ANDRÉ BRETON AND FREUD

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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The introductory chapters, "Contexts" and "First Contacts with Psychoanalysis and After," are followed by "The Praise of Folly," "Automatism," "Dreams," "The Aesthetics of the Pleasure Principle," and "The Politics of the Pleasure Principle: Conclusion and Prolegomena to a Further Study or Not." Two appendices give further information pertaining to Breton's interest in Pierre Janet and F. W. H. Myers and to the early dissemination of Freud's ideas in France.

"Contexts": Freud is one exponent of modern depth psychology, along with Charcot, Bernheim, Janet, Myers, and others--all studying dreams, hypnosis, mediums, and automatism. His ideas are also rooted in Romanticism, which is itself part of a larger anti-Cartesian movement. As a medical student and poet, Breton was aware of the traditions behind Freud's theories, yet saw their novelty. They gave him a methodology to investigate unreason without falling into either mysticism or a limited "scientific" objectivity.

"First Contacts . . .": In spite of resistance to Psychoanalysis in France, Breton claims to have recognized its importance early. He must have relied on articles in medical journals and on commentaries, until translations of

Freud's works began to appear in 1921. In the Premier Manifeste du surréalisme (1924), Freud's influence was publicly acknowledged and for Breton was constant thereafter.

"The Praise of Folly": Breton has a sympathetic view of insanity justified to a great extent by the findings of psychoanalysis and a disgust for the objective methods of traditional French psychiatry. His praise of folly, however, goes beyond anything acceptable to a clinician of any school. Reading Nadja as an anti-case history, in which the "doctor" scrutinizes himself along with the "patient," gives proper weight to the much-neglected last third of the book.

"Automatism": The term "écriture automatique" may come from Pierre Janet and the technique may be traced to mediums, but as Breton practiced it, it was a modification of Freud's free association. Breton emphasizes the psychological (not mystical) source of the automatic voice, particularly when calling for liberation through art. Although his belief in the communicability and the revolutionary potential of automatic writing is not Freudian, it is based on Freud's theories of language.

"Dreams": Breton accepts most of Freud's dream theory, but he concentrates less on analyzing the dream in depth, more on relating it to previous and future experience. He wishes to bridge the gulf between dream and "reality." A poem, a dream, a work of art, the search for

an object (animate or inanimate) of desire--all can be expressions of the same unconscious wish working with objective chance. This is a theme begun in Nadja and continuing in Les Vases communicants and L'Amour fou. For Freud, dreams expend psychic energy harmlessly; for Breton, they are an impulse to action, a motivating force for personal and social liberty.

"The Aesthetics of the Pleasure Principle": Psychoanalytic assumptions abound in Breton's criticism, although Freud's own critical writings were relatively unimportant for him. Freud retains a traditional respect for "beauty" and "form"--the means of controlling unconscious energy released through art; Surrealism would overthrow both, for the sake of that liberty which Freud only hinted at. The Anthologie de l'humour noir shows Breton developing ideas about humor, expressed by Freud almost in passing, into a critical term of great importance to Surrealism.

"The Politics of the Pleasure Principle . . .": Surrealist techniques and Surrealist polemics, advocating liberation of the unconscious, concern more than aesthetics. Freud's thought, translated through Breton, becomes political, opposing repression by both orthodox Communism and Capitalism. This position is now popular with the New Left, particularly as it finds a spokesman in Herbert Marcuse.

à Francis Meunier

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Virtually every writer on Surrealism mentions Freud, at least in passing. Quite apart from the fact that many do so without reading him, it is astonishing that no one has carefully investigated how psychoanalysis was important for Surrealism and why, given the importance which Breton assigns to it. In this dissertation, I shall attempt to make that investigation, basing my observations in the actual texts, showing that Freud was more than one influence among others, that psychoanalytic theory is at the heart of some of Breton's most important ideas, and that it undergoes some fascinating transformations in his hands.

This is a rather specialized study which expects of the reader an acquaintance with Surrealism and the works of André Breton, plus some knowledge of psychoanalysis. I shall mention names and make reference to some techniques and events without going into detail, though I do try to make clear the dates of works discussed. I shall give some quite technical information, especially about psychology, which those interested exclusively in literature may find tedious. I wish to make my information as complete as possible because I have some objections to what has been said

by other commentators on Breton and psychology.[1] At the same time, I feel obliged to spare my reader somewhat, and so have given him an opportunity to avoid part of the more technical discussion by putting it in appendices and footnotes which he can choose to read or not.[2] He will, I hope, be able to follow my argument in any case. He must still suffer some long disquisitions on Freud too central to the argument to be made optional.

I believe that I am bringing a needed body of information to studies on Breton--a check to some vague and hasty generalizations made to date. I hope also to give some real insights into Breton's work by approaching it from the point of view of psychology, as in my reading of Nadja, in my comments on l'humour noir, and in my view of Nadja, Les Vases communicants, and L'Amour fou as a trilogy with the common theme of unconscious desire seeking its object through dreams, art, and le hasard objectif.

A word about translations. I know German no more, perhaps less, than Breton did. Like him, I am bound to translations of Freud, but the one available to me is better and more complete. I have used the Standard English

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[1] I can be accused of shortchanging Jung, Rank, Reich, and others, but I have restricted myself to those psychologists most spoken of by Breton or those whose ideas are clearly in evidence in his work.

[2] Appendix II, a list of early writings in French on Freud, is included because, to my knowledge, nothing like it exists in English. I make reference to it in Chapter II.

Edition of Freud's works and I refer to that edition when summarizing or commenting on his theories. I use the French texts only when treating passages which Breton specifically quotes or cites. A careful study of the exact texts which Breton used and of the effects of translations on his understanding of Freud may be in order, but I am unable to provide it at the moment. Variations in terminology in the French texts (soi--ça, surmoi--supermoi) reflect a process among French psychoanalysts of agreeing how to translate certain terms. Different spellings of "psychoanalysis" reflect different choices of some of my sources, and myself.

I am faced with all of the methodological problems of any influence study. The easiest way to prove influence is to find quotations or near quotations from one author in the works of another. I have done this, but it is a tedious and sometimes uninformative task. A valuable influence is one which causes the thought of one man to stimulate another so that he develops it in a new direction or incorporates it into his own existing framework of ideas in such a way that an entirely new synthesis results. Sometimes this type of influence is difficult to trace because we can assume that if the ideas of two thinkers have impact on their culture, both have contributed their part to an ongoing development. No single man's ideas are entirely his own. Since, therefore, ideas have a history larger than the history of individuals, anyone hearing me assert

that Breton has taken a certain idea from Freud can legitimately ask: "But where did Freud's idea come from? Is it not possible that Breton was most influenced by that previous source? Most important, must we not see both Freud and Breton as part of a culture in which such ideas were endemic?" I hope I have satisfactorily shown in the body of this study what Breton took directly from Freud and what he did with it. In my discussion in Chapter I, using two books as a focus of discussion and making no claims to be complete, I try to suggest a common intellectual context for both Breton and Freud. In the last chapter, I suggest a direction of flow from Freud's influence through Breton to other movements.

This thesis is the result of almost two years of full-time work and a great deal of assistance from other people. It actually began with a course on Surrealist art given by Dr. Jack Spector, who finally acted as an outside reader of everything except the final copy, sending his suggestions from France. I hope that the many discussions between us have been true exchanges of ideas because I make no attempt to distinguish what I have borrowed from him. I acknowledge with thanks information, suggestions, and introductions received from Professors Meyer Schapiro, the late Herbert Gershman, Anna Balakian, and especially J. H. Matthews. A kind letter of introduction from William S. Rubin resulted in my interview with André Masson. My

thanks to M. Masson and to Philippe Soupault, Simone Collinet, Jacques Baron, and Eugeneo Granell, who were not only helpful, but made me feel welcome. Dr. Jacques Lacan was kind enough to reply to my letter when I was unable to see him personally. Francis Meunier, to whom this work is dedicated, was an active Surrealist in the forties. When I was fortunate enough to meet him "par hasard objectif" in a town in provincial France, he put his fine library at my disposal and gave me help and encouragement over a period of months. Thanks also to my readers who discussed my work with me at various times, officially and unofficially, and to Professor S. Sobolevitch, who saw it through.

A fellowship from the Canada Council of the Arts financed a good part of my doctoral studies plus an indispensable academic year in France where I was able to do research and meet many of the people mentioned above.

Peter and Andrée Jacobsohn housed us on both sides of the ocean, listened to my fulminations, and even read the product. Our parents helped out in tight spots. My wife and children, whenever fancy got astride my reason and convinced me that these lucubrations were for the universal benefit of mankind, reminded me of important things.

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CHAPTER I

CONTEXTS

> Je vois mal un surréalisme né en dehors de la mouvance freudienne.
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> Gaston Ferdière[1]

There are many myths about Freud, perhaps the most persistent being that he was a lonely pioneer in the discovery of the unconscious. That this is not true, he himself often acknowledged and yet many commentators on Surrealism, lacking a sense of the history of psychology, either accept the myth and go on to assume that Surrealism owes a debt almost exclusively to psychoanalysis or find evidence of other influences and therefore come to doubt the importance of Freud.[2] I shall give, first of all, some idea of the various psychological theories with which André Breton was certainly familiar and show very generally in what ways Freud's theories were different, in an attempt to explain why Breton should find them revolutionary. This will give a necessary vocabulary and background for more

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[1] "Surréalisme et aliénation mentale," in Ferdinand Alquié, ed., Entretiens sur le surréalisme (Paris: Mouton, 1968), p. 306.

[2] Most books on Surrealism mention only Freud. Dissenting views by Michel Sanouillet, Jean Starobinski and Anna Balakian are discussed below.

detailed discussion in the chapters which follow. I shall then try to locate both Breton and Freud in the broader context of Romanticism. Finally, I believe all can be seen as part of a greater anti-Cartesian movement which may, in this century, be at the height of its strength.

The immediate beginnings of modern depth psychology are generally traced to the great popular interest in animal magnetism aroused by Gassner and Mesmer in the 1770's and continued by the Marquis de Puységur.[3] Hypnotism was first used as a tool for cure by expurgation and therefore from the beginning had a rather confused and suspect relationship to both theology and medicine. In the second half of the nineteenth century, it became associated with the vogue of spiritism which began in the United States and spread to Europe. First attacked by the medical establishment, experiments with animal magnetism and somnambulism were eventually carried on quite actively by psychologists, particularly after the famous neurologist Charcot had made hypnotism respectable and "scientific" by studying it as part of his research on hysteria. Charcot observed hysterical and hypnotized patients and described the development of their symptoms, always from his point of view as a neurologist, in terms of various analogous stages culminating

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[3]Janet gives some of this history in Les Médications psychologiques (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1919), but the most complete study of the history of "dynamic psychology" is Henri F. Ellenberger's The Discovery of the Unconscious (New York: Basic Books, 1970).

in "la grande hystérie" or "le grand hypnotisme."

Bernheim and the School of Nancy began to use hypnosis systematically as a clinical device, refuting many of Charcot's theories on hysteria and arguing that hypnotism was nothing more than a form of suggestion, with the consequent charge that Charcot's "hysteria" might be the same. Since Charcot's methods eventually were quite discredited, the trend was toward Bernheim and "suggestion" by the turn of the century. From these two great schools came the main tendencies of the psychology which André Breton studied as a medical student (see the following chapter): from Charcot the emphasis on physiology, from Bernheim the more purely psychological emphasis.

Pierre Janet, a student of Charcot and Freud's great rival in France, tended to combine the two schools since he still insisted on the importance of heredity and physiology in mental disease, yet tended to concentrate his attention on its psychology. Babinsky, Breton's professor, was essentially a neurologist, yet suspicious of anything which recalled Charcot's now discredited views. His very few psychological papers argued that hysteria was not a true illness at all, but entirely a product of suggestion.[4]

In England, curiosity about the unconscious resulted

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[4]In "Hystérie-pithiatisme," Chapter IX, Part 2, of Exposé des travaux scientifiques du Dr. J. Babinski (Paris: Masson et Cie., 1913). Babinsky's theories are the only ones cited with approval by Breton and Aragon in "Cinquantenaire de l'hystérie," in La Révolution Surréaliste, No. 2 (15 mars 1928).

in a fascinating offshoot: the Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882 for the scientific study of the supernatural and the occult. These studies naturally led to great interest in the relations between clinical forms of automatism and such phenomena as spiritism and extra-sensory perception; and they seem to have been followed with interest by medical men throughout Europe, including Freud, Janet, and Bernheim. Three major works inspired by the Society's research are mentioned by Breton as having been important in his early reading: La Personalité humaine, sa survivance, ses manifestations supranormales, by F. W. H. Myers, published posthumously in 1903 and translated by Jankélévitch in 1910; Traité de métapsychique, by Charles Richet (1922); and Des Indes à la planète Mars, by Théodore Flournoy (third edition, 1900).[5] Myers was a founding member of the Society for Psychical Research and Richet was closely affiliated with it, his book being dedicated to Myers and William Crookes. All use as a point of departure recent discoveries in psychology, particularly Bernheim's work on hypnotic and posthypnotic suggestion (of capital importance to Freud and Janet as well). The motiving argument of Myers and Richet might be paraphrased as follows: since in physics we have discovered a light which cannot be seen, since in psychology we have discovered thoughts which we did not think we had, how can we ignore certain so-called

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[5] Entretiens (1913-1952) (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 76.

supernatural forces for which, at the moment, we do not have an explanation? Myers begins from an admittedly religious position, setting out to discover if (more accurately to prove that) part of the personality survives death. Richet denies any religious motivation.

