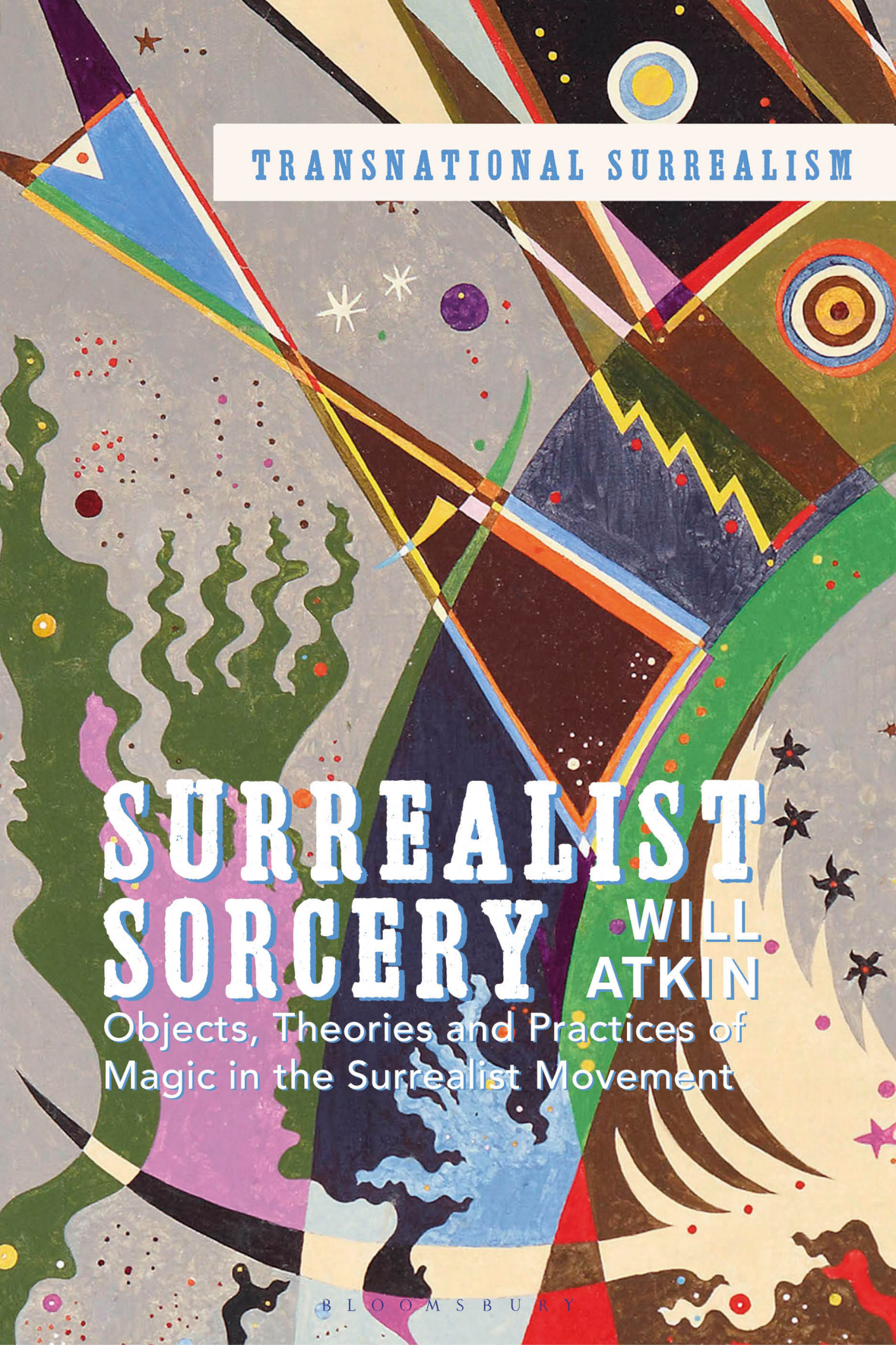

TRANSNATIONAL SURREALISM
SURREALIST SORCERY
WILL ATKIN
Objects, Theories and Practices of Magic in the Surrealist Movement
BLOOMSBURY

Surrealist Sorcery

Transnational Surrealism

Series Editor

Gavin Parkinson (The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, UK)

Exploring all aspects of the Surrealist movement since its establishment in Europe in the 1920s, Transnational Surrealism places particular emphasis on the international scope of the movement and on the long history of Surrealism, extending up to the present day. The series is a venue for scholars from multiple fields to engage with Surrealist history, with a particular focus on themes and concepts from the 1940s onwards, or on the activities of Surrealist groups in areas of the world that lie beyond the usual reach of studies of Surrealism such as Africa, China, Japan, Latin America, Romania and the United States. Monographic studies of individual groups, artists and writers are welcome, especially those that promise to uncover new or relatively overlooked areas of Surrealist activity. Proposals that promote gender and racial diversity in Surrealism studies are particularly encouraged given the fundamental aims of the series.

Advisory Board

Ambra d'Antone, Warburg Institute and The Courtauld Institute of Art, UK
Krzysztof Fijalkowski, Norwich University of the Arts, UK
Kristoffer Noheden, Stockholm University, Sweden
Michael Richardson, joint editor of *The Surrealism Reader* (2015), and Visiting Fellow (honorary) at Goldsmiths, University of London, UK
Abigail Susik, Willamette University, USA

Titles in the Series

Gavin Parkinson, *Robert Rauschenberg and Surrealism: Art, 'Sensibility' and War* (2023)

Surrealist Sorcery

Objects, Theories and Practices of Magic in the Surrealist Movement

Will Atkin

BLOOMSBURY VISUAL ARTS
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY VISUAL ARTS
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY VISUAL ARTS and the Diana logo
are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in Great Britain 2023

Copyright © Will Atkin, 2023

Will Atkin has asserted his right under the Copyright, Designs and
Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Author of this work.

For legal purposes the Acknowledgements on pp. xii–xiii constitute
an extension of this copyright page.

Cover design: Elena Durey
Cover image: Yves Laloy, *Le Grand Casque*, 1952 © ADAGP, Paris/DACS, London
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes. Photo © MBA, Rennes,
Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Jean-Manuel Salingue.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or
by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information
storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc does not have any control over, or responsibility for,
any third-party websites referred to or in this book. All internet addresses given in
this book were correct at the time of going to press. The author and publisher regret
any inconvenience caused if addresses have changed or sites have ceased to exist,
but can accept no responsibility for any such changes.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Atkin, Will, 1991- author.
Title: Surrealist sorcery : objects, theories, and practices of magic in the
surrealist movement / Will Atkin.
Description: London : Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2023. | Series: Transnational
surrealism | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2022060667 (print) | LCCN 2022060668 (ebook) | ISBN 9781350227484
(hardback) | ISBN 9781350227521 (paperback) | ISBN 9781350227491 (pdf) |
ISBN 9781350227507 (epub) | ISBN 9781350227514
Subjects: LCSH: Surrealism. | Art and magic.
Classification: LCC NX456.5.S8 A88 2023 (print) | LCC NX456.5.S8 (ebook) |
DDC 709.04/063–dc23/eng/20230412
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022060667
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022060668

ISBN: HB: 978-1-3502-2748-4
ePDF: 978-1-3502-2749-1
eBook: 978-1-3502-2750-7

Series: Transnational Surrealism

Typeset by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.bloomsbury.com
and sign up for our newsletters.

