because of the Symbolist validation of mediumism and
mediumistic art, which is discussed by Keshavjee in ‘French Symbolist Art’.
Unfortunately space and time is lacking for me to explore this issue further.

75 The origin of all the reproduced works has been researched by Dichter et al. and
provided in their notes and captions in The Message, 33-55. Note that while the
painting by LeGoarant de Tromelin derived from Aesculape, Breton was probably
pointed to it by a concise comment by Richet in Traité de métapsychique, 96:
‘Le commandant Le Goarant de Tromelin m’a envoyé souvent de très étranges
dessins spirites, composés par lui-même dans un état de demi-somnambulisme.’
See also idem, 483.

76 Breton mentions, in order: Charcot, von Schrenk-Notzing, Freud, James, Myers,
Flournoy, Charles Guilbert, ‘Professor’ Cuendet, René Sudre, Lipps, Georges Petit,
Charcot, James, Myers and Flournoy have already been discussed in the previous
chapter. Albert von Schrenk-Notzing (1862-1929) was a German psychiatrist
and parapsychologist. Guilbert, author of the article ‘Voyance’ in Aesculape
(April 1913) whence Tromelin’s painting derives. Sudre (1880-1968), French
parapsychologist and writer. Theodor Lipps (1851-1914), German philosopher
and writer. Quercy (1886-unknown), French writer and author of Études sur
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81 *Variétés* (1929), special issue edited by Breton’s Paris group. Between pages 38 and 39 two photographs of Cheval’s palace are reproduced, accompanied by a statement attributed to Cheval (1907): ‘Toutes mes idées me viennent en rêve et, quand je travaille, j’ai toujours mes rêve présents à l’esprit.’ Note the reference to dreams here, which makes it clear that Cheval was guided by an ‘internal model’.

82 Cited in Fanès, Salvador *Dali*, 164.

83 Photographs of Breton in front of the palace were included in the French originals of *Communicating Vessels* and *Black Humour* as well, for example.

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

85 Breton gleefully recounted in ‘The Surrealist Situation of the Object’ that the palace, for all its size, was so cramped there was space enough only for Cheval’s wheelbarrow. Breton, *Manifestoes*, 261; Matthews, *The Surrealist Mind*, 183.

86 See also Cardinal, ‘André Breton’, 31-2.


88 In 1948 artist Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985), André Breton and others started the *Compagnie de l’Art Brut* for the validation, promotion and collection of outsider art, thereby coining the term ‘art brut’. Breton resigned from the company in 1951 but remained an active proponent of outsider art. The category of art brut and the history of the *Compagnie* and the Art Brut Collection are discussed by Thévoz, *Art Brut*, and Perry, *Art Brut*.

89 The term ‘Outsider Art’ (capitalised) came into existence in the 1960s, a bit after the creation of the term ‘art brut’. The two are not entirely the same, but near enough that for the discussion here they can be understood as interchangeable. I will refer to the art of marginal and untrained groups, which the avant-garde
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favoured so much, as outsider art (un-capitalised). In the surrealist context, I understand it to include the art of children, alienated art or art of asylum patients or non-institutionalised persons still considered mentally ill, mediumistic art, and ‘naïve’ or folk-art. See Maclagan, ‘Outsiders’, 34-5; Thévoz, Art Brut, passim.

90 ‘Medium-derived drawings are the work of people “who do not know how to draw”.’ Breton citing from Flournoy’s Esprits et Médiums, in ‘The Automatic’, 21.


92 Although there are more criteria, I consider these three the most relevant.

93 Breton, ‘The Automatic’, 21. This information is again a citation, now from Jules Bois, which is probably why a reproduction from Bois’s book Le Satanisme… is included. The description of Sardou’s technique (wherein Breton cites from the article on Sardou in Le Revue Spirite) consists entirely of a discussion of his anti-rational stylistic and practical approach, Breton, ‘The Automatic’, 20-1. Desmoulin (1853-1914) was a French spiritualist painter and graphic artist, active between 1900 and 1902. Si Ahmed, Comment penser, 224-30.

94 Further criteria include the artists’ (apparent) indifference to reception of the work, their insensitivity to current trends or (artistic) styles; the sudden and spontaneous character of the creative drive; and, in the case of mediums or otherwise entranced artists, the inability to create anything in a ‘normal’ state. Cardinal, Outsider Art; Maclagan, Outsider Art; Méheust, ‘Un Schmürz’, 43-56; Thévoz, Art Brut; idem, ‘Médiums’. The criteria are often quite artificial. For instance, Desmoulins was hardly untaught but a trained and celebrated engraver and painter, while Sardou was hardly of a simple background but in fact a highly educated and rather famous dramatist. Dichter et al., The Message, 154, 159.

95 Dubuffet, for one, resisted differentiation between outsider art and mediumistic art. Mediumism is considered an ‘alibi’ in the sense that it functions as an accepted category allowing one not trained and/or of socially unacceptable status to still be allowed to make art. In Dubuffet’s opinion, when Art Brut was established as safe haven for the art rejected by the standards of the Beaux-Arts academy, outsider artists no longer had need of such an ‘alibi’; in fact, as it was an academy-approved alibi, one needed to forcefully remove oneself from it. Thévoz, Art Brut, 114.

96 See also Thévoz’s discussion of the differences in opinion about art brut between Dubuffet and Breton in Art Brut, 109-10, 114.

97 A number of other researchers also worked with Eva C., see further Lachapelle, Investigating, 118, 126-7, 139; and Fischer, ‘In the Darkroom’, 183-6.


Sensory and motor automatisms—the most passive of automatisms by the way—‘will be seen to be messages from the subliminal’; Myers, Human Personality, I: 222 (emphasis original).


Breton, ‘The Automatic’, 11, but see the original (Minotaure 3-4 (1933), 55) for the caption.


See also chapter two.

Breton, Surrealism and Painting, 46 (my emphasis).

Breton, ‘The Automatic’.


The relevant letter is the one to Paul Demeny of 15 May 1871, Rimbaud, Complete Works, 372-81. The influence of Rimbaud upon Bretonian Surrealism is discussed by Bays, ‘Rimbaud’.

Breton, The Lost Steps, 47: ‘We now know that poetry must lead somewhere. On this certainty rests, for example, our passionate interest in Rimbaud.’

Rimbaud, Complete Works, 377 (emphasis original).

See also Taylor, Sources, 423.

Mitchell, Secrets, 63-5; McCalla, ‘Romanticism’, passim; idem, ‘Eternal Sun’, 3-4 and passim. The mentioned notions are part of three larger Romantic trends that can be taken as central to Romanticism, as Hanegraaff has shown: organicism, or a holistic view of the world and nature; imagination, as a cognitive means of perceiving reality; and temporalism, or historical awareness.

Hanegraaff, ‘Romanticism’, 256-61. Classical studies of (French) Romantic poetry and esotericism are Viatte’s Les sources occultes, I & II, and idem, Victor Hugo (which would influence Breton considerably); as well as Béguin, L’Ame; and Roos, Aspects littéraires. Note that later poets, such as Rimbaud and de Nerval at the end of his life, were influenced by similarly later esoteric thought of, for instance, Éliphas Lévi, as discussed in Viatte, ‘Mysticisme’.

The issue of the Romantic poet-seer is much more complex and the process of its formation much more intricate than I can present here. See for instance, besides the sources mentioned above, Amiot, Baudelaire; Bays, The Orphic Vision; Bénichou, Les mages; idem, L’école; Bowman, French Romanticism; Fauchereau, ‘L’Europe’; Gille, Trajectoire; Juden, ‘Traditions orphiques’; Mayer, Jena Romanticism; Richer, Gérard de Nerval; Rosenblum, Modern Painting; Wilkinson, The Dream.
Breton, Manifestoes, 153. See my comments on Surrealism and Romanticism in chapter one.


Béguin, L’Ame, II: 434-5 and passim. Rimbaud’s concept of the poet-seer is certainly indebted to esoteric ideas as shown by, for instance, Starkie, Rimbaud, 95-103. Cf. Russell, Poets, chapter II.

‘[T]he poet is truly the thief of fire‘; Rimbaud, Complete Works, 377.

In early Romanticism poetry had been identified by both poets and esotericists as the language par excellence to approach the spiritual and ineffable, which had led some intellectuals to make of the poet a seer also in the priestly sense of the term. McCalla, ‘Eternal Sun’, 18. Cf. Viatte, ‘Mysticisme’, passim. Obviously neither Rimbaud nor the Surrealist seer-poet considered themselves priests in any way.


Breton, Manifestoes, 274.


‘Je est un autre’, Rimbaud, Complete Works, 374-5. Note that Fowlie translates it as ‘I is someone else’, but I prefer the older, more commonly used, and in the context of the Other more relevant translation, which can be found for instance in Schmidt’s translation of the Complete Works, 115.


The author writes about eyes and vision well before the story about Nadja begins, setting the stage as it were. See for instance Breton, Nadja, 28, 32, 38, 41-2, 152.

Breton, Nadja (French edition of 1964), 129. It corresponds with the following comment: ‘I have seen her [Nadja's] fern-coloured eyes open mornings on a world where the beating of hope's great wings is scarcely distinct from the other sounds which are those of terror and, upon seeing such a world, I had as yet seen
eyes do nothing but close.’ Breton, Nadja, 111 (italics original).

129 Albach has discovered a number of photographs of Delcourt, see Léona, 73, 78-9, 87, 92.

130 As Breton hardly writes about Nadja’s body in any even remotely erotic sense, it is almost obscured that there was in fact also a physical side to their affair. See for instance Breton, Nadja, 86 and 106-8; also Polizzotti, ‘Introduction’, xiv.

131 Breton, Nadja, plate 32.

132 Breton, Nadja, 116 and plate 29.

133 Breton, Nadja, 121 and plate 31.

134 Breton, Nadja, 74, 83.

135 Nadja takes Breton to this sign and compulsively touches it; Breton, Nadja, 85 and 100.

136 Breton, Nadja, 27.


138 Margaret Cohen has written an interesting and penetrating analysis of the similarity between Breton’s account of Parisian locations and tourist-guides of the time, showing that the places Breton has chosen are very specific, all of them tied to momentous events in the Parisian historical past. Despite appearances that all is (co)incidental, nothing and no place either is left to chance in Nadja. Cohen, Profane Illumination, 61-77.

139 Breton, Nadja, 11.

140 There is no doubt this was intentional. Breton stated: ‘the tone adopted for this narrative [Nadja] is copied form the one used in medical observations… which tend to preserve a trace of everything that examination and interrogation might reveal, without seeking to give its expression the least stylistic polish.’ Cited in Polizzotti, ‘Introduction’, xx. See for examples of Breton’s rather particular ‘thick description’ of Nadja, Breton, Nadja, 64, 72.

141 Breton, Nadja, 80 and 105, plates 20 and 26.

142 For an analysis of the use of photographs in Nadja and their (pseudo-) documentary character, see Bate, Photography, 91-101.

143 The supposed objectivity of photography is a complex issue, discussed by Snyder and Wash Allen in ‘Photography, Vision’; also Philips, Photography, Introduction and Introduction to the surrealist material in particular.


145 Benjamin, ‘Surrealism’, 51 (my emphasis). My argument here is based upon Bate, Photography, 92ff; and see 92n14 for discussion of the criticism that the photographs are banal. That judgement is ultimately based upon Breton’s own disappointment with the photographs in the final published novel, Polizzotti, ‘Introduction’, xxvi-xxvii.
The photographs provide ‘un commentaire troublant, dont chaque image, par la vertu d’un certain décolage, était un piège où trébuchait notre subconscient’. Review of Nadja in Art et decoration (January 1930), cited in Bajac, ‘Le fantastique’, 126.

Breton, Surrealism and Painting, 46.


Sass, Madness, 283-4.

Felman, Writing, 2.

‘The enchantments that the street outside had to offer me [Breton] were a thousand times more real.’ Breton, Surrealism and Painting, 3. Ray, The Surrealist, 20.


For the sake of brevity I am generalising here; there are obviously considerable differences between the way Romanticism and Modernism constructed madness and experimented with certain states. See for instance McGilchrist, The Master, chapters 11 and 12. Sass provides several examples of Modern luminaries in whose work estrangement of the normal is very prominent, such as Rilke, Musil, Kafka, Nietzsche and even Sartre; Madness, 45 and passim. For examples of Romantic artists and poets, see Clair’s Melancholie, passim.

Sass, Madness, 44 and 45.

Aragon, Paris Peasant, 204. For an investigation of the urban space in both Nadja and Paris Peasant, see Bonnet, ‘Art, Ideology’.

Aragon, Paris Peasant. For more on this work, see Merger, ‘Le conspiration’.

O’Connel, ‘Afterlives’, 451-2, 468-9. In Warlick’s opinion St. James’s Tower and other Parisian landmarks such as Notre-Dame Cathedral are prominently present in Nadja and Paris Peasant foremost because of their alchemical resonance; Warlick, Max Ernst, 94. I find her arguments unconvincing. Clearly both Breton and Aragon had some passing familiarity with the legend of Nicolas Flamel in connection with the tower, but it is only after 1928-9 and the review of Grillot de Givry’s Witchcraft by Leiris that we encounter a slowly growing interest in alchemy, besides some obligatory remarks about Rimbaud’s ‘alchemy of the word’ (see later in this chapter). In Mad Love (1937), 59-60, Breton would acknowledge Flamel’s connection with the Tower. In the next chapter I will discuss the references to alchemy and Flamel in Breton’s Second Manifesto and other surrealist publications.