Flournoy's book is a study of the famous medium Hélène Smith, who wrote long novels and made drawings of scenes "dictated" to her by secondary and tertiary personalities. She spoke and wrote strange tongues supposedly learned from individuals able to project their personalities through her from India and from Mars. Flournoy showed how the elaborate grammatical and phonetic systems automatically transcribed by Hélène while she was unconscious were actually altered versions of French. It should be remembered that the concept of an unconscious as it is understood in modern psychology originated from the study of such people who exhibited multiple personalities either during attacks of hysteria, or under hypnosis, or while practicing as mediums.[6]

I should like to emphasize the close interaction of virtually all the psychologists and psychiatrists mentioned

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[6]Janet remarks, "Nous persistons à croire que ce sont les spirites qui ont les premiers attiré l'attention sur les mouvements subconscients et sur les manifestations si extraordinaire de la désagrégation mentale" ("Le Spiritisme contemporain," Revue Philosophique, 33 [1892], 413-42). Breton includes illustrations of automatic writing and drawings by mediums, many by Hélène Smith, with the first printing of "Le Message automatique" in Minotaure, No. 2.

so far, and to add the name of William James, a friend of Flournoy and an admirer of Janet. Flournoy acknowledges his debt to Janet, Breuer, Freud, and Myers;[7] Janet says that he worked independently but was closest to the school of Charles Richet, somewhere between the schools of Nancy and the Salpêtrière (Charcot's hospital);[8] Freud translated Charcot and Bernheim and was first recognized in England by Myers;[9] Freud and Janet were increasingly bitter rivals mostly because their theories had much in common. Reading any one of these authors, Breton would find reference, sooner or later, to the others; and he would find automatisms, mediumism, and dreams among the most important concerns for all. This explains why automatism and mediumism are so closely associated in his mind. It also explains in part why one can always find another "source" for his ideas on the unconscious besides the major one which he constantly acknowledges: Freud.[10]

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[7]Des Indes à la planète Mars (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1900), p. x.

[8]See the chapter "L'Histoire de la suggestion et de l'hypnotisme" in Les Médications psychologiques, II.

[9]See Ernest Jones, The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, ed. Lionel Trilling and Stephen Marcus (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), p. 160 n. Freud translated Charcot's Leçons sur les maladies du système nerveux: tome troisième in 1886 and Bernheim's De la Suggestion et de ses applications à la thérapeutique in 1888.

[10]Myers is discussed by Breton in "Le Message automatique" and consequently in an article by Jean Starobinski entitled "Freud, Breton, Myers," in Marc Eigeldinger, ed., André Breton (Neuchâtel: Editions de la Baconnière, 1970), pp. 153-71. Starobinski contends that Freud, as a

I suspect that Breton took Freud publicly for mentor as part of a reaction, which literary critics ignore, against French psychiatric medicine. Freud suggested that self-analysis was possible, broke down some of the cozy distinctions made between doctor and patient, sane and insane, and thereby unwittingly provided "la clé des champs" allowing Breton to leave Babinsky, Janet, and even psychoanalysis itself behind. Freud was indeed the rationalist bourgeois whom the early Communists abhored, institutionalized after his death by official psychoanalysis, but his theories and his method had within them the seeds which have flowered in the work of the psychologist Reich, the philosopher Marcuse, and the poet Breton, each considered a revolutionary in his own discipline.

While emphasizing strongly Breton's perception and use of what was revolutionary in Freud, I must also point out that the clinical, positivist, and materialist basis of psychoanalysis provided him with a base from which he could

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conservative, did not satisfy Breton, who finally turned to the more mystical Englishman. I do not agree. Janet is seldom mentioned by Breton, considering his importance, but traces of his ideas may be found in such works as Nadja and L'Amour fou. Anna Balakian touches on this subject in André Breton, Magus of Surrealism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), especially Chapter III. I should warn the reader, though, that I do not agree with what Professor Balakian says about Janet and was unable to check some of her comments because her footnotes in Chapter III, referring to L'Automatisme psychologique, are not accurate. Notes 3 and 4 are correct, but 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 do not lead me to the passages cited. Rather than subject the reader to a lengthy and technical study of psychological theory here, I have reserved it for Appendix I, where those interested may find evidence for some of the argument to come.

extol irrationality without falling into the mysticism that is more typical of Romanticism.

Breton's love of German Romanticism and the French poets closely associated with it, especially Nerval, Baudelaire, and Rimbaud, is well known. Freud was an amateur of the same poésie, fond of quoting Goethe and Heine, fond of saying that psychology merely explained things first discovered by poets.[11] He often admitted the importance for him of a passage by Schopenhauer in The World as Will and Idea, concerning the importance of sexuality.[12] In The Interpretation of Dreams, he mentions Schubert's book on the symbology of dreams as an important source.[13] The technique of free association may even be traceable at

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[11]". . . creative writers are valuable allies and their evidence is to be prized highly, for they are apt to know a whole host of things between heaven and earth of which our philosophy has not yet let us dream. In their knowledge of the mind they are far in advance of us everyday people, for they draw upon sources which we have not yet opened up for science" ("Delusion and Dream in Jensen's Gradiva," in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey [London: The Hogarth Press, 1966], IX, 8). This edition is hereafter referred to as Works.

[12]Works, XIX, 223-24.

[13]Die Symbolik des Traumes is mentioned in Works, IV, 63, and V, 352. But note Freud's qualifying remark, of significance for my arguments below: "Pronouncements such as that of Schubert that dreams are a liberation of the spirit from the power of external nature, a freeing of the soul from the bonds of the senses, and similar remarks by the younger Fichte and others, all of which represent dreams as an elevation of mental life to a higher level, seem to us now to be scarcely intelligible; to-day they are repeated only by mystics and pietists" (p. 63).

least in part to Freud's having cherished a book by Ludwig Börne given to him as a present when he was fourteen. In this book is an essay called "The Art of Becoming an Original Writer in Three Days" in which Börne advocates writing down "without fabrication or hypocrisy, everything that comes into your head."[14] Since this will sound familiar when we begin discussing Surrealist automatic writing, I should mention here that Breton apparently knew nothing of this essay.

The theory of the unconscious which Freud propounds and which Breton accepts is firmly rooted in Romantic soil. No book can show this more clearly than Albert Béguin's L'Âme romantique et le rêve, with its summaries of Romantic theories of the unconscious. One can find plenty of statements there, that dreams and reality, the conscious and the unconscious, are equally important and fascinating expressions of the human mind. Hypnotism and mediums are often subjects for discussion. We can also discover in the Romantics (they were certainly not the originators) an idea dear to Freud and Breton, as we shall see: that dreams, poetry, hypnotism, ecstasies, and madness are related.[15]

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[14] Works, XVIII, 264-65.

[15] L'Ame romantique et le rêve (Paris: José Corti, 1939), pp. 74-75. In another place, Béguin notes: "Le rêve et la poésie, pour Hoffman, ont les rapports les plus étroits, car la poésie est à ses yeux la forme supérieure de cette même révélation des puissances cachées, qui manifestent le songe, les apparitions, les phénomènes anormaux de tout sorte" (p. 303).

Dreams and poetry are, for the Romantics, a link with childhood, with the primitive past, with the golden age. There are echos of this in Freud and Breton, of course, with the qualification that the golden age has lost any Christian overtones. The descent into the unconscious through poetry or dream is, for many of the writers discussed by Béguin, a means of sloughing off the dross of a depressing materiality--as at least a first step towards higher consciousness. The desire to evade "reality" is unashamed. Freud would call this a neurotic desire and suggest that the poet is akin to the neurotic in everything except his ability to save himself from mental breakdown by sublimating his desires in his art. Although Breton wrote a "Discours sur le peu de réalité," the Surrealists would not seek the rather nebulous higher consciousness of certain German Romantics, but instead would unite the unconscious with action.[16]

Here we are approaching a fundamental difference between Freud and Breton on the one hand, and certain German Romantics on the other, probably reflected in the choice of Romantic writers they do admire: Heine and Goethe for Freud; Arnim, Fichte, and Hegel for Breton. For Schelling, Schubert, Novalis, and others, immersing oneself in the unconscious has metaphysical overtones. Escape from the material world is not only psychological (an introversion)

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[16]See the discussion of Les Vases communicants in Chapter V.

but mystical, since the unconscious is that part of us most in tune with the cosmos--the cosmos from which reason threatens to cut us off. So, in summarizing the ideas of Schubert, Béguin mentions first certain notions which would be quite acceptable to any Freudian or Surrealist:

> . . . Schubert a été le premier à appliquer à la vie onirique les idées de Hamann, à considérer le rêve comme un langage, et à vouloir préciser les analogies de détail qui rapprochent de certaines démarches poétiques, la métaphore des songes . . . il a insisté sur l'impossibilité d'étouffer la vie inconsciente, et il a su que les rêves les plus authentiques échappent à toute mémoire comme à tout contrôle.[17]

But he goes on to point out a further contention which must be seen as quite foreign to Freud and Breton:

> Or, le rêve, la poésie, toutes les révélations de l'inconscient ont justement ce prix inestimable: ils nous arrachent à notre solitude d'individus séparés, nous mettent en communication avec ces abîmes intérieurs qui ironisent la vie de la surface, et qui sont en mystérieuse communication avec notre destinée éternelle. (p. 122)

Myers' theories (see Appendix I) are similar to this, but Freud's comments in the opening pages of The Interpretation of Dreams may be seen as a summary expression of his unsympathetic attitude to that view of the unconscious:

> We may leave on one side pietistic and mystical writers who, indeed, are perfectly justified in remaining in occupation of what is left of the once wide domain of the supernatural so long as that field is not conquered by scientific explanation. But apart from them, one comes across clear-headed men, without any extravagant ideas, who seek to support their religious faith in the existence and activity of superhuman spiritual forces precisely by the inexplicable nature of the phenomena

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[17] L'Ame romantique et le rêve, p. 379. Hereafter, throughout the text, when the title of the work cited is obvious, I include page references in brackets.

> of dreaming. The high esteem in which dream life is held by some schools of philosophy (by the followers of Schelling, for instance) is clearly an echo of the divine nature of dreams which was undisputed in antiquity.[18]

Breton, in the same way, while sharing with Baudelaire an interest in dreams, would not make the distinction that Baudelaire did between the "rêve naturel" and another type: "le rêve absurde, imprévu, sans rapport ni connexion avec le caractère, la vie et les passions du dormeur! Ce rêve, que j'appellerai hiéroglyphique, représente évidemment le côté surnaturel de la vie."[19] Freud had explained to Breton's satisfaction absurd and incongruous dreams, so he makes it clear, as we shall see, in "Le Message automatique" and Les Vases Communicants, that Surrealistic automatic writing and dreams have nothing in them of the supernatural.

Breton's familiarity with German romantic writers and his preferences regarding their ideas may be seen in his introduction to the Contes Bizarres of Achim von Arnim. Arnim is admired, in contrast with some of his contemporaries, including his brother-in-law Clemens Brentano, as a rationalist disciple of Fichte. Breton's view of Fichte's opponents is made very clear:

> La doctrine passablement confuse, mais ultra-réactionnaire, qui trouve à s'exprimer dans l'Europe de Novalis en même temps que dans les Cours sur la littérature et les beaux-arts de Schlegel et qui tient dans les quatre mots: "mysticisme, naturalisme, catholicisme, césarisme," n'avait pas eu, à son origine, d'adversaire plus résolu

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[18] Works, IV, 4-5.

[19] Cited in L'Ame romantique et le rêve, p. 379.

> que Fichte dont le rationalisme, le vieil idéal démocratique et, pour tout dire, l'esprit révolutionnaire ne semblent à aucun moment avoir subi d'éclipse.[20]

This fact, that Arnim was one of the "partisans des Lumiéres" around first Fischte and later Hegel, sets him apart for Breton from the same group which Freud dismissed. Though Arnim's "fantaisie" is "plus éblouissante qu'aucune autre à cette époque," his work is not subject to the same charges of unreality Hegel leveled against what Breton calls "le roman si nébuleux de Novalis," Heinrich von Ofterdingen (p. 15). Considering Breton's uncomplimentary remarks about the realist novel in the first Manifeste du surréalisme, we can see that he admires Arnim for finding a midpoint between the banalities of realism and the otherworldliness of some romantic novels. Arnim is part of that healthy, unmystical tradition which simply sees that, our conception of the external world being distorted by our personal perception, we should not insist too strongly on what is normally called real and what is normally called imaginary.

> Enfin, la création artistique de l'état de veille, par les rapports étroits qu'elle entretient avec la création subconsciente du sommeil et du rêve, n'est pas et, il faut bien le dire, ne sera sans doute jamais pour permettre entre ces deux solutions, la solution réelle et la solution imaginaire, une totale discrimination. (p. 18)

The problem, as Breton's further comments on Arnim's handling of the "je" dissolving into the "lui" suggest, is

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[20]"Introduction," Les Contes bizarres d'Achim d'Arnim (Paris: Editions Julliard, 1964), pp. 20-21.

psychological, not metaphysical.

Much of the product of the Romantic interest in dreams must be clearly distinguished from the Surrealist. Jean-Paul, whom Béguin calls "le maître incontesté du rêve" (p. 167), creates dreams quite distinct from the kind which Freud and Breton analyze. These are "grands rêves" with a "signification profonde." "Profonde" here has to do with metaphysical rather than psychological depth (p. 175). And this profundity is imposed on the dream in the work of literature, not derived from the dream. Jean-Paul imitates dreams in his writing; he does not recite them. So Béguin admits,

> Il est probable qu'une partie des songes de Jean-Paul est ainsi 'rêvée d'après' un rêve. Et il est certain que tous ont été écrits dans un état d'extrême exaltation. Ce sont les extases d'un rêveur éveillé, mais qui avait du monde des songes une trop profonde connaissance, un trop vivace expérience, pour ne pas emprunter au moins, aux images de ses nuits, leurs paysages et certaines formes de symbolisme. (p. 183)

For Breton, of course, Jean-Paul's sense of the poetry of dreams would be perfectly acceptable, but not his literary manipulation of them. The danger is that the dream can become "littérature" in the pejorative sense, as it does in the poem "Myrte" of Brentano which Beguin cites, and comments: "le mot rêve, dans cette poésie immatérielle, n'a plus guère de signification, il est tout entier devenu tonalité, comme chez certains poètes du symbolisme français" (p. 283). It is this sort of dream-tonality which Breton feels must be surpassed with recitations of real dreams and

an understanding of their workings. Probably the closest of the German Romantics to Breton in attitude is Heine, whom Freud admired, and whom Béguin distinguishes from the others in the following terms:

> Si le romantisme avait effectué le passage de la psychologie pure à la métaphysique, Heine refait le chemin inverse, avec cette seule différence qu'au lieu d'aboutir à une conception rationaliste et mécaniste de l'âme, il lui donne un contenu affectif et lyrique. (p. 323)

Neither Freud nor Breton make any attempt, then, to conceal their antecedents in the Romantic thinkers and poets, but they have a clear idea of the distinction between their predecessors and themselves. It has to do with what Freud considers to be, and what Breton accepts as, a new understanding of the mechanism of unconscious processes, an empirical understanding. Dreams, automatic writing, a certain type of humor, had all been fascinating to the Romantics, but for the Surrealists these same things are understood in the light of psychoanalysis. The tools are the same, but the process is rationalized and stripped of its metaphysical trappings. A number of critics suggest that Breton rejects Freud's positivism as being too restricted. On the contrary, it is Freud's method, his empiricism, which Breton admires and which is reflected, distorted or not, in the Bureau de recherches surréalistes; which is used, dialectically, to combat what Breton considers to be the dangers of a metaphysical evasion of responsibility. Dreams, for him, do not lead to escape from the material

world, but to action in it.