To Olivia, these imaginative possibilities

Contents

List of illustrations viii
Acknowledgements xii

Introduction: Surrealism, magic and the surrealist object as instrument of magic 1

1 Of gold, meteors, stones and crystals: Alchemy and the object in the works of André Breton, Salvador Dalí and Ithell Colquhoun, 1929–49 17
2 Satanic sorcery: Black magic, demons and vampires in the objects and writings of Ghérasim Luca, 1939–45 49
3 Cosmic magic: Talismans and ciphers in the objects of Victor Brauner, 1940–6 77
4 Primordial myth and magic in the writings of André Breton and Benjamin Péret, 1942–59 109
5 Ritual magic in the masks and fetishes of Mimi Parent and Jean Benoît, 1959–76 137

Conclusion: Surrealist lessons in the study of magic, as past and future craft 169

Notes 176
Index 220

Illustrations

Plates

1 Victor Brauner, *La Pierre philosophale*, 1940
2 Salvador Dalí, *Geological Destiny*, 1933
3 Salvador Dalí, *The Font*, 1930
4 Victor Brauner, *Objet de Contre-Envoûtement*, 1943
5 Victor Brauner, *Portrait de Novalis*, 1943
6 Victor Brauner, *La Charmeuse de serpent*, 1943
7 Poupée Kachina Hopi, *c.* 1850–1950
8 Yves Laloy, *Le Grand casque*, 1951–2
9 Jean Benoît, *Emboîtage pour une tête trophée Mundurucu*, 1968
10 Mimi Parent, *Reliquaire pour un crâne surmodelé du Moyen-Sepik*, 1976

Figures

0.1 Man Ray, *Myself and Her (Moi, elle)*, *c.* 1934 2
0.2 Man Ray, *Aneas Carrying his Father (Énée portant son père)*, *c.* 1934 3
1.1 Ithell Colquhoun, *Alchemical Figure – The Opal (I)*, 1940 18
1.2 Salvador Dalí, *Surrealist Object Functioning Symbolically-Gala's Shoe*, Edition of 1973, Original 1931 (lost) 28
1.3 Salvador Dalí, *Aspect des nouveaux objets 'psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques'*, 1933 33
1.4 Iron meteorite, Campo del Cielo, Argentina 33
1.5 Salvador Dalí, *Shades of Night Descending*, 1931 36
1.6 Salvador Dalí, *Symbiosis of a Head of Seashells*, 1931 37
1.7 Brassaï, *La Maison que j'habite, ma vie, ce que j'écris*, 1934 39
1.8 Unknown photographer, *Cristaux*, *c.* 1934–5 41
1.9 Ithell Colquhoun, *Alchemical Figure – The Androgyne*, 1941 45
1.10 Ithell Colquhoun, *Alchemical Figure*, 1940 46
1.11 Ithell Colquhoun, *Alchemical Figure*, 1940 47
2.1 Unknown Photographer, Members of the Iron Guard marching along Piaţa Revoluţiei, 1940 50

2.2 Unknown Photographer, The War Ministry in Bucharest decorated with portraits of Adolf Hitler, King Michael I, Ion Antonescu and Benito Mussolini, 1941 51
2.3 Gherasim Luca, *The Statue of the Libido*, photographed by Théodore César Brauner, *c*. 1941–5 53
2.4 Gherasim Luca, *The Ideal Phantom*, photographed by Théodore César Brauner, *c*. 1941–5 54
2.5 Gherasim Luca, *Dusk*, photographed by Théodore César Brauner, *c*. 1941–5 57
2.6 Gherasim Luca, *The Letter L*, photographed by Théodore César Brauner, *c*. 1941–5 58
2.7 Gherasim Luca, *Latent Powers Considered as Possibilities*, photographed by Théodore César Brauner, *c*. 1941–5 61
2.8 F. W. Murnau, (Still from) *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens*, 1922 64
2.9 F. W. Murnau, (Still from) *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens*, 1922 65
2.10 Unknown Photographer, *Object 'I'*, *c*. 1944 71
2.11 Unknown Photographer, *Object 'II'*, *c*. 1944 71
2.12 Unknown Photographer, *Object 'III'*, *c*. 1944 72
2.13 Unknown Photographer, *Object 'IV'*, *c*. 1944 72
2.14 Unknown Photographer, *Object 'V'*, *c*. 1944 73
2.15 Gherasim Luca, *Tenter l'impossible*, *c*. 1945 76
3.1 Victor Brauner, *Les Amoureux*, 1943 79
3.2 Victor Brauner, *Image du réel incrée*, 1943 80
3.3 Victor Brauner, *Paysage Méditerranéen*, 1932 81
3.4 Victor Brauner, *Autoportrait*, 1931 82
3.5 Victor Brauner, *Sans titre (Hitler)*, 1934 84
3.6 Victor Brauner, *Sans titre (mandrake)*, 1939 85
3.7 Victor Brauner, *La Mandragore*, 1939 86
3.8 Victor Brauner, *La Pierre Philosophale*, 1930 89
3.9 Cover to Jean Marquès-Rivière's *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales* (Paris: Payot, 1938) 91
3.10 '"L'intelligence" de Saturne' / 'le "Démon" de Saturne' (and other symbols) 94
3.11 Carré magique hébraïque de Saturne (and other symbols) 95
3.12 Victor Brauner, *La Saturnienne*, 1943 96
3.13 Amulettes hébraïques en 'écriture boulée' 97
3.14 Victor Brauner, *Hommes supércelestes pantaculairiens*, 1945 98
3.15 Victor Brauner, *Portrait pantaculaire de Novalis*, 1945 101
3.16 Victor Brauner, *Portrait pantaculaire de Novalis*, 1945 101
3.17 Victor Brauner, *La Loi des correspondances*, 1944 106

4.1	Jacques Faujour, *Atelier d'André Breton* (Kachina dolls visible), 1994	110
4.2	Willy Maywald, *Victor Brauner's altar at the exhibition 'Le Surréalisme en 1947'*, 1947	116
4.3	Cover to Benjamin Péret's *Anthologie des mythes, légendes et contes populaires d'Amérique* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1959)	123
4.4	Adze-shaped Pre-Columbian carving	124
4.5	Mask from British Columbia	124
4.6	Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *Autumn*, 1572	131
4.7	Joos de Momper II, *Anthropomorphic Landscape*, *c.* 1600–35	131
4.8	Mask from the Sépik River Region of Papua New Guinea	133
4.9	Malangan Carving from New Ireland	134
4.10	Tsimshian Head Ornament from British Columbia, *c.* 1880–1900	134
5.1	Meret Oppenheim, *Masque*, 1959	142
5.2	Jean Benoît, *Costume pour L'Exécution du testament du marquis de Sade*, *c.* 1959	143
5.3	Jean Benoît, *Costume pour L'Exécution du testament du marquis de Sade*, *c.* 1959	144
5.4	Leonor Fini, *Masque composé pour un bal à la piscine Deligny (Paris)*, 1950	146
5.5	Mimi Parent, *Masque exécuté pour Maurice Henry* (closed view), photographed by George Pierre, *c.* 1959	147
5.6	Mimi Parent, *Masque exécuté pour Maurice Henry* (open view), photographed by George Pierre, *c.* 1959	147
5.7	Jean Lavaud, *Kwakiutl Winter Ritual Mask known as 'Hamshamtses'*, *c.* 1959	148
5.8	Jean Benoît, Invitation au *L'Exécution du testament du marquis de Sade* (addressed to E. L. T. Mesens), 1959	148
5.9	Cover to *Arts – Lettres, Spectacles* no. 752, 9–15 December 1959	149
5.10	Cover to Jean-Louis Bédouin's *Les Masques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961)	152
5.11	Jean Lavaud, *Zuni Ceremonial Kôkô Mask from New Mexico*, *c.* 1959	153
5.12	Jean Lavaud, *Hopi Ceremonial Kachina Mask from Arizona*, *c.* 1959	154
5.13	Mimi Parent, *Êmboitage pour une poupée Zuni* (closed view), *c.* 1960–6	155
5.14	Mimi Parent, *Êmboitage pour une poupée Zuni* (open view), *c.* 1960–6	155
5.15	Hopi Kachina Doll from the former collection of Roberto Matta	156
5.16	Jean Benoît, *Le Nécrophile: un costume en accord avec ses penchants*, 1963	157
5.17	Tête trophée, Population Mundurucu, *c.* 1800	159
5.18	Georges Pierre, *Crâne surmodélé, région du fleuve Sépik*, *c.* 1965	159