Besides Mad Love, for instance in ‘Pont Neuf’, Free Rein, 221-28. See Margaret Cohen’s studies of Mad Love, in which she uncovers Breton’s references to the uncanny presence of Parisian pasts, such as the revolutionary past and the


162 Breton writes that if he were to reread the draft of *Nadja*, it would be ‘with the patient and somehow disinterested eye I would be sure to have’; Breton, *Nadja*, 151 (my emphasis).

163 E.g., Breton, *Nadja*, 83, 107, 121.


165 Many scholars have commented upon his rather self-centred use and manipulation of Nadja. Roger Shattuck has accused Breton of stealing Nadja powers, whatever those may be, calling it ‘psychic grand larceny’ and ‘psychic cannibalism’, even. Breton is on a ‘vampirelike [sic] quest for himself [that] destroys her’. Shattuck, ‘The Nadja’, 49, 55.

166 Breton, *Nadja*, 32 and plate 7 on 33.

167 Breton, *Nadja*, 90 (my emphasis).


170 Fanés, *Salvador Dali*, 137.

171 Breton, *Anthology*, 113, discussion of one of de Villiers de l’Isle-Adam’s protagonists.

172 Note that only *men* were invited to participate in this collage. See *La subversion*, 225 ff., for many more examples of surrealist art works with eye(s) or the act of seeing as motif.

173 See also Eburne, *Surrealism*, 74-95, spec. 93-4; Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, xlvi.

174 ‘La femme est l’être qui projette la plus grande ombre ou la plus grande lumière dans nos rêves.’ LRS 1 (1927), 17; taken from Baudelaire’s preface to *Artificial Paradises* and cited in Eburne, *Surrealism*, 93 (my emphasis).

175 There may exist a historical link between this idea and *Die Symbolik des Traumes* by G.H. von Schubert (1814); see Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 262-3.


177 Short, *The Age*, 27.

Hedges, ‘Constellated Visions’, 100.

Hedges, ‘Constellated Visions’, 100; Kuenzli, ‘Introduction’, 4. Preceding *Emak Bakia* was Anemic Cinema (1924-26), a project of Ray and Duchamp. Ray’s ideas about vision may well have been influenced by Duchamp’s notion of ‘anemic vision’; unfortunately there’s no space here to explore this angle further. See Judovitz, ‘Anemic Vision’.


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

Aphorism 146 from *Beyond Good and Evil*.

The quintessential ‘blind’ poet is Homer, see also West, ‘The invention’, 346-82.


Schneede, ‘Sightless Vision’, 355, 356. Dali, always one for provocative paradox, stated that the best film is one that can be seen with eyes closed—this in an era of silent movies.

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


See also Cirlot, *The Open Vision* (no page-numbers).

For more on de Sade, sadism and erotic violence in Surrealism, see for instance Bezzola et alia, *Sade Surreal*; Mundy, *Desire Unbound*. Note that surrealist sadism remained chiefly metaphorical and a literary and visual device. Man Ray experimented somewhat with s/m-relationships, as discussed by Mileaf in ‘Between You’. Breton considered de Sade a sexual revolutionary, and a political revolutionary too. The sexual and political were often combined by the Surrealists, for instance in their celebration of violent criminal women such as Berton, Violette Nozière and the Papin Sisters. For more on them and their reception in Surrealism, see Eburne, *Surrealism*, chapters 3 and 6.

Mileaf, *Please Touch*, 67-75; Mileaf, ‘Between You’, passim.


Bataille, Georges (published under the pseudonym ‘Lord Auch’). *Story of the Eye*. New York: Urizen Books, 1977. One of the best critical interpretations of...
this work is still Susan Sontag’s ‘The Pornographic Imagination’, in Styles, 35-73, spec. 59ff.


198 Le Gall, ‘Voir’, 220.

199 I will explore this in more depth in the next chapter.

200 E.g., Colville, ‘Filles d’Hélène’, 246.

201 For a further discussion of the surrealist erotic gaze in Surrealism generally, see Caws’s excellent study *The Surrealist Look*.


203 For instance, substance (ab)use by the members of Grand Jeu was the main reason Breton disapproved of them; see further Balakian, ‘Breton and Drugs’, passim.

204 Aragon & Breton, ‘The Fiftieth’.

205 Breton, *Manifestoes*, 36; note the reference to Baudelaire’s book.

206 Compare also Breton’s comments on the sway of the pleasure principle over the reality principle, Breton, *Manifestoes*, 273.


208 For both Freud and Lacan woman is closer to the unconscious because she has not fully entered the symbolic universe, as man has. Woman has a fluid body, which is identified with the unconscious, the non-normal, the dynamic, the female side of (man’s) personality. Besides her incomplete association to the symbolic, Lacan posited in *Seminaire livre XX*, woman also has not fully succumbed to alienation from the real in the same way man has. Woman is intermediate between these states, and accordingly, because of her closeness to it, reaches more easily the state of seer or visionary. See Jardine’s discussion of this theory in *Gynesis*, 159-77; and Kuenzli’s discussion of Nadja as Other in ‘Surrealism’, 19; cf.

209 Irigaray, *This Sex*, 93-4; moreover, on 101: ‘the Other has no Other’.

210 Áragon, *Paris Peasant*, 204 (emphasis original).


212Erotically speaking, woman is thus entirely conflated with her eye-sex, becoming an eye. In the case of Nadja, woman-as-eye was immediately de-sexualized
by Breton. He was certainly turned on by her vision, but this was intellectual excitement only—or so he would have us believe, of course.


214 See my discussion about this in Chapter Five

215 ‘Hélène, c’est moi’, Nadja used to say.’ Breton, Nadja, 80.

216 Breton, Conversations, 108.

217 This is not my argument but Conley’s, which I find well-argued and convincing; Conley, ‘Not a Nervous’.

218 For instance, in ‘A Letter to Seers’ it is implied that the seers, because of the fact that they are women, are passive; Breton, Manifestoes, 203.

219 Prinzhorn, Artistry, 271 (my emphasis).


222 I have paraphrased Breton, Manifestoes, 260.

223 Rimbaud, A Season; 33-46 (my emphases); but also http://www.mag4.net/ Rimbaud/poesies/Alchemy.html (1976 translation by Paul Schmidt), from where this quotation has been taken (accessed April 10, 2011).

224 Although dated, one of the best explorations of the relationship between Rimbaud and Surrealism is still Bays, ‘Rimbaud’. For more on Rimbaud and alchemy of the word specifically, see for example Bivort, ‘Remarques’; Richer, L’alchimie du verbe; on Rimbaud and alchemy generally, see further Bouvet, ‘Rimbaud’; Guerdon, Rimbaud. The pre-eminent (though not uncontested) study of Rimbaud is still Enid Starkie’s Arthur Rimbaud, where she explores the role of alchemical and magical metaphors, including alchemy of the word, in Rimbaud’s oeuvre.


226 Ernst, Max Ernst, 28 (my translation). It is cited directly in the definition of ‘collage’ provided by Breton and Éluard in the Dictionnaire, 7.

227 Ernst, Oeuvres, 38 (my emphasis). Translation mine, but based in part upon Lippard, ‘Max Ernst’, 702.

228 Warlick, ‘Max Ernst’s Alchemical’, 72.

229 Warlick, ‘An Itinerant’; idem, Max Ernst’s Alchemical’; idem, Max Ernst and Alchemy; idem, Max Ernst’s Collage. Hopkins, Marcel Duchamp, chapter 3; idem, ‘Hermetic’; idem, ‘Max Ernst’.

230 Breton, ‘The Automatic Message’, 14. This story (retold throughout art history) is very probably based upon da Vinci’s notebooks, but what he actually describes
is a camera obscura-like device. The Surrealists’s interest in da Vinci may have been prompted by Freud’s analysis of him; Freud, Leonardo da Vinci.

231 ‘Je découvre mon tableau sur la toile comme les voyantes voient l’avenir dans le marc de café.’ Minotaure 3-4 1933, 12.

232 In ‘The Automatic Message’, 21-2, Breton makes a point of stressing that the mediumistic artists Machner ‘the tanner’, Lesage ‘the miner’ and Cheval ‘the postman’ must have looked at patterns, if only because of their profession.

233 Ernst, Beyond Painting, 7 (my emphases).

234 Ernst, Beyond Painting, 8 (my emphasis).

235 And saints such as Theresa too, Breton, ‘The Automatic’, 32.

236 See also Adamowicz, Surrealist Collage, 189.

237 Breton, Manifestoes, 260 (emphasis original).

238 Breton, ‘The Automatic’, 29 (quotation marks and emphasis original). Breton’s use of quotation marks and his point that poets have no power that manifests a priori, only a recognition afterwards, testifies to the surrealist secularisation of anything that might smack of ‘higher powers’ and also to the pre-eminence of mental or psychic automatism above any and all other concerns. Because psychic automatism captures pure unadulterated thought it can never be visionary or prophetic in the ordinary sense, as recognition of prophecy beforehand or even at the moment it occurs requires rational, civilised thought.

239 Breton, The Automatic’, 30 (emphasis original)

240 Breton, Nadja, 136.

241 Albach, Léona, 231-43, 246.

Chapter FOUR

1 Breton, Manifestoes, 133-4.

2 See also Harris, Surrealist Art, 51-3, and 248n6.

3 Chadwick, Myth, 1-6.

4 Walz, Pulp Surrealism, 146-7.

5 Surrealism and politics, and surrealist politics, are complex issues. For a good analysis, particularly of the situation in the 1930s, see Harris, Surrealist Art, spec. 49-83. See also the essays in Spiteri and LaCoss, Surrealism, Politics, particularly ‘Introduction: Revolution’ by the editors, the classic essay by Short, ‘The Politics’, and Lubar, ‘Painting’. For the French scholarly view, see Béhar, Mélusine 5: Politique-Polémique; and Asholt, Surréalisme. The insider’s perspective is well expressed by Michael Löwy in many of the essays collected in Morning Star. For more on Louis Aragon’s communist career, see Geoghegan, ‘Surrealism’; and Guiat, The French 64-83 and passim (also for more on the P.C.F. generally).

6 Breton, Break of Day, 130; Breton, ‘The Automatic Message’, discussed in
chapter three.

7 See also Cottom, Abyss, 173.
8 Breton, Manifestoes, 117-194; the call for ‘occultation’ on 177.
9 Beaujour, ‘De l’Océan’, 364; see also my discussion of the Bureau of Surrealist Research in chapter two.
10 Polizzotti, ‘Preface: In the Harsh’, ix-xvii; and further ‘Notice’ to Vases Communicants by Bonnet & Hubert in Breton, O.C., II: 1348-69, spec. 1351-2. For more on Breton’s relation to Trotsky, see Taminiaux, ‘Breton and Trotsky’; and for their co-authored ‘Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art’, Breton, Free Rein, 29-34.

11 See the sources mentioned above and specifically Harris, Surrealist Art
12 See also Harris, Surrealist Art, 2.
13 A small spoiler: Surrealism lost the battle against its embourgeoisement. By the end of the 1930s even the established press judged the movement to be ‘inoffensive’; Guiol-Benassaya, La presse, 144-5.
14 Breton, Manifestoes, 177-8 (caps and emphasis original).
15 For instance, Béhar & Carassou, Le Surréalisme, 301; Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 39.
16 In Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 39, the translator has opted for the following translation of Breton’s demand: ‘I desire the profound and real eclipse of Surrealism.’
17 E.g., French-Canadian author Robert entitled his exposé on psychiatry and Surrealism—in which no mention of esotericism or occultism is made—Le Surréalisme désocculté, or ‘Des-occulted surrealism’ (as in: ‘Surrealism exposed’).
19 Valente, ‘Agrippa’.
21 Béhar & Carassou, Le Surréalisme, 301.
22 Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 39.
23 Chadwick, Women Artists, 190.
24 Breton, Manifestoes, 173-80.
25 Breton, Manifestoes, 173.
27 Van Lennep, ‘L’Art’, 302; see also the following chapter.
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28 I use Seaver & Lane’s version of the Manifestoes, 1972 edition, wherein the Second Manifesto comprises 77 pages in total; the nine surrounding the demand are Breton, Manifestoes, 173-82.

29 Breton, Manifestoes, 173.

30 Grillot de Givry, Le Musée; idem, Witchcraft. Leiris, ‘A propos’. The relevant book by Flamel (allegedly) is the Livre des figures hiéroglyphiques, first published in 1612, in which the Book of Abraham the Jew is discussed.

31 Poisson, Albert. Histoire de l’alchimie, XIVe siècle, Nicolas Flamel, published by Charcormac in 1893; see Caron, ‘Alchemy V’, 53; Bonnet et al., ‘Notes et variantes: Second Manifesto’, 1616. Remarkably enough Bonnet et al. do not mention Grillot de Givry at all, whereas I think that Le Musée must have played an important part in fuelling Breton’s interest in these subjects.

32 Breton, Manifestoes, 174. Desnos wrote an essay about it, ‘Le mystère d’Abraham Juif’, Documents 5 (1929), 233-39. It was hardly coincidental, as Leiris’s review of Le Musée had appeared in Documents 2 some months earlier. Unfortunately for Breton’s implied argument that there must have been some sort of marvellous contact between him and Desnos (they were estranged at the time), it had rather been Bataille—who worked in the French National Library and had access to the original manuscript—who had selected the illustrations for Desnos’s article and Leiris who had prompted its writing. This was the gist of a follow-up article in Documents 7 (1929) on the matter of the not-so-remarkable coincidence by Rivière, ‘A propos’, 384. See further Warlick, Max Ernst, 101.