There has been too much of a tendency to place Breton not just in the stream of Romantic literature, but among Romantic mystics, in spite of his protests. One of the recurrent refrains of this study must be an insistence that Breton's thinking is ecclectic and dialectical. He and Freud are at once less rationalistic than Janet and the majority of their psychiatrist contemporaires, yet more rationalistic than Myers and the majority of Romantic poets and philosophers. If Breton's views seem at times to be contradictory (a charge which would not disturb him), it is because he very often uses psychoanalytic theory to play off both sides against the middle: using Freud's method against the mystics; using psychoanalytic theories, especially theories of language, against the ultra-rationalists. The importance of his efforts can perhaps best be seen if we take even a broader view of the history of modern theories of the unconscious, as Lancelot Whyte does in The Unconscious Before Freud.[21]

Whyte places Freud in a movement of reaction against Cartesianism which, we might say, sprang fully armed from the head of the cogito itself. Cartesian dualism dominated European philosophical thought for three centuries because "neither the Christian idealistic nor the scientific physiological monists could offer a satisfying alternative

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[21]New York: Anchor Books, 1962.

. . ." (p. 55). Whyte shows how interest in unconscious processes can be seen to increase steadily as poets and philosophers drew attention to the fact of unreason. He sees the idea of unconscious mental processes as "conceivable around 1700, topical around 1800, and . . . effective around 1900" (p. 57). Freud is part of this process: a progressive in that he made contributions to the understanding of the workings of the unconscious, a reactionary in that he continued to see the "irrational" as a danger to the "rational." He gave back to the unconscious the importance it deserved, but he retained the Cartesian dualism (p. 171). In this sense, Whyte suggests, Freud must be bypassed so that a balance can be reestablished:

> It is reason which must grow more comprehensive so that it can understand, assist, and fuse with--though it never will replace--the ordering process of the unconscious. The discovery of the unconscious is the recognition of the Goethian order, as much as of a Freudian disorder, in the depths of the mind. (p. 64)

When we see Freud in this context, we can have a different perspective of Breton's connections to him and of the connections of both to the broader anti-Cartesian movement.

Whether or not Breton can be properly called a philosopher, he seems to have had an uncanny sense of this movement. Although Whyte does not mention Surrealism at all, I am sure we can see it as a part of the tendency past Freud which he describes: the search for a satisfactory view of the mind which will not oppose reason and unreason. The first world war set off a strident call to unreason in

Europe, and this century may see the final destruction of Cartesianism, but a new synthesis has not yet been made and the task is difficult. Whyte suggests that both Freud and Marx seemed to be aiming at a "reasonably balanced and many-sided recognition of the inescapable immediacy of change, in contrast to the imposing static abstractions of exact reason," but each was limited in his understanding and each had to employ "static abstractions which appear unsatisfactory today: separate, supposedly unchanging economic classes, and persisting entities or regions (Superego, Ego and Id) into which the mind is assumed to be divisible" (p. 49). Breton and Surrealism attempted an amalgamation of Marx and Freud, recognized the limitations of each, and used the theories of each in critiques of the other. Highly condemned in the 'thirties, this approach is new rather fashionable.

There is always something defensive in Breton's attitude when he tries to bridge the gap between the <u>res cogitens</u> and the <u>res extensa</u>, because he is clearly aware of the pitfalls, hence his relentless hunting out of heretics and backsliders. As Whyte shows, pure mysticism and pure materialism have both been unable to dispute Cartesianism and we can see Breton counteracting their limitations, dialectically, each against the other. He is quite willing to search for a scientific explanation for Mexican jumping beans, <u>after</u> he has let his imagination play freely with

its own answers.[22] His imagination is neither materialistic, nor mystical, but both. He says in Signe Ascendant, illustrating his will towards the type of non-mystical monism which Whyte would admire:

> L'analogie poétique a ceci de commun avec l'analogie mystique qu'elle transgresse les lois de la déduction pour faire appréhender à l'esprit l'interdépendence de deux objets de pensée situés sur des plans différents, entre lesquels le fonctionnement logique de l'esprit n'est apte à jeter aucun pont et s'oppose a priori à ce que toute espèce de pont soit jeté. L'analogie poétique diffère foncièrement de l'analogie mystique en ce qu'elle ne présuppose nullement, à travers la trame du monde visible, un univers invisible qui tend à se manifester. Elle est tout empirique dans sa démarche, seul en effet l'empirisme pouvant lui assurer la totale liberté de mouvement nécessaire au bond qu'elle doit fournir.

Poetic analogy for Breton is not something restricted to literature, but something by which he strives to govern his whole life.

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[22]See La Clé des champs (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1967), p. 222.

CHAPTER II

FIRST CONTACTS WITH PSYCHOANALYSIS AND AFTER

> . . . on pourrait dire que c'est parce que j'étais français que je refusais Freud.
> Jean-Paul Sartre[1]

In "La Situation du surréalisme entre les deux guerres," Breton speaks of the importance of Freud for him, and for the century, placing as specifically as he ever does the time of his first interest in psychoanalysis. This address was made at Yale University in 1942, three years after Freud had died a refugee in England.

> Vers le même temps où je pouvais voir Apollinaire, entraînant à sa suite les bêtes d'Orphée, déambuler boulevard Saint-Germain, je découvrais que quelqu'un venait de percer à lui seul la nuit des idées dans le domaine où elle était la plus épaisse; je parle de Sigmund Freud. Quelques réserves de détail qu'appelle l'étendue de son oeuvre et qui sont la moindre rançon qu'un homme puisse payer à la non-infaillibilité, peut-on avoir concentré plus de vérité toute neuve, criante, essentielle dans l'envergure d'une pensée, d'une vie? Et dites-moi si le roc le plus dur, celui des préjugés, des tabous, des dissimulations immémoriales ne s'est pas fendu dès que s'est pointé sur lui ce doigt de lumière, si de ce roc la parole n'a pas jailli limpide, mieux même, lustrale au moins jusqu'à ce que d'autres, en la captant à des fins strictement utilitaires, commencent à la brouiller. Et pourtant, depuis l'aube de ce siècle--la Science des rêves paraît en 1900--jusqu'à l'entrée des nazis à Vienne en 1938, fut-il beaucoup de communications d'extrême importance

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[1]"Sartre par Sartre," Le Nouvel Observateur, 26 janvier 1970, p. 41.

> si persévéramment incomprises, d'existances irremplaçables payées si longtemps d'ingratitude avant de s'achever dans la persécution? J'avais vingt ans quand, au cours d'une permission à Paris, je tentai successivement de représenter à Apollinaire, à Valery, à Gide ce qui, à travers Freud--dont le nom n'était connu en France que de rares psychiatres--m'était apparu de force à bouleverser de fond en comble le monde mental. J'étais alors porté à l'enthousiasme et aussi on ne peut plus anxieux de faire partager à ceux qui m'importaient mes convictions . . . et je me rappelle que je tendis à chacune de mes victimes l'appât auquel elle me paraissait devoir le moins résister: à Apollinaire, le "pansexualisme," à Valéry la clé des lapsus, à Gide le complexe d'Oedipe. Eh bien, en dépit de mes frais, des trois côtés je ne réussis qu'à provoquer des sourires ou avec une amicale commisération à me faire taper l'épaule.[2]

The fact that Breton was proud of his early appreciation of Freud is obvious from this and other texts. The historical accuracy, however, of what he says in this statement and, for example, in the Entretiens--in short, the "official" version of the events between 1916 and 1924--deserves to be viewed with at least some skepticism. The following remarks are an attempt to look again at a period which, for this particular study, is very obscure. The questions to be asked are: how and how well did Breton know Freud's works before 1924, and how important were these works to the emerging Surrealist movement?

Having begun his medical studies in 1913, Breton had two years of "P.C.N." ("Physique, chimie, science naturelle"--required of all premedical students) before he was mobilized in the artillery and sent to Nantes in the

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[2]La Clé des champs, pp. 78-79.

"Service de Santé" at the neurological hospital, rue du Bocage. There he knew, besides Jacques Vaché, another of the many medical students who would take part in Dadaist and Surrealist activities: Theodore Fraenkel. This was in 1916. In Paris again in 1917, he took courses at Val-de-Grace to qualify as a "médecin auxiliaire" and at the same time met Aragon.[3] Later that same year, he was at the psychiatric center of the 11th army at Saint Dizier, assistant to Dr. Raoul Leroy. He later explained that he was able, in Saint-Dizier, to experiment with the patients using psychoanalytic methods, particularly the notation of dreams for the purpose of interpreting them, and with free association. This was, he pauses to add, long before such practices were common and "On peut déjà observer en passant que ces rêves, ces catégories d'associations constituent, au départ, presque tout le matériel surréaliste."[4]

I can find no published works or research which would indicate any interest in psychoanalysis on the part of Dr. Leroy. Breton seems to have learned of Freud while he was still studying, or else when he was at Nantes. He never mentions specifically an article or book on or by Freud that he reads at this time. The first translation into French of a complete work by Freud was La Psychanalyse (the Clark lectures) made by Yves Le Lay and published in

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[3]Aragon parle avec Dominique Arban (Paris: Seghers, 1968), pp. 28-29.

[4]Entretiens, p. 29.

Geneva in 1921. Between then and 1927 more than a dozen translations appeared representing Freud's major works, but this was over twenty years after the originals, in some cases. Most important for our purposes, it was five years after Breton says he knew of psychoanalysis. From 1916 to 1921, then, he must have relied on other sources for his interest in Freud, since he apparently did not know German well enough to read the originals.[5] There were, of course, articles, reviews, and summaries of reports given at conferences, published in French periodicals to which Breton, as a student of psychiatry, would have access. The list in Appendix II of this dissertation will give some idea of the material available. It was of highly varied quality and, since it may have affected Breton's attitude towards Freud, it deserves a brief glance.

The only major work on psychoanalysis which appeared in French before the translations was La Psychanalyse des névroses et des psychoses, by Régis and Hesnard, published in 1914. It is a very full, detailed, and uncommonly objective study. This work, along with the accounts of Schmiergeld and Provotelle, Maeder,[6] Jung, and Kostyleff

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[5]Simone Collinet (Breton's first wife), Jacques Baron, André Masson, and Meyer Schapiro all indicated to me that Breton did not read German well enough to read Freud in the original. I shall mention in passing interviews which I had with André Masson (Le Tholonet, October, 1970), Philippe Soupault and Simone Collinet (Paris, January, 1971), and Jacques Baron (Paris, February, 1971).

[6]There is some evidence to suggest that Breton had read Maeder's essay "Sur le mouvement psychanalytique, un point de vue nouveau en psychologie," L'Année Psychologique,

could have given at least an introduction and a rational hearing to Freud's theories. But by far the majority of the articles at the time, and the weight of medical opinion in France, were against Freud for a variety of reasons. Most French psychiatrists before the first world war, including Breton's professor, Babinsky, placed a great emphasis on physiological and hereditary causes in mental illness and were thus suspicious of Freud's decision to concentrate on psychological aetiology. Psychoanalysis was thought to have first ruled out half the problem and then to have broadened the application of its psychological theories far beyond the scope of practical medicine. Freud was too "philosophical," too "impractical," too "dogmatic," especially in applying his theories of symbology in dreams, to be taken seriously as a scientist or clinician. The more honest of his French critics restricted themselves to this sort of criticism.

There was, however, a tendency to pass beyond pure scientific discussion in the direction of moral outrage, notably in reaction to Freud's theories about the sexual aetiology of neuroses and the concept of infant sexuality. In the words of Dr. Paul-Louis Ladame:

> L'école freudienne étend tous les jours du reste l'étiologie sexuelle à tous les névropathes et à tous les psychopathes. Il n'y aura bientôt plus une névrose,

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18 (1912), 389-418. See Chapter III, note 19. Breton mentions Maeder in a letter of 1919 to Tristan Tzara, cited in Michel Sanouillet, Dada à Paris (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1965), p. 446.

> ni une psychose, ni une psychonévrose qui n'ait sa cause spécifique dans un trouble de la sexualité. Nous sommes en pleine pansexualité.[7]

Even such a respected psychiatrist as this allowed themselves to speculate in print on Freud's motives for being interested in sexuality. One cause, Ladame suggests, might be the morals of the Viennese, an over-sexed people. Another might be Freud's friendship with Weininger, who wrote a highly libidinous book before he killed himself. Ladame devotes two pages to discussing Weininger. In French medical journals between 1913 and 1925, one finds such ideas echoing from Ladame, to Janet, to people like Laumonier who, as late as 1925, repeated Ladame's observations on Viennese morals and Weininger (observations which apparently began with Aschaffenburg and Friedländer) and then added his own about the loose sexual morality of the Germanic people in general, who tolerate deviates and show pornographic films.

> D'autre part la scatomanie propre à la race germanique est un caractère avéré dont il convient de se rappeler si l'on veut comprendre l'importance attachée par Freud et ses disciples au complexe ano-urinaire.[8]

Freud's ideas, he says, are not accepted in France because French morality and education are shocked by them and

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[7] "Névroses et sexualité," L'Encéphale, 8 (1913), 72. See above how the term "pansexualité," so full of pejorative connotations for French psychiatrists, is used by Breton in his talk at Yale.