5.19 Jean Benoît, *Emboîtage pour une tête trophée Mundurucu* (front partially open), 1968 160
5.20 Jean Benoît, *Emboîtage pour une tête trophée Mundurucu* (front open), 1968 161
5.21 Jean Benoît, *Projet tombe relief*, 1994–95 161
5.22 Cover to Vincent Bounoure's *Préface à un traité des matrices* (Paris, 1958) 164
5.23 Vincent Bounoure's dedication to Mimi Parent and Jean Benoît in *Préface à un traité des matrices* (Paris, 1958) 165
5.24 Cover to Vincent Bounoure's edited collection *La Civilisation surréaliste* (Paris: Payot, 1976) 166
6.1 Photograph of the Replica of the Depiction of a Megaloceros in the Lascaux Caves at Lascaux II 172

Acknowledgements

In its early development as PhD research, this book was enabled by support from the Art and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). In its later stages, the final editing on the book manuscript was supported by the Leverhulme Trust, who since May 2020 has funded my Early Career Fellowship at the University of Nottingham. Image rights towards the book have been partially funded by the School Research Fund at the University of Nottingham, for whose financial support I am grateful.

Discussions and interactions I have had with Gavin Parkinson, Krzysztof Fijalkowski, Michael Richardson and Gražina Subelytė have been at the heart of the conception and evolution of *Surrealist Sorcery*. Email exchanges with Gail Earnshaw, Kenneth Cox and Tessel Bauduin have been similarly inspiring and encouraging over the course of the book's development. Various conversations with Samuel Raybone, Sarah Hegenbart, Levi Prombaum, Catherine Howe, Rachel Stratton and Ambra D'Antone all played their role in the very early formulation of this project. I would also like to acknowledge the anonymous feedback provided by the manuscript's reviewers, whose reflections greatly improved the structure of the finished book.

I am indebted to numerous individuals and institutions who have assisted me with my research: Monique Yaari for her help with image research on Ghérasim Luca; Neil Ogg and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive in Edinburgh; Jane Devine Mejia and the Vancouver Art Gallery Library; the archivists at the Art Gallery of Ontario; the archivists at the Tate Archive; the librarians at the Anthropology Library and Research Centre at the British Museum; and the ever-helpful librarians of the British Library, the National Art Library, the Tate Library and the Courtauld Book Library.

I am grateful to Micheline Catti-Ghérasim Luca for her generous permission to reproduce works by Ghérasim Luca, and to Francine Joly de Lotbinière for her generous permission to reproduce works by Jean Benoît and Mimi Parent.

I am thankful for the friendship and advice of many current and former colleagues at the University of Nottingham, including Nicholas Alfrey, Lucy Bradnock, Ting Chang, Simon Constantine, Isobel Elstob, Ashley Gallant, Chloe Julius, Gabriele Neher, Lara Pucci, Mark Rawlinson, Rebecca Senior, Colin Wright and Richard Wrigley. I am similarly thankful for the many thought-provoking conversations I have had with University of Nottingham students taking my second-year *Surrealism and Its Sources* module.

Through strange and difficult times the Atkin and Dunstone families have offered boundless support. The completion of this book would not have been possible without Olivia, who has found interest in this peculiar project from the very beginning, and whose unfailing encouragement has seen it through.

This book is published against a backdrop of widespread job precarity and an unjustifiable trend towards the devaluation of Arts and Humanities subjects in Higher Education. In response, I draw attention to the many areas of this book's discussion that are preoccupied with the significance of visual analogy, encountered in terms which I hope will impart a greater appreciation of the efficacious, world-shaping power of interpreting and comparing images, and ultimately the important role of Art History in mediating this.

If this publication represents the culmination of a journey into Art History then that journey began many years ago, looking at paintings with Ray Atkin.

Introduction: Surrealism, magic and the surrealist object as instrument of magic

Any intellectual formula which considers itself definitive does so at its own peril, since it thus automatically invites the contradiction with which experimentation is always waiting to confront it.

–André Breton, 'Crisis of the Object' (1936)

The plain, unadorned fact that some of the most intellectually and politically engaged cultural figures of the twentieth century – many of them with medical, legal or academic backgrounds – turned to magic as an area of critical conceptual importance is one that immediately warrants further attention. In magic's fundamental ambition to push beyond the world's given forms and appearances, the surrealist community ultimately identified a model for their own efforts to transform a world whose failings and injustices had been starkly revealed to them by their collective experiences of the First World War, and which continued to be highlighted in a century that witnessed the birth of fascism, another world war, the Holocaust and the persistence of colonial systems of oppression. In contrast to the unwieldy bureaucratic machinery of global politics and the alienating and disenfranchising conditions of post-industrial civilization, the historical discourse of magic was ever-predicated upon the individual's innate capacity for self-illumination, and promised the willing practitioner their mage-like autonomy as an agent of change.

The surrealists had been preceded in this field at the turn of the twentieth century by certain figures from the burgeoning discipline of anthropology, whose diligent studies of the mechanics and variations of sorcery revealed the historically diverse and still-living traditions of magic as a territory of credible, urgent and – crucially – incomplete intellectual inquiry. One of the most influential voices in this anthropological vindication of magic in the early twentieth century was that of Marcel Mauss: co-author, with Henri Hubert, of *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions* (1898) and *A General Theory of Magic* (1902), and independent author of the seminal, discourse-shifting analysis of exchange, *The Gift* (1925). Mauss's now-famous theory of gift exchange is premised upon the notion that an effective social 'power' or 'force' can be manifest in material things. This idea was addressed at the outset of *The Gift*, where he pondered: '*What power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?*'[1] Mauss obligingly sought to answer this question through his discussion of the Maori concept of *hau*, which he conceived of as a magical current coursing through the gift that



Figure 0.1 Man Ray, *Myself and Her (Moi, elle)*, *c*. 1934. © Man Ray 2015 Trust / DACS, London. Photo: Telimage, Paris.

incites people to social action.[2] In his subsequent assessment, he memorably explained that 'what imposes obligation in the present received and exchanged, is the fact that the thing received is not inactive'.[3] This opening case study ultimately served as an archetype among his wider investigations into the mechanisms of gift exchange and magical discourses from around the world. The innate power or force that Mauss observed in the gift – as an efficacious node or vehicle of intention within the ceaseless chain-flow of causal affect between people and things – offers a blueprint, or at least a preliminary sketch, for approaching objects as instruments of magic: as entities that impel behaviours, provoke reactions and induce transformations through not-fully-explicable processes.