33 Breton, Manifestoes, 174-5.


35 Pierre, ‘Notice’ to the Second Manifesto, Breton, O.C., I: 1588.

36 Breton, Manifestoes, 180; the critique of Bataille and his companions (by now Breton’s frenemies) continues until page 186.


38 Agrippa, Three Books; Breton calls them the ‘Third’ and ‘Fourth Book of Magic’, Manifestoes, 175, 178. Some nineteenth and twentieth century editions included this fourth book, which was not by Agrippa at all (see also ‘On the Occult Philosophy’ by Tyson in Agrippa, Three Books, xxxix-xliii), and which was first translated into French by Jules Bois. Breton may have had access to a Chacornac edition of 1910-11 that included the fourth book; Bonnet et al., ‘Notes et variantes: Second Manifesto’, 1616.


40 See also chapter one.

41 These are plates 1 and 6 from the 17th century manuscript Figures d’Abraham Juif, in the manuscript collection of the French Bibliothèque Nationale (MS 14765); Documents 5 (1929): 235 and 238. Plate 7 (a landscape) is also reproduced, page 239, but not discussed by Breton. These are 17th century interpretations of descriptions of Flamel, who as the story goes had the originals painted on an arch; those in turn purportedly went back to the legendary book of Abraham the Jew. Grillot de Givry tells this story, Witchcraft, 352; he reproduces two other plates, namely 3 and 10. The three plates Bataille selected for Desnos’ article (of which Breton used two) are obviously ones that hadn’t been seen yet within surrealist circles. See also Greiner, ‘Flamel’, 371.


43 Breton, Manifestoes, 176; Bonnet et al., ‘Notes et variantes: Second Manifesto’, 1618.

44 This anecdote is derived from Albert Poisson’s book Histoire de l’alchimie, discussed above; Bonnet et al., ‘Notes et variantes: Second Manifesto’, 1618.

45 Breton, Manifestoes, 174-77 (emphasis original).

46 As discussed in chapter three.

47 This point is also made a couple of times by Bonnet et al., ‘Notes et variantes: Second Manifesto’.

48 Breton, Manifestoes, 177: ‘It is necessary to emphasize once again and to maintain here the ‘Maranatha’ of the alchemists, set at the thresholds of the work to stop the profane. This, it strikes me, is the most urgent matter to bring to the attention of some of our friends who appear to me to be a trifle too preoccupied with placing and selling their paintings, for instance.’ Maranatha is originally an Aramaic term and can be found in the Bible. It is possible that Breton did not know that it originally meant ‘the Lord comes’ or he might have had some qualms about using it. His use of it as a malediction is consistent with esoteric practices of the time. Bonnet et al., ‘Notes et variantes: Second Manifesto’, 1618-9.

49 Here I diverge from Bonnet et al., who ascribe all of Breton’s knowledge of Flamel to Poissons’s book.

50 I have cut this 3-page note considerably down to what I consider the essentials; Breton Manifestoes, 178-81.

51 Breton, Manifestoes, 182.

52 Breton, Manifestoes, 182, citing Choisnard, Influence astrale, 58-9, although he mentions the original essay from 1893. This is a mistake, the original essay dates from 1898, as part of a long series, all of which were published together in the 1926 edition; Bonnet et al., ‘Notes et variantes: Second Manifesto’, 1620-1. See
also chapter one.

53 Breton, Manifestoes, 182.

54 Many scholars and authors uncritically give 18 February as his birthday, see also Polizzotti, Revolution, 3-4.


56 Rimbaud's horoscope was drawn by Paul Chardon; Min 3-4 (1933): 38. See also Clébert, Dictionnaire, 64. For Baudelaire's horoscope (9 April 1821) see http://www.astrotheme.com/portraits/E3u3ALLMzLrY.htm.

57 Polizzotti, Revolution, 3-4. Breton officially changed his birth date in 1934, but had already incidentally used 18 February years earlier.

58 See chapter two. Cryptesthesia is a concept that explains paranormal experiences as sensory hallucinations of earlier, memorised, sensory experiences.

59 Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 39.

60 Chadwick, Women Artists, 190.

61 Béhar & Carassou, Le Surréalisme, 301.

62 Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 39.

63 ‘I turn toward those who are not afraid to conceive of love as the site of ideal occultation of all thought.’ Breton, Manifestoes, 181.

64 Harris, Surrealist Art, 2.

65 Mabille, ‘L’œil’. Hilke, L’écriture, 147. Many of Mabille’s short essays, including this article, are collected in: Mabille, Conscience lumineuse.

66 Breton, Mad Love, 55-7.

67 Breton, Selections, 71-2. This translation is also available online: http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/179212 (accessed August 10, 2011). For a brief formal analysis of the poem and discussion of its original historical context, see Hilke, L’écriture, 154-65.

68 Breton, Mad Love, 65.

69 Breton, Mad Love chapter 4, spec. 61, 64. See further Polizzotti, ‘Introduction: Phrases’, Selections, 26.

70 Hilke, L’écriture, 149-397. Hilke gives a line for line reading of Breton’s reinterpretation of ‘Sunflower’.

71 For instance in a note in ‘Before the Curtain’: Breton, Free Rein, 80-7, 281-3.

72 A line reads: ‘Le grands magasins de la Ménagère pourraient prendre feu’, and indeed in 1921 that specific building fell victim to a destructive fire. Hilke,
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L’écriture, 147-8, 395.

73 Breton, Manifestoes, 202.

74 ‘What does 1940 have in store for us? 1939 has been disastrous… Should we miss chivalrous trench warfare or favour the inglorious immobile exterminations of today?’ Breton & Aragon, ‘Le trésor des jésuites’, Variétés (1929), in Breton, Free Rein, 282 (my emphasis). Breton and Aragon were never in the trenches, chivalrous or no, but served as medical orderlies during the First World War. See also Hilke, L’écriture, 395.

75 Visitors to the 1938 surrealist exhibition, where Duchamp had hung 1200 coal-sacks from the ceiling of the gallery, were provided with a flashlight. The interpretation of the resulting gloominess as a prophecy of the Second World War is made by Breton, Free Rein, 80-1. See further Duplessis, Surréalisme, 158-9; Demos, ‘The Exiles’, 181-2; Hilke, L’écriture, 148. One should note, as Hilke does, that although Breton treats all these predictions as one of a kind, they are not really alike. Obviously all of them depend on the author’s reinterpretation, but in cases such as S’il vous plait there are recognisable, perhaps even controllable, names and dates, while in the Sunflower case the reader has to take Breton’s version of what transpired between him and Jacqueline, upon which his whole prophetical re-interpretation is based, at face-value. In other words, the reader cannot escape possible manipulation on Breton’s part. Hilke, L’écriture, 396.

76 Hilke, L’écriture, 148.


78 Breton, Nadja, 29-31. See also Matthews, Surrealism, Insanity, 46.

79 Cottom, Abyss, 224.

80 Littérature 14 (1920); cited in McNab, Ghost Ships, 106.

81 McNab, Ghost Ships, 106. That journey and the development leading up to and following it are the subject of Ghost Ships.


83 Polizzotti, Revolution, 245.

84 Thinkers of the October-school in particular downplay or deny any extra-normality. Hal Foster, commenting upon Breton’s reinterpretation of ‘Sunflower’ as prophetic in Mad Love, thinks it clear that ‘the poem does not predict the encounter so much as the encounter enacts the poem’, i.e., there is no prediction or prophesy but rather repetition. Foster, Compulsive Beauty, 36.

85 An approach such as Hilke’s takes the apparent prophetic nature of the poem as the starting point for an in-depth analyse of the poem itself, and subsequently of phenomena such as premonition, precognition and the like more generally, where he furthermore freely uses the term ‘paranormal’. Hilke, L’écriture. Even
more outspoken in the belief that the Surrealists actually foresaw the future is Yvonne Duplessis, the author who also credited (as paranormal) Desnos’ telepathic contact with Duchamp/Rose in New York during the sleeping sessions, for instance, as well as Nadja supposedly reading André’s mind at the Tuileries garden; Duplessis, Surréalisme. 

Caws, in her introduction to Mad Love, evades the topic entirely; Caws, ‘Translator’s Introduction’, xii-xiii. 

The fortune telling games in which Jacques Baron also participated in the early 1920s were never intended to be serious, and all were very unhappily surprised when the one predicting Crevel’s suicide became reality. 

Breton, Free Rein, 81 (my emphasis). 

Breton, Manifestoes, 303. 

Richardson, Dedalus Book, II: 285. 

‘On Surrealism and its Living Works’ (1953), Breton, Manifestoes, 302-3 (emphasis original). 

Faiivre, Access, 10-1. 

Beecher, Charles Fourier, 349; McCalla, ‘Romanticism’. 

Breton, Surrealism and Painting, 68. This is the second aphorism from The Emerald Tablet, which has many translations. See further Kahn, Hermès Trismégiste. 

E.g., Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 10. 

Breton, Surrealism and Painting, 22 (my emphasis). 

Breton, Anthology, 92 (my emphasis). It is an essay on Romantic poet Xavier Forneret: ‘[Forneret] placed his book under the invocation of this phrase by Paracelsus: “Often there is nothing above…”’ etc. Hubert and other editors of Breton’s Œuvres fail to mention where this particular form of the saying originates; Breton, O.C., II: 1471-7. I do not think it is from Paracelsus; it may be derived from Forneret himself. The last is a little known poet, part of a group usually called the ‘petit romantiques’. For a study that also touches upon the surrealist interest in his thought and work, see Kaye, Xavier Forneret. 

Breton, Surrealism and Painting, 22. 

The editors of Breton’s Œuvres, Bonnet, Hubert and others, do not provide any source for any of Breton’s various paraphrases. Apollinaire turned Breton’s attention to Agrippa’s Three Books of Occult Philosophy as well, and so perhaps to the Tablet too. Grillot de Givry mentions The Emerald Tablet and this specific aphorism very briefly, see Grillot de Givry, Witchcraft, 125 and 240. It has been suggested that Ernst was familiar with the Tablet, but whether he was pointed to it by Breton, or the other way around, if at all, remains unclear; Warlick, Max Ernst, 180. In 1928 Breton totally reverses the meaning of the saying (‘there is neither
high nor low’), whereas in 1941 and 1953 he phrased it correctly (all is above and below). This might mean that he was just reproducing something from hearsay in 1928, mistakenly at that, and that it was only in later years that he had a proper version of the Tablet at hand. On the other hand, the 1928 inversion might also be an example of surrealistic black humour and a dig at the religious undertone of the aphorism. We may never know.

100 Goethe’s original is: ‘Nichts ist drinnen, nichts ist draußen: Denn was innen, das ist außen’ (what is within is also without), to be found in the poem ‘Epirrhema’, see the ‘Notices’, Breton, O.C., IV: 1279.

101 For instance, see one of the ‘Spiritual Letters’ by Gerhard Tersteegen in Erb, The Pietists, 242. It is very probable that Goethe was familiar with these and other Pietists writings, as his family was closely connected to Pietist circles and communities. This is explored in Kemper & Schneider Goethe, for instance in the essays of Paul Peucker, Thilo Daniel and Burkhard Dohm.

102 Breton, Manifestoes, 302-3.

103 See also Friedman, ‘Definitional’.


105 This essay was written in 1924, just before the first Manifesto came out, and later included in Point du Jour, translated as Break of Day; Breton, Break of Day, 3-20, 18.

106 As discussed in the previous chapter; Breton, Manifestoes, 302-3.

107 Breton, Manifestoes, 302.

108 Belton, The Beribboned, 55. In Nadja, for instance, objective chances are known as ‘petrifying coincidences’ such as the sudden prevalence of ‘bois-charbons’-signs discussed above; Breton, Nadja, 19. See also the ‘Notice’ to Vases Communicants by Bonnet & Hubert in Breton, O.C., II: 1364. Many years later, in the Conversations, Breton returned to the topic of objective chance, in connection with Nadja. After discussing certain coincidences, in Nadja but also in an earlier work, Breton states that ‘philosophically, objective chance … is nothing more than the geometric location of these coincidences.…’ Breton, Conversations, 107.


110 Freud, Totem, ch. III and spec. 85, 88-93. He returned to it in the 1914 essay ‘On Narcissism’.

111 For more on the Freudian concept, see Pataki,. ‘Freudian’, 67-71.


113 Or otherwise call for ‘delirious interpretation’, Breton, Communicating Vessels, 92.

114 Breton, Mad Love, 25-34. For more on the sculpture, see Krauss’s fascinating
essay ‘No More Play’ in Krauss, The Originality, 43-85.

115 In Mad Love, Breton tells the story of an uncomfortable event during a strange afternoon. The characters André and Jacqueline become separated during a walk, and both begin to feel increasingly saddened and at one point even despairing of their love. When they reunite all is well again. Afterwards they learn that the house they passed by just at the moment they were feeling so desperate about their love, had been the site of a gruesome murder of a woman by her husband. Could that terrifying and haunted afternoon, Breton wonders, an afternoon that further seemed to have been almost ‘overdetermined’ (negatively) by two particular books Jacqueline brought along, have been due just to chance? ‘Everything happens as if, in such a case, one were the victim of a learned machination on the part of powers which remain, until things change, highly obscure.’ Breton, Mad Love, 111. See also Rabaté, ‘Loving Freud’, 70.