[8] Le Freudisme, exposé et critique (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1925), pp. 7-8.

because psychoanalysis is replaced by the confession.[9]

In the previous chapter, I mentioned how Janet regarded psychoanalysis. He presents himself as the amused but tolerant voice of reason, searching for what has promise in wild psychoanalysis; pointing out with gentle irony what is excessive. One must read his report on psychoanalysis to the International Congress of Medicine in London, 1913, to have a sense of his method. Some of his arguments are certainly built on misrepresentations. He does not, for example, give fair credit to the lengthy discussions of associations which must be part of the interpretation of a dream. He thus suggests that Freud's conclusions are gratuitous. But it is especially his tone of ironic and unscientific arrogance which is most offensive.[10]

As an example of less sophisticated protest against

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[9]In 1896, Freud published an article in French entitled "L'Hérédité et l'étiologie des névroses," in the Revue Neurologique, 4 (30 March), 161-69. There he traced the etiology of hysteria to sexual abuse suffered by the patient as a child at the hands of an adult, often the father. He soon repudiated this theory entirely, realizing that it was based on his patients' fantasies, but he was saddled with it in France for twenty years. Ironically, this tendency to trace neurosis to trauma is an influence of the Frenchman Charcot.

[10]For Hesnard and Régis, Janet's antipathetic remarks "résument fort exactement les idées françaises actuelles sur la psychanalyse" (La Psychanalyse des névroses et des psychoses [Paris: Félix Alcan, 1914], p. 290). Hesnard would still write, over fifty years later: "le retard de la pénétration psychanalytique dans les Universités françaises a été aggravé par l'ostracisme exercé par quelques professeurs, comme P. Janet" (De Freud à Lacan [Paris: Editions ESF, 1970], p. 19--a posthumous edition).

Freud, one might choose "La Convoitise incestueuse dans la doctrine de Freud et les conditions du désir sexuel," by Paul Courbon. This is a "common sense" article directed against the theories of infant sexuality and the Oedipus complex, arguing that incestuous attractions, contrary to what Freud would suggest, are very rare precisely because the close proximity of relatives is more conducive to boredom than to attraction: "Oedipe n'épouse Jocaste que parce qu'il ne la connaissait pas," and furthermore, "C'est parce que le père fait selon l'expression vulgaire tous les caprices de sa fille, que celle-ci aime mieux avoir affaire à lui qu'à sa mère."[11] As late as 1923, the Sorbonne accepted a thesis on "freudisme" which was nothing more than a pastiche of quotations from the recently published Introduction à la psychanalyse followed by a pastiche of criticism mostly from Ladame and Janet. One of its conclusions was:

> Les théories freudistes sont actuellement vulgarisées par la presse non-spécialisée, par la revue, le roman, la scène, etc.; nous estimons qu'elles n'intéressent que le psychiatre, le médecin, le directeur de conscience et que leur diffusion dans le public n'est pas sans dangers . . . ces doctrines peuvent, à l'égard de certains esprits, ne pas être inoffensives.[12]

Forceful reasoning of this quality appears often in the anti-freudian literature of the time. Usually, a certain recognition is granted to the theory of repression, and it

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[11] Encéphale, IX (1914), 346-53.

[12] Emile Adam, Le Freudisme, Thèse de Paris (médecine), 1923.

is admitted that more attention needed to be payed to sexual matters in psychology, but the damning adjectives "exaggerated" and "metaphysical" are there to qualify any praise.

According to Hesnard, who seems to be the official chronicler of psychoanalysis in France, there were no disciples to explain personally the Freudian method until after 1921.

> Dans le temps où la psychanalyse se diffusaît dans les milieux et cercles littéraires, une psychanalyste recommandée par Freud, Madame Sokolnika arriva à Paris et fit d'abord la connaissance d'hommes de lettres tels que Thibaudet, R.-L. Doyon, J. Romains, A. Gide, P. Bourget.[13]

No mention is given here or anywhere else in Dr. Hesnard's books, to my knowledge, of André Breton or Surrealism. Jacques Rivière, in a 1923 interview for Les Nouvelles Littéraires, says that Freud probably had no influence on French literature up to that time.[14] The only writer he mentions as possibly influenced is H. R. Lenormand. Lenormand, however, insists that he was not truly influenced by Freud's theories, for which he has more than a little contempt. He speaks of "La bonne Eugénie Sokolnika" who gave lectures and press conferences "où se pressaient les écrivains." But, he says, "c'est le dadäisme et son succédané, le surréalisme, qui exercèrent sur les badauds de la culture l'influence la plus déterminante."

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[13] De Freud à Lacan, p. 31.

[14] 1 décembre 1923, p. 1.

> On connaît les origines du mouvement. Vers la fin de la guerre, à Zurich, dont les cliniques regorgeaient de névrotiques ou de simili-névrotiques,--on était tout de même mieux au bord du lac et sous les ombrages du Dolder que dans les tranchées!--Tristan Tzara laissait choir d'un arbre de la Bahnhofstrasse l'obus du dadaïsme. L'explosion projeta des éclats jusqu'en France et l'on vit bientôt, dans les salons parisiens, les snobs se complaire à mémoriser les premiers petits poèmes dada.[15]

The rest of this passage is a fine diatribe against Dada and Surrealism as infantile, perhaps demented, and dangerous.[16]

I have digressed a little from the point, which is that in 1916 Breton probably had only a very general second-hand knowledge of Freud's ideas which he carried with him to Saint-Dizier. The experience of working at that hospital was extremely important to him, whatever the actual extent of his experiments with psychoanalytic techniques. People who knew him in the years immediately after the war--Philippe Soupault, Simone Collinet, and Jacques Baron--all insist that he definitely was at that time the sort of proselytizer for Freud that he pictures himself to be in "Surréalisme entre les deux guerres." Mme. Collinet believes that Freud's ideas were a déclenchement for Breton; M. Soupault believes that they lent support to conclusions already reached by independent experiment with poetry. Freud and

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[15] Les Confessions d'un auteur dramatique (Paris: Albin Michel, 1949), I, 314.

[16] Ernest Jones recalls asking Jung "whether he thought the vogue of Dadaism, just then beginning in Zurich, had a psychotic basis. He replied: 'it is too idiotic for any decent insanity'" (The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, p. 249).

Janet were certainly discussed, according to M. Soupault, around the time that he was collaborating with Breton on Les Champs magnétiques (1919). The first written comment which I have found by Breton on Freud is in a letter to Tzara, dated April 4, 1919: "J'ai peu fait de philosophie: une classe de collège et quelques lectures mais la psychiatrie m'est très familière (je suis étudiant en médecine, quoique de moins en moins). Kräpelin et Freud m'ont donné des émotions très fortes."[17]

In "Pour Dada" (1920), Breton mentions Freud for the first time in print. Insisting that Dada is not a form of subjectivism, he makes a distinction between that and the valid pursuit with which it might be confused:

> On a parlé d'une exploration systématique de l'inconscient. Ce n'est pas d'aujourd'hui que des poètes s'abandonnent pour écrire à la pente de leur esprit. Le mot inspiration, tombé je ne sais pourquoi en désuétude, était pris naguère en bonne part."

Apollinaire was aware of inspiration in all images, even clichés, the result of "cette activité qu'il qualifiait de surréaliste." But at this time, Breton is not ready to have himself, his friends and their works "interpreted" psychoanalytically:

> Ce qui, dans l'opinion, risque de nuire le plus efficacement à Dada, c'est l'interprétation qu'en donnent deux ou trois faux savants. Jusqu'ici on a surtout voulu y voir l'application d'un système qui jouit d'une grande vogue en psychiatrie, la "psycho-analyse" de Freud, application prévue de reste par cet auteur. Un esprit très confus et particulièrement malveillant, M. H. R. Lenormand, a même paru supposer que nous

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[17]Sanouillet, pp. 443-44.

> bénéficierons du traitement psycho-analytique, si l'on pouvait nous y soumettre.[18]

Between this date and 1922, neither Freud nor psychoanalysis are mentioned in print by Breton.

In October, 1921, however, he visited Freud in Vienna while on holiday with his new wife, Simone, accompanied by Paul and Gala Eluard. His account of this visit, the "Interview du professeur Freud," was published in Littérature, the first number of the new series, in March, 1922. It is not at all an awe-struck testimony. In the opinion of Michel Sanouillet, this publication "enlève toute créance à la doctrine d'un Surréalisme solidement fondé sur les thèses freudiennes, dès l'époque des Champs magnétiques, qui en serait un application systématique à la création littéraire."[19] The text and the incident deserve discussion in some detail. Here is the main part of what Breton wrote:

> Aux jeunes gens et aux esprits romanesques qui, parce que la mode est cet hiver à la psycho-analyse, ont besoin de se figurer une des agences les plus prospères du rastaquouérisme moderne, le cabinet du Professeur Freud avec des appareils à transformer les lapins en chapeaux et le déterminisme bleu pour tout

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[18] Les Pas perdus (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 77-78. This essay first appeared in La Nouvelle Revue Française, 83 (1920), 208-15. I have not been able to find the comment by Lenormand to which Breton refers, though I assume it was an earlier expression of the views seen in Les Confessions d'un auteur dramatique. See also Lenormand's reply to the questionnaire "L'Avenir de la critique" in La Connaissance, 2 (1921), 559. There he chides the NRF (without naming it) for publishing commentaries on "la plaisanterie dadaïste."

[19] Dada à Paris, pp. 126-27.

> buvard, je ne suis pas fâché d'apprendre que le plus grand psychologue de ce temps habite une maison de médiocre apparence dans un quartier perdu de Vienne. "Cher Monsieur, m'avait-il écrit, n'ayant que très peu de temps libre dans ces jours, je vous prie de venir me voir ce lundi (demain 10) à 3 heures d'après-midi dans ma consultation. Votre trés dévoué, Freud. . . ." Je me trouve en présence d'un petit vieillard sans allure, qui reçoit dans son pauvre cabinet de médecin de quartier. Ah! il n'aime pas beaucoup la France, restée seule indifferente à ses travaux. Il me montre cependant avec fierté une brochure qui vient de paraître à Genève et n'est autre chose que la première traduction française de cinq de ses leçons. J'essaie de le faire parler en jetant dans la conversation les noms de Charcot, de Babinski, mais, soit que je fasse appel à des souvenirs trop lointains, soit qu'il se tienne avec un inconnu sur un pied de réticence prudente, je ne tire de lui que des généralités comme: "Votre lettre, la plus touchante que j'aie reçue de ma vie," ou "Heureusement, nous comptons beaucoup sur la jeunesse."[20]

How to explain the tone of this? Clearly, the interview was a tremendous disappointment to Breton, apparently because of the coldness and reticence shown to him by Freud. He emphasizes this by publishing Freud's stiff note, and by concluding the article with his "généralités."[21] Keeping in mind that Breton was capable of strong words against Freud even when his respect for him had been

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[20] Les Pas perdus, pp. 98-100.

[21] Madame Collinet insists that the whole episode was and is a mystery to her. She does not know exactly what Breton expected from the interview, or how he could have expected a great deal. The visit was looked forward to with excitement and she awaited Breton's return expecting him to be full of enthusiasm. He would not speak about it. André Masson, recalling that Breton spoke of the interview to him some years later, says that he emphasized the fact that Freud would not reply to his questions. Ernest Jones says of Freud: "He was not at all a man who set himself out to charm or please with social graces anyone he met; on the contrary, his initial approach might even be rather brusque" (The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, p. 106).

established in print beyond any doubt,[22] I think his own description of the "Interview" as "Un regrettable sacrifice à l'esprit dada,"[23] should not be too quickly dismissed. The tone of it is remarkably similar to Cravan's in his "André Gide," a favorite little libel which Breton would later include in his Anthologie de l'humour noir. Breton considered Cravan to be one of the precursors of the "esprit dada" in France and we see in his "Interview" the same tactic of diminishing the stature of the Great Man by showing his undistinguished tastes, his defensive reticence, his patronizing attitude, his petty pride; only Breton hardly comes close to Cravan's savage irony. And, without getting involved in a useless argument about exactly what is meant by Surrealism "solidement fondé sur les thèses freudiennes," I consider it significant that in the same number of Littérature as the famous "Interview" were published Breton's first "récits de rêves," without comment psychoanalytic or otherwise, it is true, but still the first swell of the "Vague de rêves."

In the months that followed, Littérature published more dreams by Breton, Desnos, and others, but most important, "Entrée des médiums," an account of experiments with dreams and hypnotic sleep then being carried on by the

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[22]See, for example, the "Cinquantenaire de l'hystérie" in La Révolution Surréaliste, 11 (March, 1928), or Les Vases communicants, especially his comments at the end of the book on Freud's letters.

[23]Entretiens, p. 76.

group just beginning to call itself Surrealist. Some of the concepts central to the Premier manifeste du surréalisme are already there:

> On sait, jusqu'à un certain point, ce que, mes amis et moi, nous entendons par surréalisme. Ce mot, qui n'est pas de notre invention et que nous aurions si bien pu abandonner au vocabulaire critique le plus vague, est employé par nous dans un sens précis. Par lui nous avons convenu de désigner un certain automatisme psychique qui correspond assez bien à l'état de rêve, état qu'il est aujourd'hui fort difficile de délimiter.[24]

This turns out to be somewhat of a false beginning, however, for at this time Breton condemns both automatic writing and dreams as obsolete, superseded by the new discovery of hypnotic sleep. Two years later, in "Une vague de rêves," Aragon will explain how this opinion was reversed after a period of great excitement and some real fear; how Surrealism finally returned to its origins in the dream, "Mais maintenant le rêve à la lueur du surréalisme s'éclaire, et prend sa signification." Freud's picture, alongside those of a host of poets, will be hung on the wall of the "chambre du rêve." Freud is proclaimed one of the presidents of the "République du rêve."[25] But Aragon's essay, we must remember, was written in 1924. Two years earlier, in "Entrée des médiums," when Breton discusses the experiences and experiments of Les Champs magnétiques (written in 1919 but just now called the first Surrealist text) he makes

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[24]Les Pas perdus, p. 124.