That the surrealists were receptive to such notions of magic and magical objects is apparent from even the most cursory glance at the titles and contents of some of their most significant works: in the presciently titled section, 'Secrets of the Magical Surrealist Art', which closed André Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924); in the conjuring hands of Alberto Giacometti's sculpture *L'Objet invisible* (1934); in the witches and sorceresses that populate the canvases of Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo; or in Breton and Gérard Legrand's ambitious art-historical survey,

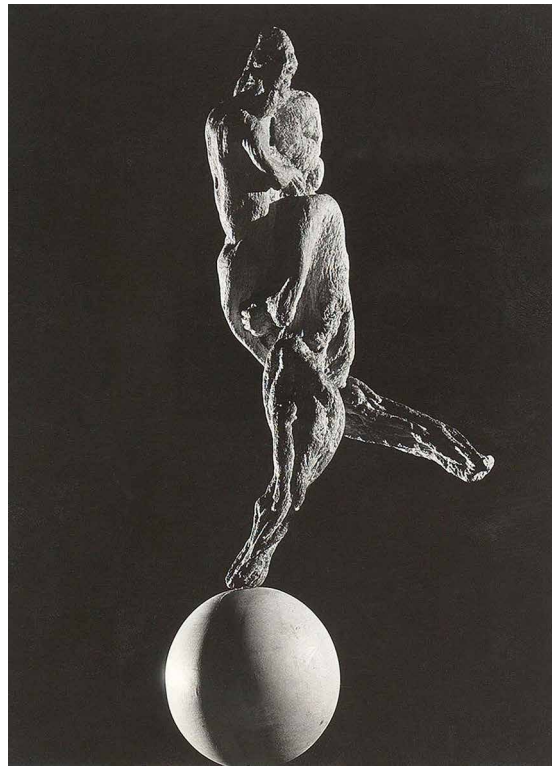


Figure 0.2 Man Ray, *Aneas Carrying his Father (Énée portant son père)*, *c.* 1934. © Man Ray 2015 Trust / DACS, London. Photo: Telimage, Paris.

L'Art magique (1957). On closer inspection, the picture becomes clearer still. In his 1937 book *Mad Love*, the definitive statement on surrealist conceptions of love, desire and objective chance, Breton also casually describes his recourse to certain 'spell-casting object[s]' in his personal life (Figures 0.1 and 0.2).[4] The matter of how this intensely serious, idiosyncratic, magically predisposed perspective on 'the object' evolved out of wider surrealist discourse requires further elaboration.

The surrealist object

In his 1936 essay 'Crisis of the Object' Breton famously described the surrealists' ambition for a '*total revolution of the object*'.[5] The text opened with an account of the prodigious contribution of nineteenth-century poetry, and chiefly the works of Arthur Rimbaud and the Comte de Lautréamont, in paving the way for the Surrealist Movement: by beginning the process of 'opening up' rationalism and aspiring towards 'a total disruption of sensibility'.[6] As Breton went on to relay, it was precisely such

disruption that the surrealist group of 1936 – faced with the prevailing intellectual currents of rationalism and empiricism – looked to achieve in the twentieth century through the surrealist object. This was the 'crisis' to which he alluded in the essay's title: the crisis of 'sensibility' that the Surrealist Movement had been battling since its origins in the wake of the First World War.[7]

In this vein, the text unfolds in the familiar form of a proclamation of the surrealists' commitment to bringing about a revolution of the mind in the form of the irrational conquest of rationality. Despite the essay's title, there is surprisingly limited discussion of the shape that surrealist discourse on the object had taken by this point. Apart from passing references to 'readymades', the 'found object' and some natural objects shaped by 'external forces', Breton's discussion is primarily given over to the 'dream-engendered objects' that he had first envisaged in 1924 in his essay 'Introduction to the Discourse of the Paucity of Reality' (published 1927), and written about more recently in his book *The Communicating Vessels* (1932).[8] In similar terms to his previous comments on such oneiric objects, he described their role in confounding rational thought and giving primacy to the unconscious: as an 'objectification of the very act of dreaming, its transformation into reality'; as 'pure desire in concrete form'.[9] He then briefly described the surrealists' aspirations to unleash this revolutionary potential in existing objects, by encouraging poets and artists to analyse them in terms of their 'latent' content (underlying unconscious resonance) rather than their 'conventional value', in order to break their bondage to the utilitarian purpose assigned to them.[10] To summarize his brief justification of the surrealist situation of the object, Breton quotes Gaston Bachelard from *The New Scientific Spirit* (1934) declaring that '*one will discover more in the reality concealed within the entity than in the immediate data surrounding it*'.[11]

Though he presumably invoked this statement for its implicit psychoanalytical and metaphysical undertones, it ultimately hangs open-endedly in the concluding section of the essay. Indeed, in its general outline, the more theoretically nuanced coordinates of Breton's essay – his allusions to the revolutionary role he ascribes to the object, and to the found object's incredible ability to invigorate and make manifest unconscious thought – are overshadowed by the more readily appreciable notion of the surrealist object as the antithesis of a useful object. This notion arises where he discussed, in unusually clichéd terms, his hope 'that the multiplication of such [surrealist] objects would entail the depreciation of those objects of often dubiously accepted *usefulness* which clutter up the so-called real world'.[12] And this idea is reinforced towards the close of the essay where he concluded with a drastically over-simplified definition of the surrealist object:

> In all these cases [the forms of surrealist object listed above], perturbation and distortion are sought for their own sake […] The objects brought together in this way have one thing in common: they derive from the objects which surround us but succeed in achieving a separate identity simply through a *change of role*.[13]

In this guise, the surrealist object was more singularly aligned with the model of the readymade – with the likes of Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel* (1913) and Man Ray's *Cadeau*

(1921) – as an entity premised on the haphazard reappropriation, humorous subversion or erotic reorientation of an everyday item.

Breton's remarks on '*usefulness*' in 'Crisis of the Object', and his allusions to surrealist objects' subversion of everyday objects' utilitarian '*role*', seem to be underpinned by his opening discussion to the *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924), which begins:

> So strong is the belief in life, in what is most fragile in life – *real* life, I mean – that in the end this belief is lost. Man, that inveterate dreamer, has trouble assessing the objects he has been led to use, objects that his nonchalance has brought his way, or that he has earned through his own efforts, for he has agreed to work, at least he has not refused to try his luck (or what he calls his luck!).[14]

This passage is contextualized by the extensive set of reflections on the trappings of modernity that follow, and which focus in particular on the inane, essentializing necessity of labour in capitalist society (introduced here through Breton's reference to the confusing nature of prescribed 'use', and to the illusion of 'luck' for the worker bound to the market economy). Taking these comments from 1924 as a backdrop, the theoretical implications of Breton's 1936 discussion of the object are cut from the same cloth; the two sets of comments comprise a kind of call and response. Where in 1924 Breton had lamented the manner in which certain objects serve as the modern citizen's point of entry into the all-consuming mythos of capitalist modernity – as the site upon which values are fixed, and thus a site of entrapment – in 1936 he outlined how the *surrealist* object could serve as a point of escape from this existence, where their physical '*change of role*' had more far-reaching implications: as a means of subverting established value in the name of an epistemological and ideological release. As Krzysztof Fijalkowski has argued, the role of surrealist objects of the ilk of Man Ray's *Gift* might be more accurately defined in terms of 'short-circuiting sense, not so much by deriding an object's utility as by driving the logic of function to a necessary conclusion'; a redesignation, rather than obliteration, of function.[15] Though not explicitly stated, the premise of such diversion of the physical world, and the incumbent epistemological release that it promised, was intended to carry the broadest conceivable possibilities: a source of surrealist insight at the experimental frontiers of all world-changing discourses, from modern physics to revolutionary politics and – as we shall see – magic. And yet, the nuance of Breton's case for the surrealist object in 'Crisis of the Object' has tended to be glossed.