116 Breton, Mad Love, 23 (my emphasis).

117 See also the brief analysis of Bonnet in her comments upon Mad Love, Breton, O.C., II: 1712n1.

118 One would perhaps expect Jung to be included among this list as well. Jung introduced the notion of synchronicity—the experience of two causally unrelated but more or less simultaneous incidents as meaningful together—in the 1920s. However, the Bretonian Surrealists disliked Jung, not least because of their fanatical admiration of Freud, and I doubt whether Breton was familiar with Jung’s synchronicity in the 1930s. Jung would provide a definite description of it only in 1951, in a lecture at Eranos, followed by a paper in 1952: ‘Synchronizität als ein Prinzip akausaler Zusammenhänge.’ (Jung, Carl G. Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle. Bollingen: Bollingen Foundation, 1993.) Ray, The Surrealist, 25-6.

119 Breton & Éluard, ‘Enquête’, Minotaure 3-4 (1933), 101-16. The list of names is quite impressive, also including Marc Chagall, Wassily Kandinsky, Aldous Huxley, Carl Jung, Ezra Pound and many others. Concerning the psychical researchers see also the brief comment in Browder, Unruly Spirits, 175n84.

120 Compare Harris, Surrealist Art, 86ff.


122 Breton, Communicating Vessels, 86.


124 Gille, Trajectoires, 48.

125 Breton, Trajectoire. See also Bastien, ‘Rêve’.

126 Although in this case not necessarily regardless of place; many Germans are included in Trajectoire du rêve, which at this stage in time (1938) went against prevailing French sentiments, and must have been motivated at least in part by
radical avant-garde sentiments, besides of course genuine admiration.

127 Breton, Trajectoire.

128 Shattuck, ‘The Nadja File’, 50. Both Surrealists and historians and others use it as such.

129 See also Caws, ‘Introduction: Linkings’, xiii; and Mitchell, Secrets, 30. For a brief analysis of the Engelsian provenance of this term, see the ‘Notice’ to Vases Communicants by Bonnet & Hubert in Breton, O.C., II: 1363-5.

130 Mitchell, Secrets, 113; Maurer, ‘Dada and Surrealism’, passim. The book is one of many famous titles featuring in the 1947 surrealist exhibition at the Galerie Maeght, as will be discussed in the following chapter. There is no need to go into Frazer and his Golden Bough at length since many others have already done so. For a brief overview, see for instance Horton, Patterns, 105-37.

131 Both books published in Paris by Alcan. Breton included La Mentalité primitive in one of his reading lists in the 1950 Almanach surréaliste, compiled together with Benjamin Péret. For a brief introduction to Lévy-Bruhl and his thought, see Horton, Patterns, 63-9.

132 Evan Maurer, Clio Mitchell and Whitney Chadwick have argued in favour of a considerable influence on the part of Lévy-Bruhl’s thought, through the two book mentioned. Maurer, ‘Dada’; Mitchell, Secrets chapter 2. Chadwick has traced Lévy-Bruhl’s influence in the journals Minotaure and Documents in Chadwick, Myth, 16-8. See furthermore Clifford, ‘On Ethnographic Surrealism’; and various articles from Thompson, L’autre et le sacré for more on surrealist interest in the ethnography, anthropology and sociology of ‘primitive’ religion. The second issue of Minotaure (1933), for instance, was devoted in its entirety to the French Djibouti mission (1931-2), in which Michel Leiris participated. For more on Leiris’s ethnography see Westbrook, ‘Michel Leiris’; Albers, ‘Mimesis’. See further Hamada, ‘La conception’. For Miró, see Stich, Joan Miró

133 Revue française de la psychanalyse VII, 1 (1934, special issue ‘La Pensée Magique’). Mitchell, Secrets, 126. On Allendy and Surrealism, see Geblesco, ‘René Allendy’

134 See also Horton, Patterns, 97.

135 Surette, The Birth, 59.


138 Mitchell, Secrets, 113ff.

139 Chadwick, Myth, 17.

140 Chadwick, Myth, 11.
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141 See also Maurer, ‘Dada’, 542.
142 Mitchell, Secrets, 117.
143 It should be noted that French sociologists Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss also related magic very closely to desire, in Théorie générale de la Magie (1902-03), and it is possible that their work influenced Breton’s thought to a certain extent, see Mitchell, Secrets, 113-4. Other thinkers who may possibly have influenced the surrealist worldview are the French philosopher Henri Bergson and the French psychoanalyst Adrien Borel; unfortunately space is lacking here to explore their relevance further, but see Maurer, ‘Dada’, 541; and Mitchell, Secrets, 127-31.
144 Discussed in chapter three; also, Mitchell, Secrets, 121-3.
145 Myth is even ‘fatally wedded’ to such early anthropology; Bell, ‘Introduction’, 1. Other important twentieth century theorists on myth include Bronislaw Malinowski, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Ernst Cassirer, Paul Ricoeur and Hans Blumenberg. For a discussion of their most important works and theories, see Stambovsky, Myth, 45-72.
146 Studies of myth and/in Modernism and/or modernity are abundant, and I can provide but a brief selection. Most studies agree myth has been one of Modernism’s most defining paradigms, whether or not one approves. Studies such as Taylor’s The Secular Age or Latour’s We Have Never Been Modern provide far-reaching philosophical readings of Modernism/modernity, dis/re-enchantment, secularisation and the role and place of myth in those developments.
147 An influential example of a reception study is James B. Vickery’s Literary Impact of the Golden Bough. Surette’s Birth of Modernism argues for the pervasive presence of myth in modernist literature, including authors like Pound, Yeats and Eliot. The triangle myth, Modernism and literature has often been explored, see further also many of the essays in Bell & Poellner, Myth, particularly Bell’s ‘Introduction’ (where many more sources are cited); Literature, Modernism and Myth by the same; Mythos and Moderne by Karl-Heinz Bohrer; or Spivey, Beyond Modernism. With respect to the visual arts, the best recent overview is the catalogue of the 2008 exhibition Traces du Sacré, which traces both myth and the idea of ‘the sacred’ in modern art; the introductory essay by Lampe and de Loisy is particularly relevant. That essay, and Traces du Sacré in general, show modernist myth to be grounded, at least partly, in Nietzsche. See also Bell, ‘Introduction’, 5; Griffin, Modernism, 131; Poellner, ‘Myth, Art’.
148 Cf. Lavergne, André Breton, 19.
149 ‘Political Position of Today’s Art’ (91 April, 1935), and ‘Surrealist Situation of the Object’ (29 March, 1935). These lectures were published together with three other political papers as Position Politique du Surréalisme in 1935 (Paris: Sagittaire); Breton, Manifestoes, 205-278; the two Prague lectures 212-33 and
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255-78. See also Bonnet, ‘Notice’, Breton, O.C., II: 1562-73.

150 Which would prefigure the political tract on the revolutionary potential of art he would write with Leon Trotsky a couple of years later, ‘Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art’, Breton, Free Rein, 29-34. See Taminiaux, ‘Breton and Trotsky’.

151 Breton, Manifestoes, 230.

152 Breton, Manifestoes, 231.

153 Breton, Manifestoes, 232.

154 Breton, Manifestoes, 232 (emphasis original).

155 Breton, Manifestoes, 233 (emphases original).

156 Breton, Manifestoes, 210 (my emphasis).

157 See also Breton, Manifestoes, 210; Bonnet, ‘Notes’, in Breton, O.C., II: 1585; Gershman, ‘Surrealism’, 52.


159 See also Beaujour, André Breton, 219.

160 Gershman, ‘Surrealism’, 53.

161 Browder, André Breton, 63.

162 Chadwick, Myth, 8. The one exception to the rule is Louis Aragon, whose Les Aventures de Télémaque dates from 1922. It is an irreverent and humorous spoof (‘pastiche-novel’) of a moralistic book of the same title, written by the archbishop and theologian François Fenelon in the seventeenth century as a guide for princes. Aragon, The Adventures

163 Breton, Free Rein, 17 (the essay ‘Nonnational Boundaries of Surrealism’, 1937). See also Chadwick, Myth, 9; Veseley, ‘Surrealism, Myth’, 88.

164 Chadwick, Myth, 19-45.

165 Masson, Mythology. See also Chadwick, ‘Masson’s Gradiva’, and idem, Myth; Lomas, The Haunted, 26-51; Schmiedt, ‘Magic Realities’, 421; and further Masson, Mythologie


168 Chénieux-Gendron, ‘Lectures surréalistes’; Eburne, ‘Surrealism noir’; Gracq, André Breton

169 Lavergne, André Breton, 29-42.

170 Buñuel’s second film, L’Âge d’Or, refers to it directly. See also the various essays in Béhar, Mélusine VII: L’Âge d’Or – L’Âge d’Homme. The topos of the castle is another motif that can be found in Surrealism, and in the interests it pursued, in this case chivalric legends and Gothic novels. Beaujour, André Breton, 221-2. For more on castles in Surrealism, see Beaujour, ‘De l’océan’; or Goodrick,
'Gothic Castles'.

171 Lavergne, André Breton, 41. Also pointed out is the myth of the woman with the vagina dentata, Lavergne, André Breton, 43. That concept was of course closely linked to the idea of woman as the praying mantis, an insect that was thought at the time to eat her partner during mating. This fascinated the Surrealist no end.

172 Gracq, André Breton, 34, 102.

173 Alquié, Philosophy, 106.

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

175 Breton, Mad Love, 114.

176 The classical version of Melusina’s story is that of Jean d’Arras from 1478, for instance in an 1854 reprint by Jannet, Paris, edited by Ch. Brunet; see further chapter five

177 Chadwick, Myth, 7. The story of Gradiva, first told by Wilhelm Jensen in Gradiva (1903) and then retold and analysed by Freud, ‘Der Wahn und Die Traume in W. Jensen’s Gradiva’ (1907), is summarised for example in Lomas, The Haunted, 184-5; but see also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gradiva (accessed April 22, 2011).

178 Chadwick, Myth, 77-86; idem, ‘Masson’s Gradiva’.

179 Eburne, ‘Surrealism Noir’, 94.

180 See also Beaujour, ‘De l’océan’, 363.

181 Minotaure was intended to compete with the very respected art review Cahiers d’Art, had a print run of 3000, and was financially backed by art editor Albert Skira and art critic Stratis Eleftheriadis, known as Tériade. Filled with high-quality essays, art reviews, theoretical pieces and many sharp and beautiful illustrations, it was a multi-disciplinary high-end culture journal. Bate, Photography, 235-37. By comparison, La Révolution Surréaliste and Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution seem dark, small, gritty, low quality, radical, peripheral, and perhaps overly concerned with political issues, LSASDLR in particular overtly Marxist.


183 Rabaté, ‘Loving Freud’, 70.

184 Rabaté, ‘Loving Freud’, 70.

185 In 1931, Lacan had co-authored an article on the case of a mad teacher, which refers to the first Manifesto and to The Immaculate Conception by Breton and Éluard; see Rabaté, ‘Loving Freud’, 68. Later in the 1930s Lacan published two articles in the surrealist journal Minotaure. In the first, he argues for a new style, that of paranoia, because the systematic distortion of reality in paranoia provides ‘a model for better understanding, as well as better expressing, the nature of causality in the first place’. Lacan, Jacques. ‘Problème du Style et la conception psychiatrique des formes paranoïaques de l’expérience’, Minotaure 1 (1933):
68-69. Eburne, ‘Surrealism Noir’, 96. The second article concerned the famous
with Dali, the most paranoid of the whole bunch. For more on Lacan, see also
Roudinesco, Jacques Lacan, chapter 4 and passim; on his relationship with
Surrealism specifically, 109-17.
186 Eburne, ‘Surrealism Noir’, 105.
187 See also Eburne, ‘Surrealism Noir’, 95, 101, 106. This was initiated by Dali’s
essay ‘L’Ane Pourrée’ (‘The Rotten Ass’), LSASDLR 1 (1930): 9-12; and Crevel’s
on the paranoid woman ‘Aimée’ was praised exuberantly in that article. By the
time Lacan was writing his doctoral thesis, he was already aware of Dali’s writings,
which may have influenced his own. Dali’s writings from the time are collected in
Finkelstein, Salvador Dali.
188 Jenny, ‘From Breton’. See further Rabaté, ‘Loving Freud’.
189 For instance Vadé, L’Enchantement, 320, 422, and passim.
190 See for instance Tambiah, ‘Form’, passim and spec. 343 and 349. See also
Riffard, ‘The Esoteric Method’, 72. The pre-eminent study of analogy is of course
Foucault’s The Order of Things.
191 See my discussion in chapter five.
192 Vadé, L’Enchantement, 400.
193 Breton, Manifestoes, 303. Breton’s interest in Fourier’s work will be discussed
in chapter five. Note that this is one of the few instances Breton himself uses the
term ‘correspondence’.
194 Breton, Manifestoes, 303.
195 Breton, Manifestoes, 303, continued: ‘Surrealism is here of the same mind as
such thinkers as Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin and Schopenhauer, in the sense
that it believes, as they did, that we must “seek to understand nature through
ourselves and not ourselves through nature”.’ De Saint-Martin (1743-1803) was
French theosophist and philosopher, and influential in the development of the
esoteric current of Martinism, founded by Martinez de Pasqually. Breton probably
paraphrased his maxim that ‘one must explain things through man, and not man
through things’, as put forth in his second book Tableau naturel des rapports qui
existent entre Dieu, l’homme, et l’univers (1782). McCalla, ‘Saint-Martin’; Hubert,
‘Notes’, in Breton, O.C., IV: 1214.
196 Jentsch’s ‘Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen’ was published in the
Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift 8, 22 (25 Aug. 1906): 195-8 and 8, 23
(1 Sept. 1906): 203-5. Translation by Roy Sellars via http://art3idea.psu.edu/locus/
Jentsch_uncanny.pdf. Freud, The Uncanny; first published as ‘Das Unheimliche’
in Imago 5-6 (1919): 297-324. A translation is available online at http://www-
rohan.sdsu.edu/~amtower/uncanny.html (accessed April 15, 2011).
The story in question is ‘Der Sandmann’ from 1816. Jentsch constructed his concept of the uncanny primarily around the character of Olimpia, the girl who the main character in the story, Nathanael, is enamoured of. She turns out to be an automaton or a life-like robot. Freud, on the other hand, relates his concept chiefly to Olimpia’s eyes that have been taken out of her head, and which drive Nathanael mad when he sees them lying on the ground. Find Hoffmann’s stories in Tales of Hoffmann.