[25]In Commerce, No. 2 (1924). Note the change from Tzara's "Tout le monde est président de Dada."

absolutely no mention of psychoanalysis or psychiatry, no mention of his work in the hospital at Saint-Dizier, certainly no mention of Freud. Without a doubt, "Entrée de médiums" is an important first text for the Surrealist movement, carefully expressing its distinctive atmosphere and presenting a first draft of what would be important ideas in the Premier manifeste. All the same, it is in 1924, going over some of this history of automatism and dreams, that Breton embellishes it with references to Freud.

The documentation that we have been able to produce of Freud's influence on Breton between 1916 and 1923, then, is very slim: some recollections after the fact, the testimony of friends, one mention in a letter, and a few printed texts, widely separated and by no means all complimentary. But it is overstating the case to speak of Breton's admiration for Freud as being purely an "arrière pensée." The evidence seems to suggest that the period from 1919 to 1924 was one of experimentation, both literary and psychological. Studying essentially public manifestations, one will find little evidence of these peculiarly Surrealist preoccupations developing along with the different interests of Dada, as Breton suggests they did.[26] "Entrée des médiums" already indicates a short history of meetings for the exploration of the unconscious. In 1922 and 1923, after the split with Dada, the new Surrealism sought rather vainly a unifying

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[26] Entretiens, pp. 56-57.

and identifying focus for its actions--a basis for the new myth of which Breton would speak later. Freud's Introduction à la psychanalyse having been published in 1922, the basic text became available for a "politique" clearly distinct from Dada. But this could not have happened without the experiments with psychological processes which had gone on before, all clearly linked to psychiatry and to Freud: automatism (Charcot, Janet, Myers, Freud), hypnotism (Bernheim, Janet, and, briefly, Freud), and dreams (Freud above a host of others). This was an ambiance absolutely unimportant to Tzaraist Dada, but one can hardly argue that it was not important, at least to Breton, even when Dada had come to Paris.

The reader must forgive me for not entering fully into the debate between philo-Dada and philo-Surrealists concerning this period. I am more and more convinced that to look for the death or development of "movements" during that time is futile and falsifying. In the end, I believe that the quarrels were a result of conflicts between Breton and Tzara who, hardly thinking of defining any sort of group, only sought to keep a certain influence on their friends as each found the "style" of the other intolerable. When the dust settles and the minor combatants have taken sides, only then does one begin to speculate about when and how a given "movement" ended and the other began.[27]

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[27]J. H. Matthews ("Back to Les Champs magnétiques," Books Abroad, 42 [1968], 541-43) and Sylvia Kantarazis

The first manifesto of Surrealism was written in the atmosphere of growing interest in psychoanalysis, described above by Hesnard and Le Normand. Le Disque Vert published a special number on Freud in 1924, an important enough event to merit a letter of acknowledgment from him. The number included articles by noted psychiatrists and critics such as Hesnard, Claparède, Jacques Rivière, and Valéry Larbaud, interspersed with quotations from men of letters such as Kafka, Dostoevsky, and André Breton, whose contribution, ironically, was an excerpt from the "Interview du Professeur Freud." A few of these articles discussed the question of psychoanalysis and literature (none mentioned Surrealism) and one, "La Psychoanalyse, caractère général de la poésie et de la psychologie d'aujourd'hui" by André Desson, is of particular interest. Desson denies that Freud can have a direct influence on good literature because direct influences are always pernicious. The ideas and methods of Proust and Dada, for example, were born outside of Freud, but later the "discovery" of freudian methods lent strength to a new way of seeing the human personality, a new way of feeling. Freud's findings gave a violent and decisive stimulus to this modern poetic and psychological movement and encouraged it to become conscious of and clarify its tendencies. But one cannot say

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("Dada and the Preparations for Surrealism," Australian Journal of French Studies, 8 [1971], 44-61) have debated Breton's version against Sanouillet.

that Freudianism engendered the new movement. What Desson has to say about Dada seems to be based on a reading of "Entrée des médiums" or works of that period, his article having undoubtedly been written before the publication of the Premier Manifeste.

> Si on compare Proust . . . au médecin psychanalyste, il faut bien assimiler Dada au patient. Dada, lui, est poète, non romancier (même lorsqu'il écrit des romans). Pur de coeur, lyrique. Non observateur, non savant, si on me permet des approximations aussi grossières. C'est sa propre vie qui est en jeu. Il cherche à s'exprimer profondément, en dehors de toute contrainte et de toute convention sociale (il rejette même celle de langage) et à exprimer Dieu--dont le très-intime de lui-même n'est qu'une parcelle, mais une parcelle qui, hostie, le contient tout entier. La méthode est différente, mais l'attitude demeure la même. C'est toujours la conception du moi composé. Comme autrefois on se méfiait de l'inconscient (on le connaissait si mal), Dada se méfie de la conscience, du masque, de tout ce qui n'est pas proprement l'individu, mais se trouve imposé par la contrainte sociale qui crée la censure. . . . Dada se sert de celle des deux voies d'investigation psychanalytique que Proust est bien obligé de négliger: les associations d'idées libres. Proust, en effet, ne peut étudier les tendances profondes de l'individu, ses tropismes sentimentaux, son moi véridique qu'à travers les interstices de la conscience. Dada, lui, supprime toute logique, toute composition et se met en rapport directement avec l'inconscient. (pp. 159-60).

Some of these comments are questionable, no doubt. One can imagine how Breton or Tzara would have swallowed "Il cherche . . . à exprimer Dieu," and Desson speaks without knowing it, of course, of ex-Dada. But at least we see here some recognition of the psychological basis of certain Dada-Surrealist techniques.

Once the Premier Manifeste du surréalisme had been published, the importance of Freud in the image of the

Surrealist movement was obvious, as can be seen by the comments of a would-be rival, Ivan Goll, who published his own "Manifeste du surréalisme," in his little review of one number, Surréalisme, which appeared in Paris in October, 1924. Goll insists on Apollinaire's definition of the word. The drabness of his concept in comparison to Breton's is striking:

> L'art de divertissement, l'art des ballets et du music-hall, l'art curieux, l'art pittoresque, l'art à base d'exoticisme et d'érotisme, l'art étrange, l'art inquiet, l'art égoïste, l'art frivole et décadent auront bientôt cessé d'amuser une génération qui, après la guerre, avait besoin d'oublier.
>
> Et cette contrefaçon du surréalisme, que quelques ex-Dadas ont inventée pour continuer à épater les bourgeois, sera vite mise hors de la circulation:
>
> Ils affirment la "toute-puissance du rêve" et font de Freud une muse nouvelle. Que le docteur Freud se serve du rêve pour guérir des troubles trop terrestres, fort bien! Mais de là à faire de sa doctrine une application dans le monde-poétique, n'est-ce-pas confondre art et psychiatrie?
>
> Leur "mécanisme psychique basé sur le rêve et le jeu desintéressé de la pensée" ne sera jamais assez puissant pour ruiner notre organisme psychique qui nous enseigne que la réalité a toujours raison, que la vie est plus vraie que la pensée.

In spite of Ivan Goll's simpleminded objections, the new formula was obviously powerful. "Une vague de rêves" had been a chronicle of past experiments; the Breton Manifeste announced an offensive, the beginning of a concerted assault on reason and "reality." Dada had begun this, but now, no one would dispute that the weapons were different--Freudian theories recognized as among the most important. The fortress of reason, so laboriously constructed over the centuries and so battered by Dada, would now be undermined

by way of the Freudian unconscious. This was not the only means. We can see in the Manifeste and particularly in the "Introduction au discours sur le peu de réalité" (in which there is no mention of psychology) first steps in an exploration of "le hasard objectif" and the occult. This tendency of Surrealist enquiry would always run parallel with psychological investigation.

From 1924, Freud and psychoanalysis never ceased to be relevant to Breton, in his own works and in the Surrealist publications he directed. Dreams are the subject of the first number of La Révolution Surréaliste; dreams and automatic texts are a major part of the review's contents. In 1927, a translation of a work of Freud appeared for the first time in a Surrealist periodical: "La Question de l'analyse par les non-médecins" (a significant choice, I think) in numbers 9-10 of La Révolution Surréaliste. There is no need to mention here all of the articles of relevance to this study which appeared from 1924 to 1927, since most of them will be discussed later. But it should be pointed out that dreams and "textes surréalistes" were still treated as pure poems, with no analysis, no theorizing.

The years after 1928 are the most important for this study because they see the publication of some major works by Breton in which the theory of psychoanalysis does come to be important. The first is Nadja, which broaches

all the problems of dreams, hallucinations, suggestion, madness, "l'art des fous," psychiatry, "le hasard objectif," and the powers of the medium--in short, a good portion of Breton's lifetime preoccupations. Others include Les Vases communicants, L'Amour fou, and Trajectoire du rêve, a collection by Breton of documents devoted to dreams, introduced by a moving homage to Freud after a false rumor of his incarceration by the Nazis. During the twenties and thirties, La Révolution Surréaliste, Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution, and Minotaure published, among many other psychologically oriented articles, Dali's theories of "interprétation paranoïaque-critique" and Freud's letters to Breton concerning Les Vases communicants. They also attracted contributions from psychoanalysts, including J. Frois-Wittman, Ed. Claparède, and J. Lacan, whose thesis De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité was admired especially by Dali and Crevel.

It was during this time, also, that Surrealism was broadening its scope to include politics. Friction was inevitable since the Communist Party regarded Freud's theories as dangerously idealistic. In the second Manifeste, published in 1929, Breton expressed strong solidarity with Freud's ideas:

> Certes le surréalisme, que nous avons vu socialement adopter de propos délibéré la formule marxiste, n'entend pas faire bon marché de la critique freudienne des idées: tout au contraire il tient cette critique pour

la première et pour la seule vraiment fondée.[28]

A special number of the Belgian periodical Variétés, entitled Le Surréalisme en 1929, also published a translation of Freud's essay on humor (see Chapter VI) and side-by-side photographs of Freud and Trotsky on one page. In such diverse works as "Le Message automatique" (1933), "Position politique du surréalisme" (1935), "Salvador Dali" (1936), and "Limites non frontières du surréalisme" (1937), Breton uses Freudian theory and Freudian vocabulary constantly, with a gradual shift in emphasis from terms associated with dreams to terms associated with the theory of the ego, id and super-ego; hence the increasing interest in "l'humour noir," the "mythe collectif," the pleasure principle, and the death instinct.

After the second great war and his return from America, Breton speaks more of the occult, alchemy, anthropology, Fourier--but automatism and dreams remain a constant preoccupation. Médium, Le Surréalisme Même, Bief, and La Brêche all contain their share of articles pertaining to dreams and Freudian theories. In response to an inquest (he always took them very seriously) asking if he would open his door to Freud, Breton replies, "Oui, avec une profonde déférence."[29] As late as 1964 in "A ce prix," two years before his death, Breton still writes, not

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[28]Manifestes du surréalisme (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1962), p. 118.

[29]Médium, No. 1, Nouvelle série (1953).

without absolute approval, of the importance of Freud's teaching on sexuality.[30]

This very sketchy account, running over the forty years from the first Manifeste to "A ce prix" is meant to do nothing more than indicate the continuing influence of Freud's ideas on Breton and Surrealism. The chapters which follow will show more completely how Freudian ideas were integrated into Breton's literary techniques, his polemic and his aesthetic theories. Before arriving at the synthesis, however, we must present an antithesis, showing how, at one extreme, Surrealism was completely at odds with established psychiatry and psychoanalysis--in its high evaluation of the "Belles chansons des asiles."

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[30] In Le Surréalisme et la peinture (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), pp. 407-08.

CHAPTER III

THE PRAISE OF FOLLY

> . . . le surréalisme, cette toute petite passerelle au-dessus de l'abîme ne saurait être bordé de garde-fous.
>
> André Breton[1]

> La maladie est un état
> la santé n'en est qu'un autre,
> plus moche,
> je veux dire plus lâche et plus mesquin.
> Pas de malade qui n'ait grandi,
> pas de bien portant qui n'ait un jour trahi, pour n'avoir pas voulu être malade, comme tels médecins que j'ai subis.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> C'est ainsi que je considère
> que c'est à moi, sempiternel malade,
> à guérir tous les médecins,
> -- nés médecins par insufficance de maladie --
> et non à des médecins ignorants de mes états affreux de malade,
> à m'imposer leur insulinothérapie,
> santé d'un monde avachi.
>
> Antonin Artaud[2]

Breton's views on madness are consistently ambiguous. According to comments made in Entretiens, his attitude may be traced to experiences at Saint-Dizier where he met a young man who was convinced against all argument that

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[1] Manifestes, p. 177.

[2] "Les Malades et les médecins," Les Quatre vents, 8 (1947).

the war was a sham with false cannon, false wounds, and false corpses strewn about false battle fields at night.

> J'ai gardé, de mon passage par le centre de Saint-Dizier, une vive curiosité et un grand respect pour ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler les égarements de l'esprit humain. Peut-être aussi ai-je appris à m'y prémunir contre ces égarements, eu égard aux conditions de vie intolérables qu'ils entraînent.[3]

Some years later, experiments with automatic writing and hypnotic sleeps, prompted by the same curiosity, had to be regulated for "considérations d'hygiène mentale élémentaire," the hypnotic sleeps particularly after an attempt at mass suicide by a group under the instigation of Crevel and an attempt on Eluard's life by Desnos (p. 89). At the time of the publication of the Premier Manifeste, says Breton, "le surréalisme entre dans sa phase raisonnante" (p. 91). Yet, according to that manifesto itself, the man partaking of Surrealist joy takes any road he likes wherever that might lead, except the reasonable road. So Surrealism continues to seek unreason, even in its "phase raisonnante" --a reasonable pursuit of unreason.