Taken in isolation, Breton's comments in his 1936 essay have been misconstrued in terms which have set the precedent for a relatively one-dimensional conception of the surrealist object: characterized as a fundamentally ironic gesture that carried little value beyond its hard denial of use-value.[16] In light of Breton's comments about targeting objects of 'dubiously accepted *usefulness*', and the copious surrealist examples of objects whose practical role had been overturned, it has been inferred that the surrealist object was conversely premised on the idea of *uselessness*. In these terms, its application is supposedly limited to the initial moment of an encounter, bound to the transient effect of the uncanny, erotic or humorous sensation it inspires. This formula of the surrealist object has stuck in part because it fits so neatly with the popular stereotype of Dalínian

Surrealism as it crystallized in popular culture in the late twentieth century: as a movement grounded in perverse humour and Chaplinesque slapstick.[17] Such has been the prevalence of this image of Surrealism and its eccentric commandeering of the object, however, that this formula has even dominated the scholarship on the subject. In the catalogue to the major 2011 exhibition *Surreal Objects: Three-Dimensional Works from Dalí to Man Ray*, held at the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, we find the following definition:

> Objects of various origins, combined and transformed, found and worked, objects that do not describe or explain, that encounter the viewer openly and intuitively, objects with a mysterious, humorous, or erotic effect […] The 'objects' [that the surrealists] developed on a large scale beginning in the nineteen-thirties contain all the fundamental principles of Surrealist art, namely *alienation*, taking a thing or an object out of its context, *combinatorics*, the conflation of diverse worlds for the benefit of a productive shock; and *metamorphosis* as the possibility to transform an object into something else.[18]

In its emphasis on the carnivalesque 'shock' of surrealist objects, this kind of assessment has tended to steer discussion away from more rigorous interrogations of the concept.

Prevailing assessments of the surrealist object as playful oddity or aesthetic curiosity – theoretically unsubstantiated subversions of utilitarian use-value – stand in stark contrast to the group's own presentation of the object as a 'weapon'. This is how Breton conceived of the panoply of surrealist objects that he discussed in 'Crisis of the Object' in 1936: as so many 'weapons' with which to undermine the 'hateful regime[s]' of 'convention' and 'common sense'.[19] And this is how Wolfgang Paalen still conceived of the surrealist object – in the freighted atmosphere of the Second World War, in the midst of so many more technologically advanced weapons – in the catalogue to the 1940 International Exhibition of Surrealism in Mexico City: 'Since Alberto Giacometti, Man Ray, Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy, Hans Arp, Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, Oscar Dominguez put into circulation the "object-beings" or "being-objects" endowed with such tremendous ability to bewilder sensation, no other surrealist weapon has proved more effective'.[20] It is in these distinctive terms, considering the surrealist perception of the object as a vital, powerful instrument of change, that this book seeks to explore its projected theoretical and practical applications within the sphere of *magic*.

Katharine Conley has gone further than most towards overturning the reductive glossing of Breton's 'Crisis of the Object', and coaxing out its more elusive nuance. In her 2013 article 'Sleeping Gods in Surrealist Collections', Conley reads between the lines of Breton's comments on the surrealist object's subversive relationship towards use-value and uncovers his altogether more surprising intimations of its 'force' and 'energy'.[21]

> In 'Crise de l'objet', the short essay Breton wrote for the Ratton Gallery Exhibition, he explains how surrealist objects, by having been turned away from their original function, repress their manifest lives and thus manifest 'champs de force' or force fields through this process of transformation that results from the juxtaposition of

> the object's current and former realities. In this way, what was formerly manifest becomes latent once it is taken out of its original context and transformed into a work of art, and this new latency produces energy. [… These objects'] repressed former functions act like inner lives for the sensitized human being who responds to their energy.[22]

In the same essay, Conley describes the more far-reaching resonances of this terminology that Breton employed in relation to the object in 'Crisis of the Object': as an indication of his habitual perspective upon the world, through which he intuited the efficacious 'force' of objects throughout his adult life. She describes how, related to such ideas of 'force' and 'energy' that he referred to here, he had a general affinity for what he recognized as 'power-laden objects', and even ascribed 'sentience' to certain objects in his possession.[23] Louise Tythacott has written similarly about Breton's unbridled capacity to project an auratic, halo-like force onto certain objects that he owned or encountered, and Gavin Parkinson has written about Breton's attribution of 'halo'-like emanations (perceptible atmospheres of supernatural deterministic energies that cling to auspicious places and objects like refractive bodies of air) in his wider writings.[24] In his biography of Breton, Mark Polizzotti recounts Breton's belief in the supernatural and magical agency of certain objects in his apartment at 42 rue Fontaine (appropriately enough during the writing of *L'Art magique*). In discussing the 'creative paralysis' that had impeded Breton's progress with *L'Art magique* in the 1950s, Polizzotti describes how he 'attributed the work's incompletion to external, occult forces – specifically to the paralyzing influence of a voodoo doll that stared down at him from a shelf in his study, and that he dared not dispose of because, as he told Roger Caillois, this required "certain conditions that are hard to realize"'.[25] Polizzotti invokes Jacqueline Lamba as long-term witness to this behaviour, citing her testimony that 'Breton believed some of his fetish objects to have "power over his daily life," and that he often moved them around on his shelves in an effort to change their influence'.[26]

The object remained an integral node of surrealist discourse and practice throughout the twentieth century. In Breton's influential career as leading theorist and spokesperson of the Surrealist Movement, he repeatedly conceived of the affective and deterministic operations of physical objects within the bounds of a spectrum of occulted belief that entertained personal superstitions as readily as circumscribed forms of magic. Meanwhile, as the century advanced, the wider group's interests in traditions of magic both intensified and diversified. As a result of these confluences, the object at once became enveloped in discourse, as a dynamic concept through which the group was able to navigate the diffuse notions of magic on paper, and also embroiled in experimentation, as the physical vessel of magical rites within Surrealism. It is precisely this lineage of magical objects in the Surrealist Movement, and the intricate web of historical and contemporary theorists and practitioners that sanctioned them, that this book sets out to chart.

Surrealism, magic and the occult

This research into the surrealist group's recourse to the concept of magic and certain established branches of occult science is indebted to a recent surge of scholarship on the topic. 'Surrealism and Magic' and 'Occult Surrealism' now represent major areas of

research in the scholarship on the Surrealist Movement, constituting a sizeable body of literature towards which this book stands in close dialogue.

These lines of intellectual inquiry first attracted attention in a string of studies produced during the lifetimes of the first-generation surrealists, including in publications by certain members and affiliates of the French surrealist community. Perhaps the most famous of these early studies are Pierre Mabille's *Le Miroir du merveilleux* (1941) and Kurt Seligmann's *The Mirror of Magic* (1948), which respectively considered fantastic and occult literature and the ancient history of occult traditions with direct reference to Surrealism. Jules Monnerot's *La Poésie moderne et le sacré* (1945) represents another significant early work in this vein, in its discussion of surrealist literature within a critical context of magic and ritual. Four years after this came Michel Carrouges's *André Breton et les données fondamentales du surréalisme* (1949), which approached surrealist practice from perspectives of esotericism, alchemy and mediumism. This was shortly followed by Robert Amadou and Robert Kanters's *Anthologie littéraire de l'occultisme* (1950), which presented the surrealists (and Breton specifically) as the modern descendants of a longstanding tradition of occult literature going back to François Rabelais and Dante. Several years after Breton's death, but having been instigated through direct contact with Breton and his colleagues, the first English-language publication dealing with the theme of 'Occult Surrealism' was published in the form of Anna Balakian's *André Breton, Magus of Surrealism* (1971).