Masschelein, ‘A Homeless Concept’, in which she also looks at the linguistic complexity of the concept (even more complex for non-German speakers), due to its negation (‘un-’) of the heimliche which can refer to the home-environment as well as to being secretive. Masschelein, The Unconcept. See also Lomas’ brief words on the Freudian uncanny in Lomas, The Haunted Self, 95-6.

See also Warner, Phantasmagoria, 53ff.

‘La Poupée’, Minotaure 6 (1934-35), 30-1. These images in turn were taken from Bellmer’s book of photographs, Die Puppe (1934). Alley, Catalogue, 45; Conley, Automatic Woman, 84. For more on Bellmer and his dolls (he constructed many more), see Liechtenstein, Behind Closed Doors; Also, Taylor, The Anatomy For a discussion of Bellmer’s apparent misogyny and his aggression towards the female body, see Kuenzli, ‘Surrealism and Misogyny’.

Benjamin Péret, ‘Au Paradis des fantômes’, Minotaure 3-4 (1933), 29-35. Just as a side-note, the terms automatism and automata are obviously semantically related, but historically too. Mesmeric automatism, grand-parent to the psychiatric automatism to which surrealist automatism is indebted, as discussed in chapter three, rose to prominence at a time (late eighteenth century) when automata were becoming quite popular, in particular at the courts of Europe. The automaton mimicked the human and displayed human intelligence, while simultaneously Mesmer was reducing humans to automata in his séances. See also Foster, ‘Exquisite Corpses’, 159-61; Pick, Svengali’s Web, 105.

Kuenzli, ‘Surrealism and Misogyny’, passim.

Lehmann, ‘Stripping Her’, 89.

See also Lehmann, ‘Stripping Her’, 89-90; Belton, The Beribboned, 111-6.

Masschelein, ‘A Homeless Concept’. Doubling is for instance also a motif in Nadja, see Hötter, Surrealismus, 44ff. For an extensive analysis of surrealist visual art as uncanny, see Foster, Compulsive Beauty

Freud, The Uncanny (my emphasis).

See this and the previous chapters; furthermore, Conley, ‘Surrealism and Outsider Art’; Maclagan, ‘Outsiders’; Maurer, ‘Dada’; Pernoud, ‘From Children’s’; Stansell, ‘Surrealist Racial’.

It is obvious that he aimed at situating his book alongside Freud’s The Interpretation of Dreams. Breton, Communicating Vessels, 149-55.

Gille, Trajectoires, 180.
Letter from Freud to Breton, 6 December 1937, Breton, Trajectoire, 127. Freud wrote that ‘a collection of dreams without association does not tell me anything...’ and (here comes the punch) ‘it is hard for me to imagine what it can mean to anyone else’—Freud was not too keen on Surrealism, clearly. See also Polizzotti, Revolution, 453; but also in Breton, O.C., I: 1192. See further Pierre, ‘Le parcours’, 20.

Rosolato, Pour une psychanalyse, 161.

Classical studies of the surrealist novel that also touch upon this topic are Hoog, ‘The Surrealist’; and Matthews, Surrealism and the Novel. Find an analysis of Paris Peasant in Walz, Pulp Surrealism, 13-41.


Hanegraaff, ‘Esotericism’; idem, ‘The Study’. See also the discussion in Bogdan, Western Esotericism, chapter 1.

Hanegraaff, ‘The Study’, 497, see also 508; idem, ‘Esotericism’, 340.


Breton, Manifestoes, 14 (emphasis original).

Breton, Manifestoes, 122 (my emphases).

Reproduced in Breton, Mad Love, 114.

Carrouges, Basic Concepts, 24-9.

Browder, André Breton, 69.

Breton, Conversations, 118. Hegel’s point is called the ‘point extrême’. Breton probably used French translations by Auguste Véra of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Mind. See Chénieux-Gendron, ‘Surrealists in Exile’, 445. French intellectuals really took to Hegel only in the 1950s, Breton was part of a small group of early admirers of Hegel. For more on Breton’s reading and use of Hegel, see for example Cunningham, ‘The Futures’; Rabaté, ‘Breton’s Post-Hegelian’; Harris, Surrealist Art, 16-8 and passim.

Guérac, Literary Polemics, 249n32.

Breton, Mad Love, 114.

Chapter FIVE

1 But financial problems may have also played a part; Polizzotti, Revolution, 525.
2 Adams, After the Rain, 95-6.
3 Arcanum 17, originally written in 1943 and published in 1945, in a re-edition, with Openings added to it; Breton, Arcanum. Idem, Ode à Fourier (originally 1945), in O.C., III: 349-63.
4 Breton, Free Rein, 83-4.
5 Breton, Free Rein, 84-5 (emphasis mine).
6 Geographically, too: Seligman settled in upstate New York in the early 1940s, while Carrington, Varo and others relocated to Mexico. Brauner remained in
France, but even though he participated in the 1947 exhibition he pursued a personal trajectory and moved outside of Breton’s sphere of influence.

7 Mitchell, Secrets, 263.
8 Kuni, Victor Brauner, 14-8; Mitchell, Secrets, 269.
9 Mitchell, Secrets, 270.
10 I am condensing here a development that has been discussed at length by Kuni, Brauner, 25-70; and Mitchell, Secrets, 270-92.
11 Mitchell, Secrets, 270-81.
12 Seligman, The Mirror; alternatively titled The History of Magic. See also Sawin, ‘Magus, Magic’. The foreword to the French edition (1948) was written by Robert Amadou; this may have been one of the things eventually leading to his contact with the Parisian Surrealists.
13 Ouspensky, Tertium; Needleman, ‘Ouspensky’.
16 These included, besides Tertium Organum and other works in several languages, also A Primer of Higher Space by Claude Bragdon, which introduced English-reading audiences to the Ouspenskyan occult fourth dimension, and works of Charles Hinton that had introduced the (mathematical as well as occult) fourth dimension in the nineteenth century. For more on this dimension in modern art and the relevant sources see Bauduin, ‘Science, Occultism’. Also, Henderson, ‘Four-Dimensional’, 365, and 390n45; Sawin, Surrealism, 28.
17 Henderson, ‘Four-Dimensional’, 365. See Parkinson, ‘Surrealism’, 565-72, for a discussion of Paalen; note that Paalen was primarily orientated towards the artistic context of quantum mechanics. Parkinson, Surrealism, 149-68. The notion of n-dimensionality, four dimensions in particular, is closely linked to non-Euclidian geometry. The latter remained foremost an interest of Matta and Paalen rather than the group as a whole, just as all this ground had already been covered by Duchamp, who had been exploring it since his early career. Bauduin, ‘Science, Occultism’, 26-34. Also, Henderson, Duchamp.
19 Colville, Scandaleusement, 290-301, 48-59, 218-27, 178-185, 100-111, 60-73. Rosemont, Surrealist Women, 52-63, 74-7, 103-6, 225-7. The issue of women surrealists is a complex one, and the selection of artists I have mentioned here, while based on their prominence within the group, is arguably somewhat arbitrary. Although some women had participated in surrealist activities from the outset, such as Simone Kahn-Breton or Renée Gauthier, they usually remained side lined and did not construct an artistic oeuvre of their own. The two notable exceptions during the late 1920s and early 30s were Valentine Hugo (1887-1968) and Czech artist Toyen (Marie Cermínová, 1902-1980), who, while closely connected to the Surrealists, still both pursued their own careers independently. Rosemont,
Surrealist Women, parts 1 and 2; specifically 3-13, 14-6, 16-9; also 80-1. Cauvin, ‘Valentine’; Hille, Spiele, 42-53; Srp, Toyen.

 Did more women join because Surrealism had become ‘weakened and more embattled’? Was it becoming ‘more welcoming’? See the discussion in Suleiman, Subversive Intent, 31; also Raaberg, ‘The Problematics’.

 Chadwick, Surrealist Women, 182.

 Breton, Anthology, 335.

 Breton, Anthology, 341.

 Hubert, Magnifying Mirrors, 113-39, 255-75.

 Hille, Spiele, 99, 100.

 Hille, Spiele, 99-102. The independent Fini’s association with Surrealism was only brief. Colville, ‘Beauty’, 175; Ferentinou, ‘Surrealism’, [in press]. I have not mentioned British Surrealist Ithell Colquhoun here, as she was not intimately connected to the Parisian group, but of the women Surrealists, her knowledge of and engagement with esotericism and particularly historical occultism was probably the most extensive. She was in fact a practising occultist, in that sense surpassing the male Surrealists too. Ferentinou, ‘Ithell Colquhoun’; idem, Women Surrealists, chapters 5 and 10, and passim.


 Arcq, ‘Remedios Varo’, 53; idem, ‘Mirrors’, 100, 113-14. Carrington, The Hearing Trumpet, passim; further discussed by Ochoa, ‘The Hearing Trumpet’. The descriptions of the doctor who acts as some sort of guru to the retirement community that the main character of the story finds herself in, and who subjects the community members to absurd food regimes and social regulations, are hilarious and well worth reading.

 Aberth, Leonora Carrington; Arcq, ‘Mirrors’; Ferentinou, Women Surrealists; Orenstein, ‘Reclaiming’.


 Colville, ‘Beauty’, 164-7. Cf. Orenstein’s articles, such as ‘Leonora Carrington’ and ‘Reclaiming’; while Orenstein seems to have an excellent insight into Carrington’s esotericism, she is unfortunately neither critical nor scholarly enough.


 Hille, Spiele, 120.

 There is a parallel here with Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) who was hailed as a ‘self-invented’ Surrealist by Breton, but who always considered herself a realist; she did not paint dreams or fantasies but rather her (personal) reality. Herrera, ‘Kahlo’.

 Arcq, ‘Remedios Varo’, 52.

 Rosenblatt, René Daumal, 139.

 ‘Foreword to the 1966 French edition’, Breton, Anthology, xii.

 ‘Beelzebub’s Tale’ is a bit of a humorous tale, and would have fitted the
Anthology. See also Challenger, Philosophy, 24-5.


40 Breton, Surrealism and Painting, 145-50, Matta and Ford spec. on 146, 148-9.

41 In 1952 Breton would definitely relegate this type of ‘hard’ science, physics, to the surrealist sideline, as he found it too concerned with positivism, progression and materialism. Second interview with André Perinaud (1952), in Breton, Conversations, 249-55. The final break of Bretonian Surrealism with ‘hard’ science is discussed in Parkinson, Surrealism, 201-17.

42 Breton, Surrealism and Painting, 149.

43 As I have discussed in chapters two and three; see also Parkinson, Surrealism, 195-8.

44 Polizzotti, Revolution, 485-96.

45 Clébert, Dictionnaire, 34; Constantini, ‘Le Jeu’; Rosemont, Surrealist Women, xliii, lvi.

46 The cards were published in VVV 2-3 (1943), 38, 58, 81, 88. The pages are reproduced in Constantini, ‘Le Jeu’, 94-7. Note that there is a joker too, namely an existing design by Alfred Jarry of his literary character Ubu Roi. Breton’s very brief explanatory essay on this deck can be found in Breton, Free Rein, 48-50.

47 Lévi, Dogme et Rituel, I & II: passim, but he first introduces the tarot as secret repositories of occult wisdom dating to ancient Egypt in the introduction to part I.


49 Which was further popularised in the 1930s by Paul Marteau, head of the Grimaud card factory, as a group of strongly similar designs. The best histories of tarot are still Dummett, The Game; and Dummett et al., A Wicked Pack.

50 ‘D’un poème-objet’ by Henri Béhar in Breton, Arcane 17, 8.

51 E.g. Sawin, Surrealism, 132; besides other sources mentioned earlier.

52 Grillot de Givry, Witchcraft, Book II, Ch. VII: ‘Cartomancy and the Tarot’ (280-98, including many illustrations).

53 André Derain, frontispiece and ‘Critérium des As’, Minotaure 3-4 (1933): cover & 8. Derain, although admired by the Surrealists, was not one of them.