To unravel this, we must start again from the basic premise expressed in the first pages of the Premier Manifeste: the world of economic, social, work-a-day "reality" is totally impoverished and the sole salvation lies in imagination--the imagination of the child, of dreams, of

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[3]P. 30. Note the convolutions of another comment on that encounter: "Sans croire à la folie, j'ai connu pendant la guerre un fou qui ne croyait pas à la guerre" (Point du jour [Paris: Gallimard, 1970], p. 55).

fantasies, of poetry, and, perhaps, of madness. One cultivates unreason, one is fascinated by unreason in all its forms, one might even risk insanity ("ce n'est pas la crainte de la folie qui nous forcera à laisser en berne le drapeau de l'imagination" (p. 18) but one does not, necessarily, go insane. Primitivism, childhood, madness are states which a rational, "civilized" adult cannot and does not wish to experience in their purity.

Michel Carrouges explains that "Le surréalisme n'est pas pur délire, mais exploration du délire, ce qui est bien différent."[4] True as this may be, it underestimates the dangers of a "promenade perpétuelle en pleine zone interdite," dangers of which Breton was fully aware, as his remarks so often show. Speaking of the Surrealist furor in the Seconde Manifeste, he says, "Et qu'on comprenne bien qu'il ne s'agit pas d'un simple regroupement des mots ou d'une redistribution capricieuses des images visuelles, mais de la recréation d'un état qui n'ait plus rien à envier à l'aliénation mentale" (p. 209). Even in a much later article on Artaud, whose own experience of almost ten years in an asylum might or might not be seen as a warning, Breton insists that the highest privilege of poetry "est d'étendre son empire bien au-delà des bornes fixées par la raison humaine."[5] Playing with reason and

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[4]André Breton et les données fondamentales du surréalisme (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), p. 108.

[5]Perspective cavaliere, ed. Marguerite Bonnet (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 171.

folly must be seen as part of the constant dialectical search for that hypothetical point which will resolve the conflicts between the extremes of life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the communicable and the incommunicable. But, given the acknowledged dangers, what did this land on the other side of the mirror offer?

Of first importance is the possibility of freedom and a certain moral purity. The insane lead an existence out of time, free from material concerns, from criticism, even free from the indignities inflicted on them. For the madman and the child, "les pires conditions matérielles sont excellentes. Les bois sont blancs ou noirs, on ne dormira jamais."[6] Like the young man at Saint-Dizier, the insane can actively transform the world, changing carnage into a macabre game, or they have the power of the patient who, in a short dialogue in the Premier Manifeste, is free to ignore his age and name and is even able, by the strangeness of his responses, to force himself on the attention of his doctor (p. 50). Surely an ability to impose one's will on circumstances and people, or simply to ignore both, are prime requisites of freedom.

The moral purity of the insane is a result of their paradoxical freedom:

> Par un bouleversant effet dialectique, le claustration, le renoncement à tous profits comme à toutes vanités,

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[6] Manifestes, p. 16.

> en dépit de ce qu'ils présentent individuellement de pathétique, sont ici les garantes de l'authenticité totale qui fait défaut partout ailleurs et dont nous sommes de jour en jour plus altérés.[7]

The insane are never constrained or smothered by a "reasonable" goal and this total liberty gives their art a majesty which is found only among primitives. Liberty of spirit leads to liberty of expression and, quite naturally, Breton sees in the cultivation of folly great potential for poetry. In the "Cinquantenaire de l'hystérie" (on which he collaborated with Aragon), hysteria is described as the greatest poetic discovery of the end of the nineteenth century. At the moment when the very term is open to question, Breton and Aragon present the following definition:

> L'hystérie est un état mental plus ou moins irréductible se caractérisant par la subversion des rapports qui s'établissent entre le sujet et le monde moral duquel il croit pratiquement relever, en dehors de tout système délirant. Cet état mental est fondé sur le besoin d'une séduction réciproque, qui explique les miracles hâtivement acceptés de la suggestion (ou contre-suggestion) médicale. L'hystérie n'est pas un phénomène pathologique et peut, à tous égards, être considérée comme un moyen suprême d'expression.[8]

To prove the point they publish photographs taken at the Salpêtrière of a young patient in superb erotic-coquettish poses. Breton even uses his opinions on hysteria to make a point about poetry, in his essay on Gaspard de la nuit. He expresses his distrust of critics, psychiatric or literary,

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[7] La Clé des champs, p. 274.

[8] See Chapter II above, note 22. This essay is reprinted in Maurice Nadeau, Histoire du surréalisme (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964), pp. 284-85.

who must categorize and explain according to generalities: "On sait aujourd'hui q'il n'y a pas 'd'état mental hystérique' [probably a reference to Janet's title] et je suis bien près de croire qu'il n'y a pas non plus d'état mental romantique." For the sake of certain ends, the Romantic strikes a pose, he follows a mode, as does anyone, including hysterics. Generalizations cannot be made about their expressions from that. Each work (and each individual) should be taken as is.[9]

L'Immaculée conception, written in collaboration with Paul Eluard, is an attempt to illustrate by simulation the poetry of madness. In the middle of a series of other poems representing a conception not at all immaculate: a sordid round of birth, copulation, and death; habit, sameness, lack of wonder; in the middle of all this are the "possessions,"[10] the only light of life. These are simulations of "la débilité mentale," "la manie aiguë," "la paralysie générale," "le délire d'interprétation," and "la démence précoce." A comparison of a few lines can clearly show the contrast in tone between the section devoted to "life" and the section devoted to "possession." La

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[9] In Les Pas perdus, pp. 82-85. This essay was published in 1920--eight years before "Le Cinquaintenaire de l'hystérie."

[10] One need only read "L'Art des fous, la clé des champs," in La Clé des champs, p. 270, to see how Breton was fully aware of the ancient connotations of madness and possession. Like Erasmus, he takes great pleasure in the paradox of folly "possessed" with a knowledge of total reality far greater than that of the philosophers.

Conception begins: "Un jour compris entre deux jours, et comme d'habitude, pas de nuit sans étoile, le ventre long de la femme monte, c'est une pierre et la seule visible, la seul véritable, dans la cascade"; La Naissance: "Le calcul des probabilités se confond avec l'enfant"; La Vie:

> Il a encore le souvenir du lendemain, le souvenir d'aventures atroces dans un brouillard de pendu. Il sait qu'il a été dénoncé, qu'un garde-fous est désormais autour de lui pour l'empêcher de se jeter dans l'horloge inutile qui s'est mise à marquer les heures.

Here, force of habit is reassuring, love is a problem to be solved by thirty-two absurdly named positions. By contrast, the "possessions" are a breath of fresh air, full of play on words, striking absurdities, the exhuberant rhetoric of delusions of grandeur. Unlike the sterile gymnastics of "L'Amour," for example, the "Essai de simulation de la paralysie générale" is a magnificent hymne to "ma grande adorée belle comme tout sur la terre:"

> Tu n'as pas à attendre la surprise que je veux te faire pour ton anniversaire qui tombe aujourd'hui le même jour que le mien--je te la fais tout de suite puisque j'ai attendu quinze fois l'an mille avant de te faire la surprise de te demander de penser à moi à cache-cache--je veux que tu penses à moi ma jeune femme éternelle en riant. J'ai compté avant de m'endormir des nuées et des nuées de chars plein de betteraves pour le soleil et je veux te mener la nuit sur la plage d'astrakan qu'on est en train de construire à deux horizons pour tes yeux de pétrole à faire la guerre je t'y conduirai par des chemins de diamants pavés de primevères d'émeraudes et le manteau d'hermine dont je veux te couvrir est un oiseau de proie les diamants que tes pieds fouleront je les ai fait tailler en forme de papillon.[11]

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[11]All citations are from Paul Eluard, Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Gallimard, Collection "Pléiade," 1968), I, 305-56. No specific page references are necessary since

In the essay of explanation prefacing "Les Possessions," Breton and Eluard insist that their simulations are not a pastiche of texts from actual cases, but an honest attempt to prove that a normal man poetically prepared is capable of reproducing all the verbal expressions of mental illness, without being ill himself and without compromising his own sanity. They invite comparison of these texts with other Surrealist writings and with the actual writings of the insane. Finally, they emphasize their satisfaction with the exercise as a poetic one, which "remplacerait avantageusement la ballade, le sonnet, l'épopée, le poème sans queue ni tête et autre genres caducs." The "Lettre à A. Rolland de Renéville" in response to his review of L'Immaculée conception is proof that Breton took these remarks seriously. Again, the question of moral purity enters, as he suggests that the simulations may be an antidote to the pernicious tendency of automatic writing to become self-conscious and literary.[12]

Concentrating on the poetry of madness in this way may present a certain danger by suggesting that Breton

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the passages are easily found. According to Dr. Henri Ey, when Breton and Eluard attempt to imitate "la Paralysie Générale," "Ils echouent entièrement" ("La Psychiatrie devant le surréalisme," L'Evolution Psychiatrique, 4 [1948], 48). Unfortunately, he does not explain how the experiment is a failure. May we assume that the others were not?

[12]Roland de Renéville's review "Dernier état de la poésie surréaliste" appeared in La Nouvelle Revue Française of January, 1932, and is partially reprinted in the complete works of Eluard, I, 1426-27.

sentimentalizes a state which, obviously, is not ideal. This would be to forget his sense of dialectic. It is in Nadja, especially, that he agonizes over the beauties and dangers of "la plus grande liberté d'esprit," dispelling any suspicions of sentimentality. It should be noted immediately that Nadja is about its author, not essentially about the woman who inspires its title. This is shown in the opening words, "qui suis-je" and explained in the opening pages. The conventional novel is a form to be despised, according to Breton. Only works which in some way reveal the author are of any value to him (with the one exception of Les Chants de Maldoror). The first section of Nadja (to p. 68)[13] is an account of Breton's actions, his way of life between 1918 and 1926--up to the moment he meets Nadja. His is an existence analogous to the mental life of a person who is free-associating or dreaming: there is no rational control, time is of little importance; he wanders aimlessly, deliberately not selecting his entertainments; people and objects come and go without apparent cause. The style of life is reflected in the style of the book, which is a history recorded "sans ordre préétabli, et selon le caprice de l'heure qui laisse surnager ce qui surnage" (p. 22), or as Breton explains in his preface of 1962, "le ton adopté pour le récit se calque sur celui de l'observation médicale, entre toutes neuro-psychiatrique,

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[13]Paris: Gallimard, 1964.

qui tend à garder trace de tout ce qu'examen et interrogatoire peuvent livrer . . ." (p. 6). The actions described, then, are characterized by a maximum of "disponibilité" until Breton meets Nadja, the quintessentially "disponible."

Nadja is the "âme errante," the embodiment of (potential) hope and desire. She has adopted the name Nadja "parce qu'en russe c'est le commencement due mot espérance, et parce que ce n'en est que le commencement" (p. 74). At the same time, she is full of potential disaster. Her whole history is one of impulsive acts. She eats wherever she happens to be, wanders the streets, devoid of any security. To amuse herself, she plays little games of free association, starting with a name or a number and proceeding with anything that comes into her head. And this is more than a game: "c'est ainsi que je me parle quand je suis seule, que je me raconte toutes sortes d'histoires. Et pas seulement de vaines histoires: c'est même entièrement de cette façon que je vis." Breton comments in a note: "Ne touche-t-on pas là au terme extrême de l'aspiration surréaliste, à sa plus forte idée limite?" (pp. 84-85).

In the total freedom of her actions, Nadja departs from the point where most people hardly dare hope to arrive. Her eventual madness is attributed by him to the fact that she lost "la faveur de cet instinct de conservation" which was necessary to keep her attached to normal society; but this does not negate her experience. She served the cause

of human emancipation, "La seule cause qu'il soit digne de servir."

> Nadja était faite pour la servir, ne fût-ce qu'en démontrant qu'il doit se fomenter autour de chaque être un complot très particulier qui n'existe pas seulement dans son imagination, dont il conviendrait, au simple point de vue de la connaissance, de tenir compte, et aussi, mais beaucoup plus dangereusement, en passant la tête, puis un bras entre les barreaux ainsi écartés de la logique, c'est-à-dire de la plus haïssable des prisons. (p. 166)

For Nadja, who had escaped the prison of logic, there might not be much difference between the inside and the outside of an asylum; but for Breton there must be. Thus, when he insists that he will continue to be "disponible" it is with remembrance of "la folie qu'on enferme" clearly in mind, for it is just after his "digression on madness" and just before the story of Monsieur Delouit (who, in his distraction and his rather heroic blood-spattered single-mindedness, is an appropriate black-humor image of Breton and his co-seekers)[14] that he makes the following invocation:

> Que la grande inconscience vive et sonore qui m'inspire mes seuls actes probants dispose à tout jamais de tout ce qui est moi. Je m'ôte à plaisir toute chance de lui reprendre ce qu'ici à nouveau je lui donne. Je ne veux encore une fois reconnaître qu'elle, je veux ne compter que sur elle et presque à loisir parcourir ses jetées immenses, fixant moi-même un point brillant que je sais être dans mon oeil et qui m'épargne de me heurter à ses ballots de nuit. (p. 180)

Again, the motif is of wandering or exploration in obscure

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[14]Roger Shattuck in "The Nadja File," Cahiers Dada Surréalisme, 1 (1966), 49-56, completely ignores the context of this story, makes no mention of Breton's diatribe against psychiatry and mental hospitals, and thus, in my opinion, falsifies much of the book.

regions and it is striking that the landscape here is totally internal. The wanderer, the jetty, and, most important, the "point brillant," a sort of lighthouse giving direction and warning of danger--all are part of the speaker; the adventure, the danger, and the salvation are all within. This is why Nadja is important to and for Breton. He is not sure which is the real she: the "génie libre," the spirit of the air, or the girl who slips through the looking glass. From this, of course, arises the whole emotional and moral complexity of the book.[15]

This leads to a neglected question: to what extent is Nadja a product of Breton's reading of psychological case histories? We know that he read Kraepelin, whose Introduction à la psychiatrie clinique, a classification of types of mental diseases, is full of fascinating descriptions of symptoms. Even more important was Flournoy's Des Indes à la planète Mars, not a clinical case history, it is true, but an extensive psychological study of a medium. Finally, he knew of Janet's elaborate treatises on hysteria and neurosis, particularly De l'angoisse à l'extase and Les Obsessions et la psychasthénie.