These early studies, each in one way or another directly connected to the Surrealist Movement, addressed many of the key themes around which studies on Surrealism, magic and the occult continue to be structured today: themes such as alchemy, esotericism, mediumism, mysticism (inherited from German Romanticism) and nineteenth-century occultism. However, more recent scholarship has noticeably advanced these conversations into more specialized territories. Nadia Choucha's *Surrealism and the Occult* (1991) provided an insightful, if brief, account of the topic, which extended discussion beyond the singular significance of Breton's oeuvre in this occult context to artists such as Duchamp, Max Ernst and Leonora Carrington. Clio Mitchell's 1994 thesis, *'Secrets de l'art magique surréaliste': Magic and the Myth of the Artist-magician in Surrealist Aesthetic Theory and Practice*, subsequently provided a much more engaging discussion of the theoretical coordinates of magic within the Surrealist Movement, and went on to introduce an array of other figures to this discussion, ranging from Dalí to Joan Miró. The occult paradigm of Ernst's work, specifically, was dramatically expanded in 2001 by M. E. Warlick's *Max Ernst and Alchemy: A Magician in Search of Myth*. Other studies with a similarly specific focus have followed, such as Susan Aberth's monograph on Leonora Carrington, Victoria Ferentinou's research on Ithell Colquhoun, Victoria Clouston's writings on Breton's wartime researches into the occult and Daniel Zamani's work on Victor Brauner.[27] In a format more familiar from Choucha's or Mitchell's work, Celia Rabinovitch's *Surrealism and the Sacred: Power, Eros, and the Occult in Modern Art* (2002) considered 'Occult Surrealism' through a wide lens that took in the broader *durée* of the movement, but ascertained a novel conceptual vantage point in its particular evocation of the sacred as 'an unusual state of mind akin to the modern literary epiphany, the Romantic sublime, the aesthetic or creative experience of revelation, and the heightened awareness engendered by various Buddhist or Hindu meditative practices'.[28]

The growing momentum of this field of research was signalled by the proximate publications of Patrick Lepetit's *Le Surréalisme: parcours souterrain* (2012), which was subsequently translated and published in English as *The Esoteric Secrets of Surrealism: Origins, Magic, and Secret Societies*, in 2014, and Tessel M. Bauduin's *Surrealism and the Occult: Occultism and Western Esotericism in the Work and Movement of André Breton* (2014). Whereas Lepetit's study – with its idiosyncratic, peripatetic style and unrivalled anecdotal detail – has not had a direct bearing on the topics developed in this book, Bauduin's has had a notable impact on account of both the detailed evidence that it raises and the overriding argument that it projects.

Bauduin's study specifically considers Breton's role as the figurehead of the surrealists' pursuit of magic and occult knowledge. In her introduction, she notes how existing assessments of Breton's role in the manifestation of an occult dimension to the movement vary considerably, ranging between the poles of significant under- and over-estimation; differences in opinion that highlight that the matter demands much closer scrutiny. Bauduin initially anticipates that the truth lies somewhere in the middle of this polarized coverage, predicting that her research will produce an account that 'not only diverges from the view that the Surrealism of Breton had little to do with occultism […] but also from the view that it had everything to do with it'.[29]

Bauduin's *Surrealism and the Occult* remains the authoritative account of the French Surrealist Movement's diverse and evolving recourse to Occultism. Its analyses of the circumstances of surrealist occultism during the Second World War, the alchemical and mythological references of *Arcanum 17* (1945), and the magic- and occult-themed exhibition *Le Surréalisme en 1947* are among the most incisive scholarly navigations of those subjects. However, the present volume draws slightly different conclusions from *Surrealism and the Occult* from those presented at the end of that book, where Bauduin deduces that the Surrealist Movement 'was not a celebration of occultism':

> Breton was not an occult adept and his movement was not a celebration of occultism. […By contrast,] His movement was a celebration of Romanticism and Symbolism, including its occult elements and traces of earlier esotericism.[30]

This statement seems to run counter to the extensive evidence on display within *Surrealism and the Occult*, assiduously researched and expertly detailed, of the surrealists' entirely serious reading of a panoply of occult writers, from Cornelius Agrippa to Eliphas Lévi. The nuanced distinction being made here between occultism, on the one hand, and Romanticism and Symbolism, on the other, is one that I fail to make so keenly in the present volume. In *Surrealist Sorcery*, by contrast, I find the surrealists' celebrations of occultism within the contexts of Romanticism and Symbolism commensurate with a celebration of occultism itself, however deeply embedded within the broader cultural contexts of these movements. Bauduin's closely related assertion that 'at no point did Breton or his very immediate circle become practicing occultists' is tested over the course of *Surrealist Sorcery*, which presents evidence that would seem to challenge this assessment.[31] Whilst the case studies explored here are generally supportive of Bauduin's assertion that occultism was often employed 'as an investigative technique […and] a patterning device', in a theoretical capacity, they also reveal the unquestionable presence of magical practices within the Surrealist Movement.[32]

Bauduin's own subsequent research and editorial work have enabled and nurtured the developments, caveats and expansions that this book presents to her discussion from *Surrealism and the Occult* in 2014. Her 2018 collection *Surrealism, Occultism and Politics: In Search of the Marvellous*, edited in collaboration with Ferentinou and Zamani, opened up for analysis a wide range of occult practices that existed under the auspices of the Surrealist Movement: from séance, to palmistry and witchcraft. Zamani's and Gražina Subelytė's chapters in *Surrealism, Occultism and Politics*, on the legendary references of Breton's *Arcanum 17* and the occult research of Kurt Seligmann, respectively, betoken their own prodigious individual contributions to this field. Zamani's aforementioned article on Brauner, his 2017 PhD thesis *In Search of the Holy Grail: Medieval Tropes and the 'Occultation of Surrealism' in the Work of André Breton*, Subelytė's 2014 article 'Spectrality and the Dance of Death in the Art of Kurt Seligmann' and her 2021 PhD thesis *Kurt Seligman: Occultism and Surrealism* have comprised some of the most original pieces of scholarship in the recent trend of research into Occult Surrealism.

The parallel researches of Subelytė and Zamani have played a vital role in driving this academic discussion of surrealism and magic. Their shared interest in this field ultimately led to them spearheading the exhibition *Surrealism and Magic: Enchanted Modernity*, which was shown at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice (2022) and the Museum Barberini in Potsdam (2022–3). Their jointly edited catalogue to the *Surrealism and Magic* exhibition offers another rigorous and expansive analysis of its topic, and its multivalent discussions of female paradigms of the enchantress, in particular, have opened up rich new territories for scholarly investigation.[33] The concession to practices of magic within the surrealist community, however, is once again largely implied and only tentative here. The volume's treatment of the concept of magic is appropriately extensive and multifaceted, yet there is no comparable treatment of magical practices *per se*, perhaps owing to the exhibition's essentially (and inevitably) artistic emphasis. Scoping the expansive terrain of the exhibition title, Parkinson briefly describes how the surrealists also actively explored magic in the overlapping contexts of its 'rites and ceremonies, incantations and spells, shape shifting, totemism, varieties of clairvoyance, astrological prediction and other divination, sympathetic contiguity, and creation of magical recipes and talismans'.[34] It is precisely such rites, ceremonies, recipes, talismans and invocations of sympathetic magic that take centre stage in *Surrealist Sorcery*.