54 Mesch, ‘Serious Play’, 66; or http://www.johncoulthart.com/feuilleton/2006/03/17/surrealist-cartomancy/ (accessed March 12, 2012). Such a comment merely indicates limited knowledge of occultism generally and of occult games in particular, as there is nothing whatsoever specifically occult about these suits. Similarly, the tarot suits of swords, cups, etc. were originally not occult either, and mere deviation of standard suits and court cards does not necessarily make something occult. Cf. also Polizzotti, Revolution, 494.
56 Breton, Free Rein, 48-50. This essay is entirely devoid of any esoteric reference, and if the Marseille Game was a reinvention of tarots specifically Breton would have certainly let that be known.
57 Which fits with the sentiment that games were played at that time (of war) to preserve ‘at any cost, sufficient freedom of mind’; Polizzotti citing Jean-Louis Bédouin: ‘Introduction: Phrases’, 31. See also Sawin, Surrealism, 132.
58 ‘D’un poème-objet’ by Henri Béhar in Breton, Arcane 17, 8. On a side note, the story goes that Seligmann was dismissed from the surrealist group by Breton in 1943 over a strong disagreement about the interpretation of an (unidentified) tarot card, although this is based on anecdotal evidence; Sawin, ‘Magus, Magic’, 77.
59 Breton, Free Rein, 49; the historiographers ‘do not provide any further explanation’.
60 Sawin states that Breton learned in Marseille that the original four suits of clubs, spades, etc., are derived from military signs, Sawin, Surrealism, 130, which might have contributed to the decision to change the four suit-signs in the surrealist game.
61 Hanegraaff & Versluis, ‘Novalis’, 870.
62 Breton, Manifestoes, 39note. Breton cites Baudelaire directly here, who had translated a story by Edgar Allen Poe to which the particular quote from Novalis, originally from his Fragments, served as an epigraph; and it is very probable that Breton did not actually read Novalis in the original at that time. Rainey, Modernism, 736n65; Bonnet, ‘Notes et variantes’, Breton, O.C., I: 1361.
63 Béguin, ‘Les romantiques’; idem, L’Ame
64 Béguin, ‘L’Androgyne’; see also my discussion in chapter one.
65 Breton & Éluard, Dictionnaire, 18
66 Béguin, ‘Les Romantiques’; idem, L’Ame. In both article and book Béguin discusses the relations between research into the unconscious, analysis of dreams, mesmerism and certain occult movements; obviously all topics cutting close to the heart of Surrealism. Béguin’s essay ‘L’Androgyne’ appeared in Minotaure. The relation between Béguin’s works and Surrealism is discussed by Mitchell, Secrets, 66-71, further 71-5; also Asari, ‘Vers un mythe’, 65-8; Bruno, ‘André Breton’, 67n4; Eigeldinger, ‘Poésie et language’, 22, 24; Lamy, Hermétisme, 99ff. Novalis, Notes. Breton would have used French collected editions of Novalis, such as Journal intime
67 See also Polizzotti, ‘Introduction: Laughter’, ix.
68 Bays, The Orphic Vision, 12.
69 As has been argued by Bays, The Orphic Vision; and Wilkinson, The Dream, chapters 4 and 5 specifically. See also my discussion in chapter one.
70 For instance, even though Breton already refers to Swedenborg and his
Memorabilia in the first Manifesto (Breton, Manifestoes, 25), this is done in direct connection with de Nerval. In a letter from that time Breton writes that he had been searching for Swedenborg’s ‘Mémorables’ because the book was mentioned by de Nerval, but had been unable to find it and had made do with some citations elsewhere. Bonnet, ‘Notes et variantes’, Breton, O.C., I: 328. Moreover, Paul Valéry had become interested in Swedenborg after reading a biography by Martin Lamm (1915), which may well have been another incentive for Breton who really admired Valéry then, to mention Swedenborg’s name in the first Manifesto.

71 E.g. Balakian, AB: Magus; Browder, André Breton.

72 For instance, in the Anthology of Black Humour, in the essay on Fourier, Breton cites Baudelaire citing and describing Swedenborg; Breton, Anthology, 41. Swedenborg is always mediated at least twice in Bretonian Surrealism, if not more often. Note that this essay was added to the Anthology for the 1950 edition, and postdates Breton’s discovery of Viatte and reference to Swedenborg in the 1947 exhibition.


74 Mitchell, Secrets, 61.

75 Kuni, Victor Brauner, 49.

76 Kuni, Victor Brauner, 68-9.

77 Novalis, Notes, 181 (aphorism 1075); see further Wood, ‘Introduction’, xxiv.

78 Novalis, Notes, 13 (aphorism 79).

79 Novalis, Notes 8 (aphorism 50).

80 Kuni, Victor Brauner, 55.

81 For a detailed discussion of the activities of the Surrealists in the United States and also their influence upon American art, see Sawin, Surrealism, spec. chapters 4-10.


83 Seligmann’s library would eventually contain more than 250 titles on magic, occultism and related topics. Sawin, Surrealism, 115, 308-12; idem, ‘Magus, Magic’; also, Warlick, Max Ernst, 171.

84 Seligmann, Kurt. ‘Heritage of the Accursed’. View 5, 5 (Dec 1945); in Ford, View, 179-82. The Ouroboros or tail-eating serpent, originally an ancient symbol, usually functions as a symbol of eternity and/or the cycle of change and renewal, often in an alchemical context.

See also Roudinesco, *Histoire*, II: 28. Note that some of the Surrealists who were drifting away from the movement during the War did express an interest in Jung, such as Gordon Onslow Ford; Sawin, *Surrealism*, 161.


Ernst very probably knew (some of) Jung’s early works, such as *Wandlungen und Symbolen der Libido* (1916), but there are very few traces of any familiarity with Jung’s later work. Jung’s *Psychology and Alchemy* came out only in 1944. Legge, *Max Ernst*, 56-7; also for a more extensive discussion of Jung’s absence from Ernst’s life and work. Further, Warlick, *Max Ernst*, 19, 32. See my brief discussion of Ernst and his alchemy in chapter three.

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

Interview with Charles Henry Ford, Breton’s only American interview, originally published in *View* 1, 7-8 (1941); in Breton, *Conversations*, 181-90, spec. 182. In between his service in the army and the period at the villa ‘Air-Bel’, Breton and his family stayed in Mabille’s house in Salon-de-Provence, the village where Nostradamus is buried. There, depressed by the situation, he brooded on Nostradamus’ *Centuries* (1555-58, 1568) for days. Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 484.

Breton, *Conversations*, 182.

Paris was liberated in August 1944; by 7 May 1945 the war was officially over.

See also Ades, *Dada*, 374-83, 386-7.

In New York Breton and Lévi-Strauss, accompanied by Ernst, would visit antique shops specialising in tribal art, and Lévi-Strauss noted how Breton’s eye would pick out objects he himself had dismissed already as culturally functionally irrelevant, thereby prompting him to learn to admire such objects aesthetically. As primitivism, myths and magic were much on the mind of Breton and many other Surrealists, we can imagine that such topics were discussed between them and that the interchanges were fruitful to both sides. Sawin, *Surrealism*, 136; Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 496, 500, 502, 505; Wilcken, *Claude Lévi-Strauss*, 122-5, 128-31. After the return to France Breton (Ernst, too) would remain in occasional contact with Lévi-Strauss, but it is unclear to what extent his thought influenced that of Breton, if at all, and good scholarly works on this topic are still lacking. Lévi-Strauss would publish his most important works after his return to France in 1948, with *La pensée sauvage* (*The Savage Mind*) coming out in 1962 (English translation 1966). One of his influential ideas relevant here is that the human mind is structured the same everywhere, whether western or tribal or otherwise. This contrasts with the opinion of Lévy-Bruhl as I have discussed in chapter four, while it parallels that of Frazer, although without Frazerian superiority accorded to the ‘civilised’ mind. One wonders if this notion was already formulated in his mind in the early 1940s and if it found its way into Bretonian Surrealism.

Mitchell, *Secrets*, in particular chapters 1, 4 and 5.

For Brauner, see also Kuni, *Victor Brauner*, which focuses explicitly on the
magically formative period 1940-1947. For Ernst, see further Warlick, Max Ernst, 171, 223 and passim; idem, ‘Magic, Alchemy’. I have not been able to trace what the role of Novalis may have been in Ernst’s self-perception as a magician.


98 Ernst, Beyond Painting, 26. Ernst writes that Cologne ‘was a former Roman colony called Colonia Claudia Agrippina’, before mentioning Agrippa in the next line; some surrealist black humour is traceable there. Albert the Great or Albertus Magnus (1193/1206-1280), well known theologian and philosopher and reputed magician and alchemist, is also connected with Cologne, and it seems clear that that city functioned as a defining characteristic here. Fanger, ‘Albertus Magnus’ 9-12. The last three are the Biblical wise men (magi in Latin) from the east.

99 Ernst, Beyond Painting, 29. Ernst was drafted in the First World War, serving on both the Eastern and Western German fronts (mainly as cartographer).


101 Tyler, ‘The Point’, 3. The other editor of View was novelist Charles Henri Ford (1913-2002).

102 As argued in ‘The Political Position of Surrealism’ (1935, discussed in the previous chapter); Breton, Manifestoes, 232.


104 Breton, Manifestoes, 286; the entire essay 281-94. Originally VVV 1 (June 1942).


106 Breton, Manifestoes, 293-4.

107 Breton, Manifestoes, 293-4.

108 Breton, Manifestoes, 293. See Adams, After the Rain, 201; Faucherau, ‘La magie’, 312. Matta may have suggested the idea of these beings to Breton, and they immediately made their appearance in surrealist art works, for instance by Matta and Seligmann. Adams, After the Rain, 75-6, in particular 199 for a discussion of other scholars’ views of the Transparent Ones; further Sawin, Surrealism, 199; also Hubert & Pierre, ‘Notice’, Breton, O.C., III: 1136-7.

109 Péret, Benjamin. ‘Magic, the Flesh and Blood of Poetry’. View 3, 2 (1943): 44, 46, 63, 66. Another version of it appeared around that time in the pamphlet La Parole est à Péret, which I have used, as this is the version the Surrealists endorsed; Péret, Les déshonneur. Péret’s Anthologie would be published in 1960.


111 Péret, Les déshonneur, 21-2. See also Mahon, Surrealism, 84.


Breton: ‘deep affinities’ exist between ‘so-called primitive thought’ and ‘Surrealist thought’; Interview for the Haiti Journal (December 1945), in Breton, Conversations, 191-95, 193.

Hanegraaff, Esotericism and the Academy, 164-9.


Breton, ‘The Legendary Life’, 34. Such omniscience is not necessarily science as we might understand it; it is achieved by a combination of ‘satire and mystification’, which ‘creates what the vulgar understand as “humor”’, Breton continues. The superlative of such humour is of course black humour, the exclusive domain of Surrealism.

Péret, Les déshonneur, 51.

Péret brought his radical vision of poetry to bear in the polemical piece ‘Les déshonneur des poètes’ (1945), also included in Péret, Le déshonneur, 69-89.

Breton, Arcanum, 147.

‘Without unleashing a storm of delirium one can work systematically to deprive the distinction between subjective and objective of both necessity and value’ Breton, ‘The Automatic’, 32; this text has been discussed at length in chapter three.

Breton, Free Rein, 72.

This is argued in chapter three. In 1948 artist Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985), André Breton and others started the Compagnie de l’Art Brut, thereby coining the term art brut. Breton resigned from the company in 1951 but remained an active proponent of outsider art. The category of art brut and the history of the Compagnie and Art Brut Collection are discussed by Thévoz Art brut and Perry, Art brut

Breton, Arcanum Beaujour, ‘André Breton’; Eigeldinger, Lumières; Krell, ‘Between Demon’; Lamy, André Breton.

Etiemble, ‘Breton?’.

Balakian, André Breton, 201. Albach has argued that Nadja should be considered his alchemical ‘Magnum Opus’; Albach, Léona, 121-7; 218-22. I find this all rather speculative, but if there were ever anything that Breton had created that should be seen in that particular light, I would think it to be Surrealism as a whole.

Löwy, Morning Star, 17.

Rosemont, Surrealist Women, 248.

Hille, Spiele, 35. See also Beaujour, André Breton, 221. The different categories of surrealist Woman have been listed by Gauthier, Surréalisme, 71-194.

Breton, Arcanum, 80.
See Ferentinou, ‘Surrealism’, [in press]; idem, Women Surrealists, chapters 8 and 9. The identification of women with witches is very complex and has a long and convoluted history, made no less complex by the appearance in the twentieth century of feminist Wicca and a reclaiming of witchcraft, witches and witch-hunts from a contemporary and often feminist perspective. An interesting study is Purkiss, The Witch.

The first is discussed in chapter three, for the last see the example of Brauner, discussed above.

Breton, Arcanum, 80.

[M]ay we be ruled by the idea of the salvation of the earth by woman’, Breton, Arcanum, 69 (emphasis original). See also Browder, André Breton, 138-41.

The tale of Melusina is much older than 1392, but Arras was the first to write it down. For a brief discussion of the tale and its origins see Krell, ‘Between Demon’, 375-80.

Beaujour, André Breton, 225.

Frangos, The Shame, Introduction and first chapter.


See also Conley's interpretation in Automatic Woman, 123-4, 129-30.

Breton, Nadja, 111: ‘I have taken Nadja, from the first day to the last, for a free genius [génie libre], something like one of those spirits of the air which certain magical practices momentarily permit us to entertain but which we can never overcome’ (my emphasis).

Villars, Le Comte; Hanegraaff, Esotericism and the Academy, 222-5.

A reception history traced by Hanegraaff in Esotericism and the Academy, 226-30.

See also Goldammer’s extensive analysis of Melusina and of the undine in Paracelsian sources, and their reception in Romanticism. Goldammer, Paracelsus, 89-130. ‘Undine’ quickly became a poetical concept in Romanticism; Goldammer, Paracelsus, 91. Ferber, A Companion, 151-2.