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[15]After writing these pages, I discovered Harold Wylie's "Breton, Schizophrenia and Nadja," The French Review, 43 (1970), 100-106. I agree with much of what he writes, but not with his conclusion that Nadja was "an ideal for which Breton was unable to abandon his own material interests." A good part of the poignancy of that story comes from Breton's gradual disenchantment with Nadja --his realization that she is not an ideal. The Surrealist "furor" is not uncontrolled, any more than "L'Amour fou" is promiscuous. Therein lies the difficulty of the game.

Both Flournoy and Janet published drawings, paintings, samples of writing and photographs with their case histories. The first volume of Les Obsessions et la psychasthénie includes classifications of and comment on symptoms, the second contains case histories of a number of patients including one, as Anna Balakian has pointed out,[16] called Nadia.

Janet's patient bears very little resemblance to Nadja:

> Nadia est une jeune fille d'une famille riche et très distinguée, elle est elle-même extrêmement bien douée. Son intelligence est remarquable, elle parle couramment le français, l'anglais, l'allemand et le russe, elle lit l'italien et l'espagnol. Ses connaissanaces littéraires dans toutes les langues sont considérables, et elle lit encore énormément. A bien des points de vue, elle est une artiste remarquable, capable de dessiner un peu et de composer des motifs de décoration. Elle est surtout extrêmement musicienne soit au point de vue de l'exécution, soit même au point de vue de la composition. Ses compositions musicales, que nous avons fait apprécier par des personnes compétentes, ont été trouvés intéressantes et dénotent surtout de grandes connaissances musicales. Ajoutons qu'elle a un goût très sûr, beaucoup de distinction et d'élégance.[17]

The principal symptom of this woman is an intense prudery, a "honte de corps" which causes her to starve herself so as to render her body undesirable. Neither her refinement nor her prudery find a clear parallel in Breton's heroine. And yet, comments such as the following must strike anyone

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[16] André Breton, Magus of Surrealism, pp. 111-12. Professor Balakian suggests that Nadia's case history is in De l'angoisse à l'extase. She is mentioned there, but her history is actually found in the second volume of Les Obsessions et la psychasthénie (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1903).

[17] Les Obsessions et la psychasthénie, II, 368-69.

familiar with Nadja:

> Un amour fou pour un grand musicien complique les choses. Le talent de ce musicien, qu'elle était fort capable d'apprécier avait déterminé chez elle une violente émotion et cette émotion, comme il arrive souvent chez les psychasthéniques, l'avait relevée, remontée, lui avait rendu un peu le sentiment de la réalité, l'avait quelque peu débarrassée de ses pactes. (II, 371)

Even if the patient Nadia does not bear close resemblance to Breton's heroine, the composite, clinical picture of Janet's "scrupuleux" does, in many ways. First of all, these patients can be quite rational most of the time, but are capable of being completely dominated by their obsession and their hallucinations (I, 65-66). Generally, they are fully aware of their neurosis. Theirs is an "obsession avec critique" (I, 67) as, of course, is Nadja's. Janet differentiates the hallucinations of the "scrupuleux" from those of hysterics by showing that the former tend to be vague and symbolic: "elles ne sont pas constituées par la représentation d'un objet intéressant en lui-même, mais par l'évocation d'un signe qui résume une quantité d'autres pensées" (I, 94). This applies to Nadja's visions of the "flower of love," of herself as Mélusine, of Breton as the flaming hand. Often these patients have a "sentiment de domination" where they feel themselves controlled by the will of another (I, 273-74) as Nadja feels herself controlled by Breton (p. 89). These patients have trouble fixing their attention, cannot keep an appointment on time (I, 338ff.; Nadja, p. 155). Reading

through the sections of Volume I of Les Obsessions et la psychasthénie, we will find descriptions of a "sentiment de dédoublement," a "sentiment de désorientation," a "sentiment d'isolement," a "sentiment de l'imaginaire, de l'irréel," and a "sentiment de disparition du temps," all of which find an echo in Nadja.

I do not mean to suggest that we have in Janet's case history the core of Breton's book. I have no doubt that Nadja is essentially biographical, as the author says, and that the mysterious woman who gives it its title was real, whatever that means. I simply wish to add another dimension to a work of art whose genesis, like its form, must be recognized as immensely complex. I would even hint that comparison with a traditional psychological case history may be invited by Breton. If Nadja approaches one in some ways, it also distinguishes itself by incorporating, even emphasizing, the case of the author himself, as well as showing an uncharacteristic admiration for the patient. It raises questions about truth which amount to a critique of medical "scientific objectivity."

It was the objectivity of Charcot and the members of his school which allowed them to parade patients before a panel of experts pointing out symptoms which, according to Janet himself, the patients probably learned to exhibit.[18] It is this same attitude which allowed Janet

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[18] Les Médications psychologiques, Vol. I, Part II, Chapter III.

to amuse himself with the antics of his suggestible charges and to comment on them in print as he does in L'Automatisme psychologique, speaking of the "rêves mimés" of one patient:

> L'hallucination "d'un voyage," comme elle disait, devenait chez Lucie une véritable comédie avec milles péripéties inattendues. Non seulement elle éprouvait le mal de mer sur les bateaux . . . mais elle se figurait tomber dans l'eau, nageait sur le parquet et se relevait dans une île déserte en grelottant. Naturellement je lui ai fait faire les plus belles expéditions sur la lune, au centre de la terre, etc.: il me suffisait de lui donner un thème sur lequel son imagination brodait les complications les plus extravagantes. Je ne puis insister sur ces spectacles comiques; ils sont toujours surprenant à voir, mais ils sont maintenant trop connus pour qu'on les décrive. (p. 155)

This lack of respect for the dignity of the patients was precisely what made Breton want to pass them a revolver. It shows the relevance of the question which he posed to the Chief Psychiatrists of mental asylums: "combien êtes-vous, par example, pour qui le rêve du dément précoce, les images dont il est proie sont autre chose qu'une salade de mots?" His experiments of simulating madness, Breton explains in his "Lettre à A. Rolland de Renéville," were necessary and practical precisely because "la psychiatrie, toujours hypnotisée par le contenu manifeste des élucubrations de malades, n'a guère entrepris jusqu'à ce jour que le classement."[19] And although that was written in 1932,

Artaud

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[19]The "Lettre aux médecins-chefs des asiles de fous" was published in La Révolution Surréaliste, No. 3 (1925) and is reprinted in Nadeau's Histoire du surréalisme, pp. 212-13.

With these two comments juxtaposed, note what Maeder says in "Sur le mouvement psychanalytique . . . ," a possible source of Breton's early knowledge of Freud (see Chapter II above, note 7). Discussing another of his

as early as 1924 in the first Manifeste, two years before he met Nadja, Breton had already suggested that poets might be equally as qualified as psychiatrists for studying and perhaps helping control those strange forces in the depths of our souls which are "capable d'augmenter celles de la surface, ou de lutter victorieusement contre elles" (p. 23).

As another possible example of Breton's view of himself with regard to madness and medicine, consider the second of a series of dream recitations which he published in the first number of La Révolution Surréaliste, in December, 1924. Arriving in Paris and having made use of one of the ordinary kind, he discovers an "urinoir volant" on which he rides until he realizes that the drive is a danger to passengers and pedestrians (though they do not seem to notice). He descends and persuades the "conducteur imprudent" to follow him, obviously in order to give him a medical examination.

> C'est un homme de moins de trente ans qui, interrogé, se montre plus qu'évasif. Il se donne pour médecin militaire, il est bien en possession d'un permis de conduire. Etranger à la ville où nous sommes il déclare arriver "de la brousse" sans pouvoir autrement préciser.

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articles entitled "La Langue d'un aliéné," a study of a paranoid, he says, "L'examen attentif de ce charabia, la comparaison avec les communications actuelles écrites et verbales, montra une constance dans les éléments de cette 'salade de mots' suivant l'expression classique de Forel." Maeder was able to discover a complicated system of ideas and clear proof of intense intellectual activity in this peculiar language. "Les psychiatres se sont laissés trop longtemps retenir par les apparences, et trop souvent contentés de diagnostiquer et de classer comme les botanistes du temps de Linné" (L'Année Psychologique, 18 [1912], 411-12).

> Tout médecin qu'il est j'essaie de le convaincre qu'il peut être malade mais il m'énumère les symptômes d'un grand nombre de maladies, en commençant par les différentes fièvres: symptômes qu'il ne présente pas, qui sont d'ailleurs de l'ordre clinique le plus simple. Il termine son exposé par ces mots: "Tout au plus suis-je peut être paralytique général!"

Both driver and examiner could, according to Freud's theories, represent the dreamer himself and this does not seem out of the question here, since Breton was twenty-eight when he wrote the dream, had been a "médecin auxilaire" in the army, and did, some might say, come from the bush (darkest Normandy). This amusing dream seems to show him once again obscuring the traditional distinction between doctor and patient, sane and insane, himself and persons like Nadja.

I believe that we can get a new perspective on Nadja if we keep this attitude in mind and remember that Breton constantly insists on the relativity of madness, refusing to evaluate morally the various states of lucidity. For him, total insanity like suicide or the ultimate Surrealist act (about which more ink is spilled than any Surrealist will ever spill blood)[20] is an extreme response to desperate circumstances. Madness is not a static state, and at any rate Breton demands for himself and others the right to madness since "L'absence bien connue de frontière entre la non-folie et la folie ne me dispose pas à accorder une valeur différente aux perceptions et aux idées qui sont

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[20]See Manifestes, p. 155.

le fait de l'une ou de l'autre" (Nadja, p. 169). But he knows that others have the power to judge him as they judged Nadja, and this, I believe, accounts for the violence of the explosion which follows his announcement of Nadja's "imprisonment," when he vents his rage and his fear on the psychiatric establishment, a force of repression:

> Le procédé qui consiste à venir vous surprendre la nuit, à vous passer la camisole de force ou de toute autre manière à vous maîtriser, vaut celui de la police, qui consiste à vous glisser un revolver dans la poche. . . . Le mépris qu'en général je porte à la psychiatrie, à ses pompes et à ses oeuvres, est tel que je n'ai pas encore osé m'enquérir de ce qu'il était advenu de Nadja. (p. 164)

Surréalism, in fact, waged a constant war against the attitude of society and psychiatry towards madness. It begins with comments in the Premier Manifeste to the effect that the insane are only locked up because of certain acts they have committed--that madness is definable only arbitrarily and unjustly (p. 17). In the "Lettre aux Médecin-chefs des asiles de fous" we read: "La répression des réactions antisociales est aussi chimérique qu'inacceptable en son principe. Tous les actes individuels sont antisociaux. Les fous sont les victimes individuelles par excellence de la dictature sociale. . . ." In Nadja, Breton suggests that under the care of men like Professor Claude of Saint-Anne, "avec ce front ignare et cet air buté qui le caractérisent," who interprets actions according to his a priori diagnosis, no one could help wanting to kill a

doctor or two, if only to have a little peace.[21]

This last comment caused some excitement in the medical world, as may be seen from the reports appended to the Seconde Manifeste, remarkable at once for their haughty dismissal of Surrealism and for their exaggerated fear for the effect of Breton's words. Pierre Janet remarks (see above for an idea of the purely psychological connotation of his words): "Les ouvrages des surréalistes sont surtout des confessions d'obsédés et de douteurs." Breton's response to the response of the psychiatrists was "La Médecine mentale devant le surréalisme" published in Le Surrealisme au Service de la Révolution, No. 2, of October, 1930. Regarding certain fears for the safety of psychiatrists expressed by one doctor, he comments: "Il est clair que les psychiâtres, habitués à traiter les aliénés comme des chiens, s'étonnent de ne pas être autorisés, même en dehors de leur service, à les abattre." He charges that the recent trend of psychological medicine has been to denounce more and more stridently what Bleuler called l'autisme (egocentricity), "dénonciation bourgeoisement des plus commodes puisqu'elle permet de considérer comme pathologique tout ce qui n'est pas chez l'homme l'adaptation

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[21] P. 158. Dr. Jacques Lacan wrote in a letter to me of February 17, 1971: "Les attaques de Breton contre le professeur Claude m'ont toujours paru . . . très drôles [sic]." Professor Claude was the supervisor of Dr. Lacan's thesis. This attack seems not to have disturbed the amicable relations of Lacan and Breton, however, which, according to Lacan, "n'ont jamais pris pour truchement la psychanalyse."

pure et simple aux conditions extérieures de la vie."

If Breton chose to, or was able to, stop at exploration of the land of delirium, other people associated with Surrealism went farther and their experiences tend to support his views. Works like the Lettres de Rodez and Au Pays des Tarahumara of Artaud, or En Bas of Leonora Carrington are examples. Artaud's letters were written while he was in the hospital at Rodez; Leonora Carrington's account, three years after she had been interned for some months in Spain. In neither case is there any sense of the experience as degenerating or cretinizing in itself--the greatest horror according to both was in the treatment. The opening paragraphs of En Bas are quite a striking restatement of some of the ideas expressed by Breton:

> Je dois revivre cette expérience, parce que je crois vous être utile en le faisant, et je crois aussi que vous m'aiderez à voyager de l'autre côté de cette frontière en me conservant lucide, et en me permettant de mettre et de retirer à volonté le masque qui me préservera contre l'hostilité du conformisme.
>
> Avant d'aborder les faits de cette expérience, je tiens à dire que l'arrêt prononcé contre moi par la société à ce moment-là était probablement, et même sûrement, un bien car j'ignorais l'importance de la santé, c'est-à-dire la nécessité absolue d'avoir un corps bien portant pour éviter le désastre dans la libération de l'esprit. Plus importante encore, la nécessité que d'autres soient avec moi, que, de nos connaissances, nous nous alimentions les uns les autres afin de constituer l'Entier.[22]

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[22] En Bas (Paris: Editions Fontaine, 1945), pp. 7-8. Pierre Mabille, a medical doctor himself, to whom the "vous" in these lines apparently refers, commented on the text in "A Propos de En Bas de Leonora Carrington," Fontaine, 56 (1946), 626-30. He says, "les souvenirs qu'elle en [of her experiences in the hospital] avait conservés lui paraissaient à la fois singulièrement lumineux (quant à la

Artaud's letters from Rodez to Henry Parisot are brilliant and strange, full of fantasies, it seems, but always lucid in expression. His contribution to the special Surrealist issue of Les Quatre Vents, written after he had left the hospital, is a fine complement to the passage above. It includes the poem "Les Malades et les médecins" (partially quoted at the beginning of this chapter) and "Les Treuils de sang," a description of waking up from a delirium, straitjacketed, in Rodez:

> Alors les murs et le lieu me revinrent, et je compris que contre tous ces efforts de traction criminelle hors de la terre, j'étais purement et simplement là, dans le dortoir du quartier des pensionnaires de l'Hôpital psychiatrique de Rodez.
>
> Et il me revint qu'il y a un point de Thibet où des moines abjects usent des potences et de treuils dans une certaine vallée qu'ils ont appelé l'Uterus de la forme humaine et où ils ont la prétention de retenir enchainées toutes les consciences d'hommes qui veulent échapper à leur notion particulière de l'homme aussi bien sur le Plan Physique que sur le Plan Métaphysique, organique, intellectuel, névrotique et sensoriel.[23]

The motifs in common in these statements and Breton's might be reduced to the single formula: madness is a sort of poetic non-conformity which should not be punished.