Overview

The two most pressing challenges in the process of planning and structuring this book have been to do with the problem of defining magic, on the one hand, and the problem of defining Surrealism, on the other.

In terms of the theoretical representation of magic, I have deliberately avoided introducing a working definition. In the first place, I arrived at this decision because there is no single academic definition of the term, as a concept or phenomenon, which fits with the surrealist case. This is largely a result of the fact that magic was

an ever-evolving, amorphous concept in surrealist discourse. And this in turn was a consequence of surrealist theories and practices of magic being developed in close dialogue with other conceptual issues on the surrealist agenda (such as the political question of social revolution) and being constantly readapted in the context of impingent historical events (such as the rise of fascism in the 1930s or the crises of the Second World War in the 1940s). For the most part, except for when Breton was tasked with defining the term in the context of the commission for *L'Art magique* in the 1950s, the figures considered in this book were simply not concerned with providing a working definition of magic. Mitchell has explained how the surrealists' resulting recourse to the term was inevitably incompatible with its formal definition:

> Such a loose conception of magic, in which it hovers somewhere in the interaction between mind and outer reality, emanating from either or both, and may be consciously or unconsciously exerted or received by the subject, is clearly incompatible with the more rigorous definitions of the scientists, and is also rejected by certain occultists.[35]

Whilst contemporaneous academic definitions of magic circulating during the twentieth century are certainly relevant, they are rarely profitable from the point of view of trying to fix or stereotype surrealist discourse on the topic. During this period, magic was being defined in academic circles in almost exclusively disapproving terms, as an erroneous formulation of causality. The tone of its academic definition remained fundamentally unchanged between Sigmund Freud (citing E. B. Tylor) defining magic in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) as a case of 'mistaking an ideal connection for a real one', and Claude Lévi-Strauss defining magic in *Structural Anthropology* (1958) as an idealistic frame of reference that smooths over 'contradictory elements' to the ends of creating convenient epistemological distillations of the universe.[36] This decidedly condescending account of magic consistently contradicted the surrealists' interest in the topic. On this basis, I ultimately avoid invoking any definition that would demand qualitative judgement on what does or does not technically qualify as magic, which would constitute a distraction from the central task of articulating the idiosyncratic and diverse conceptions of the term within surrealist discourse.

The only parameters I adopt and recommend to the reader of this volume are those set out by Mauss and Hubert in their *General Theory of Magic*. The first and most essential of these is that anything that is being designated as 'magical' must necessarily correspond in some degree to a recognizable precedent or 'tradition' of similar practices. They explain that magic must always pertain to certain 'traditional facts':

> In the first place, magic and magical rites, as a whole, are traditional facts. Actions which are never repeated cannot be called magical. If the whole community does not believe in the efficacy of a group of actions, they cannot be magical. The form of the ritual is eminently transmissible and this is sanctioned by public opinion. It follows from this that strictly individual actions, such as the private superstitions of gamblers, cannot be called magical.[37]

In accordance with this definition, the magical credentials of each of the case studies addressed in this volume are construed in terms of their correlation with aspects of historical traditions of magic on the basis that they would be recognized as such by those traditions' historical or modern adherents. In its identification of 'magical objects' circulating among the international surrealist community, this study is also aligned with Mauss's and Hubert's stipulation that 'magical objects' are specifically those that have received some form 'magical consecration' from their preparation or from the subsequent rite in which they were involved.[38] In other words, my designation of 'magical objects' in the present volume always necessarily rests on hard evidence, or at least a compelling implication, of those objects' actual, realized treatment as instruments of magic (rather than merely speculating about their potential magical invocation) by members of the surrealist community. All magical objects, thus defined, consist of what Mauss would call 'representations' and accompanying 'actions', which always go hand-in-hand. Indeed, as Mauss and Hubert proceed to explain, these 'Actions and representations are inseparable to such an extent that magic could be called a *practical idea*'.[39]

In her study on the politics of the French surrealist movement, *Parcours politique des surréalistes* (1995), Carole Reynaud-Paligot asks whether it is possible to speak of a singular 'Surrealism'.[40] The validity of this question is ever-apparent in this book, where each chapter deals with a different figure or group of people using a different conception of Surrealism to direct their researches into magic. The already varied terrain of Surrealism covered in this book is, moreover, only a portion of the wider history of the movement, which both precedes and post-dates its chronological parameters. As Michael Richardson has commented:

> surrealism was and is a living thing. How then does one deal with it without reifying it? It cannot be understood simply through the work of those people who constituted it. Any individual work has to be considered by reference to the common activity of surrealism, by an appreciation of how individual surrealists contributed to it to found the point of convergence at which we can discern, although never fully situate or articulate, the place at which surrealism can be found.[41]

It is in these terms that both Surrealism and its incumbent concepts are presented here as a set of changeable positions, responsive and reactive to the group's ongoing explorations of that 'psychophysical' field which Breton had designated as its special area of research.[42]

In his 2022 essay 'A Tower Struck by Lightning' published in the Leeds Surrealist Group's latest journal, *S*, Kenneth Cox presents a searing attack on popular characterizations of Surrealism at the hands of the 'cultural heritage industry' and its academic 'scholarship arm'.[43] Published in the same year as exhibitions on Surrealism at several major international art museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Tate (*Surrealism Beyond Borders*), The Peggy Guggenheim Collection and the Museum Barberini (*Surrealism and Magic*), in the midst of various events being

planned and billed for centenary celebrations of the 'Surrealist Manifesto', and following in the wake of the latest iteration of the Venice Biennale, which inserted Surrealism at the heart of its thematic content via its title (borrowed from Leonora Carrington) 'The Milk of Dreams', the principal targets of Cox's essay are easy to infer. Over the course of its argument, which takes the titular tower as a structuring metaphor (Surrealism as tower), Cox deplores the reduction of a shared historical understanding of Surrealism to mere token acts of cultural sightseeing:

> Refuge and beacon, a tower held in veneration, exerting a magnetic allure. There can be little doubt that certain places, certain buildings, hold such a magical attraction, casting a spell over us, sometimes to the point of the sublime. As well as to the architectural atmospheres such places project, this attraction can also be due to past associations, with people and events that inspire, accruing an almost mythic status, perhaps that we have read about and from stories we have been told, or in sequences from a film never made. […] Perhaps we visit such places to better visualise the past, attempting some sort of communion with our ancestors, or simply to tick them off a list, like a tourist.[44]

Stepping in and out of the tower metaphor, Cox proceeds to call for an uprooting of Surrealism from its now-hallowed trail of cultural artefacts and its funereal display in galleries and museums, in order to face – in the manner of a visitation – the ethers of its conceptual legacy, in a rarefied atmosphere that lies beyond institutional appropriation and commodification:

> Perhaps this tower would serve us better as a picturesque gothic ruin through which to wander by moonlight, transgressing time. Better a ghost than a tourist or a pilgrim, but a ghost on the precipice of becoming, playing with a box of Bengal matches.[45]

The essay takes its inspiration – in its title and accompanying illustration – from the sixteenth card of the Major Arcana of the Tarot, The Tower: a card associated with lightning-like revelation and momentous change; and which insists, in its central symbolism of the crumbling tower, upon the transience and impermanence of physical things.