Breton, ‘Fata Morgana’, in Idem, Poems, 130-55; see note 1 on 251. Obviously the phrase’s secondary meaning, the weather-related illusion, is also implied. The parallels between Melusina and Morgan le Fay are many, as the last is also a character with magical powers, a sorceress even, originally from medieval legends (Arthurian in this case), who meddles in men’s lives to either beneficial or detrimental effect. She too was reinvented in Romantic literature, serving possibly as an inspirational figure for Keats’s ‘belle dame’ in La Belle Dame sans Merci and being depicted in many a Pre-Raphaelite and Symbolist painting. Although Morgan le Fay (or Morgana) is an English fairy, while Melusina is French, in her undine form she is connected to the Morgans, legendary siren-figures from Bretagne. Melusina’s essential Frenchness—legend has it she is the
ancestor of the French Lusignan family, and she symbolises France’s important heritage of troubadour literature—may have been a further reason she figures so prominently in A17: alongside the many references to French historical figures (e.g. Breton, Arcanum, 65) and culture. Traveling through (Francophone) Quebec surely aggravated Breton’s homesickness; Balakian, ‘Introduction’, 12.

146 Beaujour, André Breton, 219, 230.
147 Breton, Arcanum, 112.
148 Breton, Arcanum, 114.
149 Breton, Arcanum, 118.
150 See Eburne, ‘Surrealism Noir’; also Chénieux-Gendron, ‘Lectures surréalistes’. Gracq has listed all the things ‘noir’ that Bretonian Surrealism was interested in, Gracq, André Breton, 39-42.
151 As discussed in chapter three.
152 Breton, Arcanum, 90.
153 And also Bilqis [Queen of Sheba], Cleopatra, and Gustave Moreau’s Griffin-fairy; Breton, Arcanum, 84.
154 Breton, Arcanum, 89-90.
155 Breton, Arcanum, 100-4.
156 Breton, Arcanum, 90.
157 Hubert, ‘Notice’, Breton, O.C., III: 1164. See also Browder, André Breton, 139.
158 Lepetit, Le surréalisme, 104.
159 Breton, Arcanum, resp. 60, 117, 118.
160 See the sources mentioned already above, as well as in chapter one. Breton would cite Paracelsus only once, in L’Art magique (1957), but that citation in turn is taken from La Magie by J.A. Rony; Breton & Legrand, L’Art, 28.
161 Hubert, ‘Notice’, Breton, O.C., III: 1171.
162 Breton, Arcanum, 131.
163 Hubert, ‘Notice’, Breton, O.C., III: 1171.
164 See Laurant, L’Ésotérisme, 102-7; for more on Lévi.
166 For instance Breton, Manifestoes, 98-100. Compare Browder, André Breton, 50-1.
167 Breton, Arcanum, 132.
168 Novalis, Notes, 13 (aphorism 80), emphasis original.
170 Hubert, ‘Notice’, Breton, O.C., III: 1175.
171 Something else that may have supported Breton’s interest in the tarot, is that Lévi described the Spanish mystic Ramon Llull (ca. 1232/3-ca. 1316) as a cryptic commentator on the tarot. Lévi, Dogme et Rituel, I: 76, 220, 355 (‘the Majorcan Raymond Lully’). The Surrealists had been interest in Llull already for some time,
specifically in his technique for producing absolute knowledge about the world through a mechanical and logical system known as his ‘Ars Magna’, published as *Ars Generalis Ultima* and its abbreviated version, *Ars Brevis* (1307-08). The mechanism is the Llullian circle, which could be interpreted as something that seemingly creates, or points towards, a corresponding universe and is therefore surreally relevant. The mystical, rather absurd seeming, definitions that are part of it were certainly appreciated. Breton: ‘[Let us chalk up] the outlines of one of those magnificent rosettes, similar to those which enchanted Ramón Lull and inspired in him these immortal propositions: ... Digestions is the method by which the digestion digests the digestible.’ Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 30-2. Breton refers to a French tradition of the *Ars Brevis* (Paris: Chacornac, 1901); Bernier, Herbert & Dumas, ‘Notes et variantes’, Breton, O.C., IV: 1272; see also idem, I: 633, where Breton indicates that it was the French Romantic poet Aloysius Betrand (1807-1841) who first pointed him towards Llull’s *ars*. Lévi calls Llull an alchemist, equal to Flamel, and the Surrealists considered him to be such as well. Scholarly opinion of today holds that that was not the case; rather, some of Llull’s followers adapted his ‘*ars*’, to alchemy and wrote alchemical treatises in his name. Bonner, ‘Llull’; Laurant, ‘Tarot’, 1111.

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174 It is known that at a later date Breton’s library included such books as Wirth’s *Le Tarot* and *Tarot de Marseille* by Marteau (1949), for instance, besides books by other tarot-authorities such as Falconnier, Maxwell, and Rijnberk; Constantini, ‘Le Jeu’, 104-5. For instance, Breton mentioned Gérard van Rijnberk’s *Le Tarot* (Lyon: P. Dérain, 1947) in a note to ‘Fronton-Virage’ (1948), Breton, *Free Rein*, 287n30.
176 Breton, *Arcanum*, 130. Interestingly, that letters of the Hebrew alphabet resemble the shape of the tongue in the mouth is a point already made by Flemish alchemist and doctor Francis Mercury van Helmont (1614-1698) in *The Alphabet of Nature* (1667), passim and 169-201 for illustrative diagrams.
177 Hopkins, ‘Max Ernst’, 242. Note that the works of many Surrealists are hybrid as well; many of Breton’s novels, not least *Nadja* and *Arcanum 17* are ‘literary mongrels’, as Shattuck, ‘The Nadja’, 49, puts it, or at least amalgamations of various literary forms, such as autobiography, travel journal, political polemic, philosophical essay and fairy tale. Ernst and Masson experimented widely with mixed works, such as the collage, *bricolage*, sand-painting, and frottage-painting combinations. The surrealist collective artwork par excellence, the exquisite corpses, resulted by definition in hybrid beings. Lastly, during the 1930s and early
1940s many Surrealists created ‘poem-objects’ or small mixed media-objects. See also Béhar, ‘D’un poème-objet’. A preference for hybridity was therefore expressed not only in content but in form too.

178 Hille, Spieles, 32.
179 Grillot de Givry, Witchcraft, plate 1 (frontispiece).
180 This argument has been made for instance by Warlick, Max Ernst, e.g. 93-6, passim.
182 Breton, Arcanum, 154-5 (only the last emphasis mine, first two original); cf. also the citation of himself on 153.
183 See also Dumas, ‘Notes sur André Breton’, 128.
185 See also Hubert, ‘Notice’, Breton, O.C., III: 1172, who also uses the term ‘rapport’.
186 See also Breton, Conversations, 160.
187 Viatte, Victor Hugo, 65-77 (Fourier & Fourierism), 91-7 (Tristan & Lévi), 181-5 (Fabre d’Olivet). See also my comments in chapter one. Tristan was additionally interesting because she was the grandmother of Paul Gauguin, an important surrealist Predecessor. Tristan and Lévi corresponded, met, and exchanged notes. McIntosh, Eliphas Lévi, 84-5, 90. More on Tristan in Rice-DeFosse, ‘Flora Tristan’.
188 Breton, Conversations, 222; see also 207.
189 Beaujour, ‘André Breton’, passim; Browder, André Breton, 130.
190 Breton, Conversations, 207.
191 Breton, Free Rein, 85; I have given the citation in full in chapter one.
192 Breton, Anthology, 39-41; he refers to Viatte’s Victor Hugo… in a footnote.
193 Compare also Balakian, André Breton, 207.
194 Breton, Free Rein, 83.
195 See Adams, After the Rain, 98-9.
196 Adams, After the Rain, 135-40.
197 Adams, After the Rain, 139-43; 147-8.
198 Adams, After the Rain, 151-5.
199 Breton, ‘Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art’, Free Rein, 29-34.
200 Adams, After the Rain, 108-11.
201 Adams, After the Rain, 111-2.
202 Durozoi, Surrealism, 461.
203 Alexandrian, Surrealist Art, 190.
204 Breton et al., Le Surréalisme
205 Breton, Manifestoes, 205-78; 281-94; see discussion of both above.
206 Breton, O.C., III: 1367.
207 Rioux, ‘À propos’, 168. The description below of the actual layout is based in
part upon Alexandrian, *Surrealist Art*, 190-4, as well.

208 Rioux, ‘À propos’. The text of the invitation is reproduced in pages 168-70. It is also reproduced in Breton, O.C., III: 1367-70; a shortened translation can be found in Jean, *The Autobiography*, 420-1.

209 See also Mahon, ‘Staging Desire’, 283.

210 ‘The surrealist undertaking, … had been in existence long before it became codified’ [by Surrealism]; Breton, *Free Rein*, 84.

211 Mahon, ‘Staging Desire’, 283; Rioux, ‘À propos’, 168-70. Note that the actual staircase consisted of fewer than 21 steps, necessitating some books to be painted two to a stair. Also, the one unnumbered and unaligned card of the Major Arcana, the Fool, was not assigned a stair, for unknown reasons.

212 Jean, *The Autobiography*, 420. Perhaps this is a book Breton wished existed or would have liked to write himself?


216 See also Lennep, ‘L’art alchimique’, 304.

217 Bonnet & Hubert, ‘Notice’, Breton, O.C., II: 1178.

218 Breton, *Selections*, 106-10, 109-10 specifically. The radicals are early feminist
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Angélique Arnaud (1799–1884), and revolutionary journalist and politician (Jean-Paul) Marat (1743-1779). See also Polizziotti, ‘Introduction: Phrases’, 28; and Bonnet & Hubert, ‘Notes’, Breton, O.C., II: 1783-5.

Breton, ‘The Legendary Life’, 34.

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

Bonnet & Hubert, ‘Notice’, Breton, O.C., II: 1780.

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

Hubert, ‘Notice’, Breton, O.C., III: 1171.

Breton, Conversations, 218.

Hopkins, ‘Hermetic’, 723. Several artworks by Ernst seem to refer to Rosicrucianism and The Chemical Wedding in particular, such as the frottage and painting Les noces chymiques (resp. 1925 and 1947-8), and La toilette de la mariée (1940). Hopkins, ‘Max Ernst’, 237-40. Ernst’s knowledge of and deep involvement in alchemy has also been argued by Warlick, Max Ernst, passim. Duchamp had been a bit more closely allied with Bretonian Surrealism since the late 1930s, as he had been responsible for the art direction of the exhibitions of 1938 (Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme), 1942 (First Papers of Surrealism) and the 1947 show. Duchamp’s interest in, knowledge of and artistic engagement with alchemy is discussed for instance by Moffit, Alchemist; and Szulakowska, chapter 3; but the best scholarly study to date is Hopkins, Marcel Duchamp.

Breton, Free Rein, 107.

Hubert, ‘Notes’, Breton, O.C., III: 1377.

Breton’s last mention of Swedenborg is in L’Art magique (1957), 41, which is a discussion of Baudelaire and his Correspondances.

As discussed in chapter one.

Chapter one; Viatte, Les sources; Hanegraaff, Esotericism and the Academy, 337-8.


See above; and Mitchell, *Secrets*, 343.

In his 1947 manifesto on ‘Magic Architecture’, he included a first page with statements applicable to this room particularly; Kiesler, *Magical Architecture*.

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


Péret, ‘Le sel répandu’, in Jean, *The Autobiography*, 424-5. Note that this essay offers primarily a long list of new superstitions, to replace the old ones whose value has been spent. They include: ‘make a wish when you see a priest beaten’; ‘If you see a flag, turn away and spit to conjure the bad omen’; and, ‘Giving dogs extra teeth to chew brings good luck’. The very fact that new, sometimes absurd, and frequently blasphemous (to Church and State) superstitions are included testifies to the specifically *surrealist* reordering of the superstitious mind that was to take place.

One of the more complete collections of photographs of this exhibition can be found in Durozoi, *History*, 468-70.

Hopkins interprets this painting as a portrait of Christian Rosenkreuz; while certainly not inconceivable, I am not convinced by Hopkins’s arguments. Hopkins, ‘Hermetic’, 716, 720-3.


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

Breton, *Free Rein*, 96.

Letter to the author, van Lennep, *Alchemie*, 420. In the same letter Duchamp disavows all interest in ‘the occult sciences’, even—which may be a reaction against the many essays Arturo Schwarz had dedicated since the 1950s to interpreting almost everything Duchamp had ever done and did as occult or esoteric. Many of those are collected in Schwarz, *L’immaginazione*. Duchamp’s background in esotericism, his attitude towards it, and the role it may have played in his work remain a very thorny question up to this day, not least because the scholarship of such supporters of an esoteric Duchamp as Schwarz and Moffit (*Alchemist*) is not up to scratch. Much more thorough are Henderson, whose publications on Duchamp have been mentioned, and Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp*, 41-94.


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

NOTES FIVE

248 Mitchell, Secrets, 346. Apollonius’ hours from Nuctemeron are provided by Lévi in a supplement to his original French edition; Lévi, Dogme et Rituel, II: 385-410. Note that Breton only attributed the hours (i.e., first hour, second hour), and not any of the genies, elements or hieroglyphs that Lévi ascribed to them as well.

249 We can be certain that it was planned; Rioux, ‘À propos’, 170. It is however very hard to find out how much of these more abstract parts of Breton’s design actually found a material place in the final exhibition; sources are not sufficient and do not agree either. The few black-and-white photographs available are little help.

250 The division of altars was as follows: 1) the Fashionable Tiger, a character created by Jean Ferry (1906-1974), writer and exegete of the works of Roussel. Breton would add Ferry’s story ‘Le tigre mondain’ to a new edition of his Anthology of Black Humour in 1950. 2) the hair of Falmer (Lautréamont, Les Chants). 3) the Helioderma suspecta. 4) Jeanne Sabranas (the heroine from Jarry, La Dragnone). 5) Léonie Aubois d’Ashby (Rimbaud, ‘Dévotion’). 6) the Secretary Bird or Bird Superior (Loplop/Ernst). 7) the Juggler of Gravity (Duchamp). 8) the Condylure or star-nosed mole. 9) the Wolf-Table by Brauner. 10) Raymond Roussel (1877-1933); more about him in the next part of this chapter. 11) the Great Transparent Ones. 12) The Window of Magna sed Apta (du Maurier, Peter Ibesson). Rioux, ‘À propos’, 169-70. Breton had wanted to include Giacometti’s Invisible Object too, but could not get the object on loan.