When Breton publishes his "Hommage à Antonin Artuad" (1946), he appends a moving note which shows that he is

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perception claire qu'elle avait possédée à certains instants) et effroyables comme un affreux cauchemar si elle se référait aux heures d'épouvante, aux chocs thérapeutics subis." He explains how some of the ideas in his Miroir du merveilleux, notably the lack of frontiers between the world of physical reality and the world of thought, corresponded with impressions she had during the time she was "hors de la raison commune."

[23] Les Quatre Vents, 8 (1947), 20.

fully aware of Artaud's continued belief in his hallucinations; but this awareness in no way reduces his appreciation of the man, nor the rage he feels, and felt twenty years earlier against,

> une institution dont nous ne cesserons de dénoncer le caractère anachronique et barbare et dont l'existence même--avec tout ce qu'elle couve de camps de concentration et de chambres de torture--porte à elle seule, contre la prétendue "civilisation" d'aujourd'hui, une accusation décisive.[24]

And the objections presented in these last pages should not be dismissed as the fulminations of paranoia in varying degrees, for Dr. Gaston Ferdière points out that psychiatrists in 1950 and after would probably agree with Breton, in marked contrast to their predecessors of 1926. In fact, says Dr. Ferdière, "Ce sont les surréalistes qui nous ont appris à repenser la psychiatrie, à repenser le psychiatre . . . et à approfondir son rôle et sa fonction."[25]

What is the importance of Freud to all of this? Certainly, he is not exempt, as a psychiatrist, from Breton's attacks on the profession, nor would he be any more likely than Janet to accept the definition of a madman as someone who had "un compte à regler avec la raison humaine" or someone whose insanity depended on an

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[24] La Clé des champs, p. 101.

[25] "Surréalisme et aliénation mentale," in Ferdinand Alquié, ed., Entretiens sur le surréalisme (Paris: Mouton, 1968), p. 303. I must mention that Ferdière, who treated Artaud, is a very controversial figure, apparently having been suspected of keeping Artaud as an interesting object of study. I cannot comment.

insufficient sense of self-preservation. This concept of madness as a choice made by an individual, indeed the whole idea of madness as a liberation of the spirit would probably not be accepted by psychoanalysis or any other school of psychology, all of which tend to think of insanity as determined, the differences between the schools often depending on whether they consider the determination to be predominantly physiological, hereditary or psychological. All the same, Freud's theories of the function of the unconscious and his methods of approaching mental illness were obviously an improvement in Breton's eyes. His maxim, "It is essential to abandon the overvaluation of the property of being conscious before it becomes possible to form any correct view of the origin of what is mental"[26] tends to contradict Janet and is often echoed, slightly and significantly changed, in Breton's assertion that one can have no idea of "reality" if one only concentrates on what is rational.

Of primary importance (see Chapter I and Appendix I)

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[26] The Interpretation of Dreams, in Works, V, 612. A more comprehensive statement of the same idea may be found in a text which Breton could have read as early as 1922: "Il convient de noter que nos productions oniriques --nos rêves--ressemblent intimement aux productions des maladies mentales, d'une part, et que, d'autre part, elles sont compatibles avec une santé parfaite. Celui qui se borne à s'étonner des illusions des sens, des idées bizarres et de toutes les fantasmagories que nous offre le rêve, au lieu de chercher à les comprendre, n'a pas la moindre chance de comprendre les productions anormales des états psychiques morbides" (Cinq leçons sur la psychanalyse [Paris: Payot, 1966], p. 37--this is a reprint of the original translation of Yves Le Lay).

is the fact that Freud saw the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious as a dynamic one, a struggle going on at all times in everyone, so that at certain moments and not just in sickness, anyone's unconscious can temporarily overcome the defense of the ego. The force of this is to emphasize the relativity of madness and to lift a great deal of the weight of moral condemnation which Janet's theories tended to place on unconscious acts. Freud gave promise of a movement away from the purely objective study of patients. The psychoanalytic method, by attempting to interpret the special language of automatism, dreams and delusion, was doing something more than classify. At least it held up the possibility of understanding the "salade de mots" of delirium and saw the expression of the patient as potentially meaningful--not to be entirely divorced from "normal" thought processes. It is no accident that Breton uses psychoanalytic terminology in criticizing psychiatrists for being hypnotized by the "contenu manifeste" of deliria.

Freud's one incursion into the study of real psychosis was concerning a case of paranoia. His comments were based on a written work: the published autobiography of a judge, Dr. Schreber.[27] It had already been observed by Kraepelin and Bleuler that paranoia is characterized by systematized delusion. Freud attempted to show the reasons

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[27]"Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia" (1911), in Works, XII, 9-79.

for this, to more precisely define paranoia by suggesting that the systematized delirium was a result of the patient's attempt to repress homosexual and narcissistic tendencies. Freud's work is important for us essentially because it directly influenced a study well known to the Surrealists: the thesis of Dr. Jacques Lacan, De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité. Lacan, it will be remembered, contributed to Surrealist periodicals in the 1930's and is still probably the best-known psychoanalyst in France.[28]

Dr. Lacan's study is of "Aimée" who, over a period of about ten years, elaborated a complex system of delusions representing herself as an intellectual and suggesting danger to her child involving hurt or abduction. Finally separated from husband and child, living in Paris, she attacked with a knife an actress who did not know her, on whom she had projected her delusions of persecution. She was an intelligent woman able to write, just before the crisis in her illness, two works with some remarkably valuable passages: the first a pastoral of sorts based on her peasant childhood (dedicated to the Prince of Wales, object of platonic sexual fantasies), the second a satire. Lacan shows how her psychosis was affected by a paranoid mother and by relations with an elder sister, how it has undertones

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[28]The thesis was published in Paris in 1932. Lacan also wrote "Le Problème du style et la conception psychiatrique des formes paranoiques de l'experience" for Minotaure, No. 1 (1932).

of homosexuality directed towards a dominating friend, how finally Aimée strikes out at an overdetermined object-person representing her sister, her friend, and herself (her idealized image of herself as a woman of the arts). This study, and particularly the description given of the elaboration of Aimée's delusions, influenced Dali especially. Lacan, for example, explains that "contrairement au rêves qui doivent être interprétés, le délire est par lui-même activité interprétative de l'inconscient. Et c'est là un sens tout nouveau qui s'offre au terme de délire d'interprétation" (p. 310). This clearly supports Dali's ideas about the activity of "paranoïaque critique" as opposed to the passivity of automatism. Aimée is able to incorporate virtually anything into the fabric of her delirium: gestures, chance occurrences, newspaper articles, innocent passages from books, etc. Speaking also of the "identification itérative" of Aimée's persecutors, Lacan says:

> C'est là qu'on voit fleurir à souhait les idées de recommencement, de répétition indéfinie des mêmes événements dans le temps et dans l'espace, les démultiplications ubiquistes d'un même personnage, les cycles de mort et de résurrection que le sujet attribue à sa personne, les doubles et triples réalités qu'il reconnaît concurrement. . . . N'est-ce pas le même principe qui se reflète jusque dans les troubles de la perception, par la répétition, la multiplicité, l'extensivité des phenomènes de fausses reconnaissances, de symbolismes menaçants, de significations personnelles?" (pp. 304-305)

The relevance of this for Dali's painting is obvious, for we can see in his work plastic expression of the same

phenomena. Examples of repetition are not hard to find (the lion's head in "Accommodation of Desire," for example); the sense of menace, the multiplicity of personal significations can be seen in the Wilhelm Tell series, Dali having explained the symbolic connection of his father and Wilhelm Tell; double and triple realities are presented not only symbolically but pictorially in any of those paintings where figures merge with and emerge from the landscape or from other figures--where any shape can represent at once a person and an object. And these, of course, are not preoccupations of Dali only. The Surrealist movement in general was fascinated with the whole question of metamorphosis, multiple perception, and multiple significance.

Breton himself, having described in Les Vases communicants how, at a certain moment, objects, people, and events of the past few days all seem to be overdetermined and interdependent, merging into one event, says: "Que cela puisse, pour certains, friser le délire d'interprétation, je n'y vois pas d'inconvénient, ayant insisté comme je l'ai fait sur les raisons de mon peu d'équilibre d'alors."[29] He is suggesting, in effect, that an "activité paranoïaque-critique" may be the cause of his particular sensation.

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[29] Les Vases communicants (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), p. 110. Breton cites himself or Dali in "Le 'cas' Dali" as saying, "L'activité paranoïaque-critique est une force organisatrice et productive du hasard objectif" (Le Surréalisme et la peinture, p. 135).

Indeed, the whole thesis of Les Vases communicants, based on the capacity of desire to express itself in dream and art and action (see Chapter V), seems to be connected with contemporary studies on paranoia, and is another example of Breton's insistence on the community of all mental processes. It is not surprising, then, to see him using Lacan's thesis in the essay "Le 'cas' Dali" of 1936.

When Lacan discusses the mechanisms of Aimée's disease, he bases his findings solidly on Freud's theories, with specific reference to the analysis of Schreber. I shall only give a very brief summary here, emphasizing those passages which are echoed in Breton's essay. Aimée's trouble is a result of fixation at the period of "narcissisme secondaire," which involves a "reincorporation au moi d'une partie de la libido, déjà projetée sur les objets (objets parentaux principalement)." The stage of secondary narcissism also shows "une fixation affective à l'économie dite sadique-anale" so that Aimée's sexual responses are characterized by a morbid prevalence of "mécanismes d'autopunition" and by what Freud called infant homosexuality "qui répond à l'érotisation des objets fraternels" (p. 262). In this context, Aimée as artist has little importance, but Lacan had shown earlier how her writing reflected her paranoia. Breton, using essentially Lacan's language, avoiding some of the technical jargon, gives greater emphasis to the role of the artist and the function of art as a means of preserving sanity:

> Les artistes présentent en commun avec les malades paranoïaques un certain nombre de ces dispositions, qui tiennent à leur fixation à la période de narcissisme secondaire (reincorporation au moi d'une partie de la libido et, par suite, d'une partie du monde extérieur, cette partie de la libido étant déjà projetée sur les objets doués de valeur subjective, c'est-a-dire essentiellement sur les objets parentaux, d'ou allégement des contraintes répressives, accomodation avec le mécanisme auto-punitif du surmoi). C'est sans doute la mesure même où l'artiste est apte à reproduire, à objectiver par la peinture ou par tout autre moyen les objets extérieure dont il subit douloureusement la contrainte, qu'il échappe pour une grande part à la tyrannie de ces objets et évite de verser dans la psychose proprement dite. La sublimation, qui s'opère en pareil cas, semble le produit simultané, à l'occasion d'un trauma, du besoin de fixation narcissique (de caractère sadique-anal) et des instincts sociaux (érotisation des objets fraternels) appelés à se manifester électivement à cette période." (pp. 130-33)

"Le 'cas' Dali" is not, however, only a repetition of Lacan's (indirectly Freud's) ideas. Breton uses them as the foundation on which to build his own observations. He goes on to show how Dali's originality lies in the fact that he is able to participate in this paranoid action as both actor and spectator, as a paranoid and as a critic, subject and objective observer--as opposed to the true paranoid who is only subject. This, of course, is a good part of the problem with which Breton had been concerned in Nadja. The capacity of self-preservation which he mentions, and which Nadja lacks, must in some way be related to this capacity to be both actor and spectator. It is Breton, after all, who writes the book.

Insofar as Nadja can be considered a study of a woman in the last stages of psychological crisis, the book

shows certain affinities to Lacan's thesis, though it was written some six years earlier. Hallucinations, delusion, the sense of "directed" chance are as pervasive here as in Aimée's case. By publishing Nadja's drawings, Breton illustrates her instant sympathy with Surrealist and primitive art, her sensitivity; but he also illustrates the approach of her breakdown. Nadja, like Aimée, produces her creative work in the last months of illness. Particularly her later drawings are full of symbology, she herself being seen as a siren, always with her back turned and head partly obscured by large animal horns. The horns, snakes, eyes, hands (or gloves), and vases which appear in her drawings may all be interpreted as sexual symbols according to Freud's chapter on symbology in The Interpretation of Dreams. Most striking are the constantly menacing phallic shapes of the snake (one even threatens "La fleur des amants"), horns, and knives. The drawing entitled "L'âme du Blé," with the words A MORT boldly written on it, puns with "l'âme" as kernel of wheat and as the human soul (Nadja was "l'âme errante") and with "la lame," the blade, the object most clearly emphasized in the drawing, threatening decapitation (castration, according to psychoanalytic theory), apparently encouraged by the four figures on the right. Although it is clear that this drawing is meant to be seen as symptomatic, Breton makes no attempt to analyze it or Nadja, obviously because to do so would be of little value to him. His very real interest

in madness has contacts with Janet, Freud, and Lacan, but it is concerned less with madness as it relates to sanity and more with madness as it relates to poetry.

These questions will arise again in Chapter V, where Nadja is seen as one part of a trilogy including Les Vases communicants and L'Amour fou concerned, broadly speaking, with André Breton in psychological crisis. For now, let us concern ourselves with the milder forms of madness displayed in automatism.