251 There exists a little known and undated notebook by Breton (probably 1945), in which he outlined a Fourier-esque bizarre utopian scheme. In this surrealist Utopia the Gila monster and star-nosed mole played an important role; see LaCoss, ‘ Attacks’, 278-9.

252 See also Kuni, Victor Brauner.

253 Analysis of this painting in Kuni, Victor Brauner, 158-66.

254 After Nadja Breton interpreted 1713 as ‘AB’, and he would sign his initials in a way that resembled the numbers. Kuni, Victor Brauner, 162; Lamy, André Breton, 13, 20.

255 On the tarot-stairs Death was identified as Apollinaire, Breton’s mentor and first and most intensely revered hero, whom he strived hard to equal—could we interpret this as his (Freudian) usurpation of his hero-father’s position?

256 Kuni, Victor Brauner, 163-4.


259 Mitchell, Secrets, 350. Baskine is a very particular and somewhat understudied artist, who explored many esoteric themes in his works, primarily alchemy but also, for instance, Nostradamus and his prophecies. His work was hardly ever shown outside his own intimate circle, and he partook of Surrealism only briefly and sparingly. See Maurice Baskine. Breton’s admiration for Baskine was intense
but brief.


Breton made a significant impression on young Haitian artists and intellectuals, and it has been suggested by many that his speeches on liberty were instrumental in the 1946 uprisings. See Richardson, ‘An Episode’. Many documents detailing Breton’s and Mabille’s fascination with Haiti, Martinique and the French Caribbean generally, as well as the response of Caribbean artists to Surrealism, can be found in Richardson and Fijalkowski, *Refusal*. The argument that the interaction with Lam was the source of Breton’s interest in voodoo is made by Adams, *After the Rain*, 206.


This did not mean that it was not successful commercially, on the contrary: around 40.000 people went to see it; Durozoi, *Surrealism*, 472.


Mahon, *Surrealism*, 140.

Adorno’s ‘Theses Against Occultism’ is in fact a complaint against irrationalism at large, including myth and magic too. Adorno, ‘Theses’; Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 312-3.

Bell, ‘Introduction’, 1. In chapter one I have already touched upon the association of myth and of esotericism with fascism, and the relevant sources.


Adorno, ‘Theses’, 175.

Adorno, ‘Theses’, 175.


Breton, *Free Rein*, 85 (my emphasis); Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 45. We should note further that ‘black art’ and ‘errors’, let alone the children of such, were surely things positively valued in Surrealism.

See also Mahon, *Surrealism*, 140.


Breton, *Free Rein*, 96. ‘[It] *all seems* today as if some relatively recent poetic and visual works extend a fascination over people’s minds quite disproportionate with that of a work of art. … It is … as if those works bore the mark of revelation. The *uplifting* nature of those works, as well as the ever more insistent questions and inquiries to which they are subjected, the resistance they put up to the modes of apprehension afforded by human understanding in its present state… all this lends support to the idea that a *myth* is stemming from them, that it is
entirely up to us to define and coordinate it. What we have set out to, within the framework of this exhibition, is merely to sketch the outlines of what such a myth might be—a sort of mental “parade” before the real show.’ Breton, *Free Rein*, 87 (emphases original).

280 Breton, *Free Rein*, 96.

281 Breton, *Free Rein*, 96.

282 There is only one exception to this rule: Fulcanelli, a twentieth century alchemical author whom I will discuss in the next section.

283 Breton, *Free Rein*, 95.

284 Breton, *Free Rein*, 96 (emphasis original). This is the essay ‘Surrealist Comet’, written together with ‘Before the Curtain’ and intended for the exhibition’s catalogue too, although not included in the end; Breton, *Free Rein*, 88-97.

285 Mahon, *Surrealism*.


287 Interview with André Parinaud for *Arts* (1952) in Breton, *Conversations*, 249-55.

288 Breton, *Conversations*, 251-2 (paraphrased). Also mentioned are Magritte (throwing ‘doubt on traditional optics... by premeditating all its modes of telescoping’), Toyen (‘a cynecetics of apparitions’), and Hérold (who ‘turned to mineralogy in order to master its sparks’). Kandinsky is hardly a Surrealist, but increasingly in the 1940s and 50s Breton appropriated him for Surrealism.

289 Cohen, *Profane Illumination*, 79-84; idem, ‘Mysteries of Paris’, 101-4; discussed in chapter three.

290 Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 565

291 Let me point out that this is not the case in other respects; artistically, politically, and erotically some original things were still happening.

292 For a comprehensive overview of sexual magic, see Hakl, ‘The Theory’; de Naglowska is discussed in 465-74. For Randolph, see Deveney, *Pascal Beverly Randolph*.


294 Alexandrian, ‘Maria de Naglowska’.

295 Republished as the *Lexique succint de l’érotisme* 61; anonymous but attributed to Legrand. It consists of only 8 lines and is one of over 280 entries.


297 In his foreword to Deveney’s book on Randolph, Franklin Rosemont argues, rather unconvincingly in my opinion, that Randolph should be considered a Surrealist avant-la-lettre; and furthermore that the Surrealists must have known of Randolph in the early 1930s. That is, although not impossible, certainly unproven, and has given risen to even more unfounded rumours that Breton, Bataille, Ray and others attended sessions of sexual magic hosted by de Naglowska’s magical order in the 1930s. At the time the Parisian press reported the scandals around
de Naglowska’s order, and while it is certainly conceivable that some Surrealists would have heard of it, it is questionable whether they participated at all. I place more stock in Rosemont’s point that the Surrealists learned of sexual magical groups (in Paris, specifically)—if at all—by way of books such as Pierre Geyraud’s *Parmi les sects et les rites* (1936). Rosemont, ‘Foreword’, xvii-xix.

299 Breton & Legrand, *L’Art*, 43: ‘Myths seem more or less done for, by now…’. I suspect that this was to a large extent due to a mixture of pressure from other Surrealists and external political pressures, as it was clear on all sides that an adherence to myth was just not tenable. However, as most of the studies on myth in Surrealism do not consider the post-war period, I cannot provide a definitive explanation for the sudden demise of myth.

300 See also Bang Larsen’s comments on the ‘affective turn’ in occult art, ‘The Surface’, 42-3. Unfortunately, space is lacking here for me to develop this idea in relation to ‘the aura’ of the art work, as defined by Walter Benjamin, or to—even more importantly—the concept of ‘resonance’, as developed by Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, 161-84.

301 For the scholar of esotericism, ‘art magic’ immediately rings a bell, but there is no evidence that Breton and Legrand were familiar with *Art Magic* (1898) by (allegedly) the Spiritualist Emma Hardinge Britten (1823-1899).
303 Reproductions of these art works are scattered throughout *L’Art magique*, in something approaching chronological order.
305 See also Polizzotti, *Revolution*, 595.
309 Breton & Legrand, *L’Art*, 34; also 35, 36, 37, 70.
311 Breton & Legrand, *L’Art*, 37; Lévi, *Dogme et rituel*, I: 139: ‘There is only one dogma in Magic, and it is this: The visible is the manifestation of the invisible, or, in other terms, the perfect word, in things appreciable and visible, bears an exact proportion to the things which are inappreciable by our senses and unseen by our eyes.’
312 Already mentioned in the first chapter, and also described by Bonnet, ‘Notes’, Breton, O.C., IV: 1402. The letter is reproduced in O.C., IV: 873-9.
313 Such as Goethe, Blake, Fabre d’Olivet, Novalis, Balzac, Hugo, de Nerval, Poe, Baudelaire, de Villiers de l’Illse-Adam, Mallarmé, Huysmans, Rimbaud—besides
Breton himself, of course. Amadou & Kanters, *Anthologie*, 140-8, 156-71, 186-227, 236-53, 263-75, and 304-8; and 6-14 of the introduction.


315 Breton, *O.C.*, IV: 877.

316 Breton, *O.C.*, IV: 877.

317 Breton, *Free Rein*, 49.

318 Breton & Legrand, *L’Art*, 42.

319 ‘Ascendant Sign’ (1947), Breton, *Free Rein*, 105. These are the very lines that Amadou and Kanters cite as an example of Breton’s insight as an ‘occult poet’, Amadou & Kanters, *Anthologie*, 10.

320 Breton, *Free Rein*, 105.

321 See also chapter one.


323 For example, a description of a sword in terms of a necktie, by Toyen: ‘I am a gleaming necktie knotted around the hand so as to run across those throats at which I’m placed’. Reproduced in Brotchie & Gooding, *A Book*, 31.


326 This is obviously precipitated by Huizinga’s points that from play, ‘all poetry’ is born, that ‘poetry is the human realisation of every communal tendency towards play’, and that ‘play confirms the supra-logical character of the human situation’; Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 142, 3-4. The surrealist reception of Huizinga’s book provoked a reaction by Roger Caillois: *Man, Play and Games*, 1958. Indeed many of the chain games played in the early years of Surrealism in retrospect seem to reveal the irrational correspondences of Surrealism; for instance ‘definitions’ and ‘conditionals’, Brotchie & Gooding, *A Book*, 26-8.

327 Lévi, *Dogme et Rituel*, I: 67, 70, passim; II: passim.


being so impressed by Fulcanelli’s second, but despite the insistence of Balakian, Warlick, van Lennep and others that this book is so important, there is no direct evidence that supports him having actually read it.

333 Breton, *Free Rein*, 287n15.
334 I have discussed these alchemies in previous chapters.
337 He was the only real person allotted an altar in the 1947 exhibition, evidence of the very high esteem he was held in. Playing upon phonetic incidents and homonymic jokes, Roussel wrote numerous novellas and plays, most of them quite absurd, fantastic and endlessly digressive, and a complete break with literary tradition. Audiences were baffled, critics irritated, and the Surrealists delighted. They admired Roussel for the free rein he gave his imagination, but moreover appreciated that his method implied a means of creating literature arbitrarily, without rationality, and possibly without morality or narrativity either; approaching automatism, therefore. His method-disclosing work *Comment j’ai écrit certains de mes livres* was published posthumously in 1935. During, *Modern Enchantments*, 195, 196ff, 202-3; Tresch, ‘In a Solitary’, 309-10, 315. Roussel and in Surrealism is discussed by Béhar, *Les enfants perdus*, chapter 3; and in idem *Mélusine* V. An inevitable source on Roussel and his method is Foucault’s study *Death and the Labyrinth* (London: Continuum, 2004), which, seeing how both authors play inimitable games with language, is quite a tough read. Alternatively, Ford, *Raymond Roussel*.
338 Golan, ‘Matta, Duchamp’, 42.
339 Compare: ‘I am a hardened sunbeam that revolves around the sun so as to release a dark and fragrant rainfall each morning, a little after midday and even once night has fallen.’ Answer: a coffee-mill. ‘One in another’ by Jean Schuster, Brotchie & Gooding, *A Book*, 31.
340 Fulcanelli’s *Le mystère* is a case in point. Through use of the phonetic similarities between ‘art gothique’ and ‘argotique’, Fulcanelli argues that the gothic cathedral is work of ‘argot’: a particular language that is subsequently interpreted as a ‘cabalistic’ language of alchemy. Fulcanelli further bolsters this argument with a discussion about the Argonauts, Jason’s companions on his quest for the Golden Fleece, a story that is considered to be an alchemical legend (ee for example Faivre, *The Golden Fleece*; Holmyard, *Alchemy*, 28). Fulcanelli, *Master Alchemist*, 42; also Khaitzine, *La langue*, 28.
341 Breton, *Free Rein*, 86. ‘Phonetic cabalism’ is interpreting and creating the
Breton, *Free Rein*, 86. ‘Phonetic cabalism’ is interpreting and creating the language of alchemy, as Canseliet also explained in his second introduction to Fulcanelli’s *Le Mystère*, 17; it has nothing to do with Jewish Kabbalah, he states.

Breton, *Free Rein*, 86.

And compare further: the (poetical construct of the) image is born from ‘a juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities’. ‘The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be—the greater its emotional power and poetic reality...’. Obviously this refers to the metaphor or analogy. Breton citing Pierre Reverdy in *Nord-Sud* March 1918, in *Manifestoes*, 20.


Breton, *Manifestoes*, 297.

Breton, *Free Rein*, 86. Brisset’s first name was Jean-Pierre. He has been discussed above. Similarly, in 1945 Breton mentioned the ‘esoteric tradition’ in relation to Duchamp and as examples of it refers to Paolo Uccello and Georges Seurat—hardly occultists but a fifteenth-century Italian Renaissance painter and a nineteenth century French post-Impressionist. Breton, ‘The Point’, 122.

Breton, *Conversations*, 229.

Carrouges, *Basic Concepts*, 74.

Breton, *Manifestoes*, 301-2 (emphasis original).

See also the lemma of the androgyne by Legrand in *Lexique succint*, 9.

**Conclusion**

1 Interview with Francis Dumont for Combat (May 1950), in Breton, *Conversations*, 227-30.

2 Breton, *Conversations*, 228.

3 Breton, *Conversations*, 229.

4 Breton, *Conversations*, 229.

5 Breton, *Conversations*, 229.

6 ‘I seek the gold of time’ is chiselled on Breton’s tombstone.