At risk of further curling the pages of Cox's already-smouldering text, this book represents an academic publication that maintains in its very premise that it would not misconstrue the activities, communities and principles that it takes as its subject, and *that once existed* around the word 'Surrealism', for activities, communities and principles *that are dead*. The fact of their historical existence should not preclude their continuation. In these terms, this book does not regard itself as a post-mortem so much as a toolkit. And in this capacity it aspires to join company with that portion of the community of historians of the Surrealist Movement who, Cox concedes, 'are genuinely sympathetic to Surrealism as a living, convulsive body of ideas and their continuity, and who do not view it as something to be kept safely

at arm's length in the past or within the confines of "art" or "literature"'.[46] Against Surrealism's 'aestheticization', 'misrepresentation' and commercial fetishization, this book is an earnest attempt at relaying the still-fervent voices of some of these ghosts of the surrealist tower; hauntings that it seeks to report (against the sensationalizing, profiteering distortions of an alternative coverage) calmly and procedurally, like the young child in the castle who has no other point of reference beyond what they know they saw.[47] Only through such a wide-eyed retelling can this book hope to offer access to the authentically 'magical domain' of surrealist discourse as a space in which the reader can settle.[48]

The case studies that are addressed here fall between two landmark publications that help to bookend the topic of 'Surrealist Sorcery' within the confines of the present volume. The year 1929, where we begin in Chapter 1, was the year that Breton published his 'Second Manifesto of Surrealism' in the twelfth and final issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*, where he boldly envisaged the group's future interests in magic and the occult. Within the space of a couple of years, Dalí's first writings on the object were published in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* in 1931, ushering in the object's imminent emergence as a critical concept within the movement. In Chapter 1, I argue that it was precisely through this confluence of events that the surrealist object subsequently came to be conceived as a vessel of magic during the 1930s. At the opposite end of the book's chronology, 1976 not only marks the year in which Mimi Parent produced her *Reliquaire pour un crâne surmodelé du Moyen-Sepik,* which is the last work under analysis, but also the year of publication for the collective volume *La Civilisation surréaliste*, edited by Vincent Bounoure, which arguably represents the last major collective surrealist publication of the twentieth century that closely dealt with the theme of magic.

Beginning with Breton's 'Second Manifesto' statements on alchemy and the occult, Chapter 1 explores the historical circumstances under which these themes entered and settled within surrealist discourse. Discussion initially focuses on the interpretation of alchemy within Dalí's and Breton's writings on the object in the early 1930s, before turning to consider the 'magical' dimensions of the 'found object' later in the decade, and the special significance of minerals, stones and crystals within this debate. This leads into a concluding analysis of the works of Ithell Colquhoun, who emphatically associated the processes of alchemy with such mineralogical objects. In addressing the group's occult researches in relation to manifesto statements and other polemical texts, the opening chapter initiates a discussion that continues throughout the book, which considers how the surrealists' recourse to magic became a moot point in the context of the group's revolutionary ambitions.

Following on chronologically from Chapter 1, Chapter 2 considers the definition of black magic in Ghérasim Luca's writings on the object from during the Second World War. The central case study here is Luca's *The Passive Vampire* (written 1941), which curiously conflates this topic of black-magical objects with discussions of Satanism and vampirism. In the first instance, Luca's writing is considered in relation to Breton's discussion of the object from the 1930s in order to outline its originality. The black-magical objects of *The Passive Vampire* are then set against certain established definitions of magic and sorcery, before the chapter ultimately turns to explore the ideological merits of Luca's idiosyncratic account of black magic in the context of his

wartime situation in Bucharest. In the final analysis, Luca's collective writings yield the theoretical possibility of a revolutionary application for the black-magical object.

Chapter 3 runs roughly parallel to Chapter 2, in its analysis of the talismanic objects that Victor Brauner produced during the war. The chapter begins by investigating certain underlying themes of magic that already existed in Brauner's work during the 1930s, and which subsequently came to inform his wartime objects. In its close analysis of these objects that Brauner created between 1942 and 1945, this chapter presents probably the most authentic instance of a surrealist *practice* of magic. At the same time, although Brauner was officially attached to the surrealist group during this period, his wartime oeuvre represents a break with pre-existing conceptions of magic within the movement, and with the psychoanalytical and revolutionary paradigms of surrealist discourse more generally. On this point, in the concluding section of the chapter, Brauner's objects are framed in terms of a reorientation of the group's occult interests going into the post-war period, paying particular attention to the new emphasis on symbolism and analogy in his formulation of talismanic magic.

Spanning the early 1940s to the late 1950s, Chapter 4 offers a 'long view' of the surrealists' wartime and post-war writings on the ethnographic artefact. After an opening examination of Benjamin Péret's landmark essay of 1943, 'Magic: the Flesh and Blood of Poetry', the discussion considers Péret's and Breton's parallel conception of magic in the post-war era. Across a series of closely related publications, the chapter addresses the overlapping theoretical discussions of esotericism, poetic analogy, myth and magic art that preoccupied their respective works during this period. The final case study of this chapter is Breton's and Gérard Legrand's co-authored study, *L'Art magique* (1957). In the course of approaching *L'Art magique*, discussion considers how the collective surrealist voice of these authors came to identify as a counterpoint to prevailing academic interpretations of ethnographic artefacts, and to the increasingly popular mode of analysis being popularized by structural anthropologists.

In the fifth and final chapter, the implications of Surrealism's uneasy relationship with anthropology are explored in more detail in the context of the surrealist careers of the French-Canadian artist-couple, Mimi Parent and Jean Benoît. The pair are introduced here as figures who had moved in an unorthodox direction: from an early training in anthropology at the Musée de l'Homme in the late 1940s, to becoming members of the surrealist group in the late 1950s (in stark contrast to other figures, such as Michel Leiris, who had moved in precisely the opposite direction during the 1930s). Their correlative explorations of ritual magic, their shared engagement in mask-making and the development of Benoît's overtly ceremonial performative practice are presented here in terms of a conclusive rejection of the research paradigm of contemporary anthropology. In its closing discussion, the chapter looks to find justification for this distinction, and to ascertain the essential value of Surrealism, at a time when the ideological and intellectual coordinates of the movement were perceived to be becoming increasingly diffuse in the wake of the movement's dissolution in France in 1969.

As this brief overview intimates, the surrealists' conception of magic was dynamic and variable. In these terms, each chapter of this book effectively represents a discrete conceptual discussion in its own right, which is detachable from the work as a whole. Indeed, the continued evolution of ideas pertaining to magic is something that

this book embraces in its very premise, in its commitment to the open horizons of experimental thinking. In the words of the surrealists' beloved Novalis, 'If theory were to wait for experience it would never come about'.[49] All that is asked of the reader for their appreciation of the book, channelling this Romantic spirit, is that they share in its commitment to theoretical possibility through a good-faithed suspension of disbelief.

A Further Priming Thought

In sections of this book's discussion, there is an irrefutable sense of proximity to the past: a past failing to recede and pressing upon the present from just below the surface; or else a past plateaued, from which all things can be kept in play and hold their place at the table. The peculiar presence of the past in this book's analysis is not neatly reducible to the Benjaminian paradigm often-invoked in Surrealism Studies concerning the past's resurgence via historical objects, upon which the past's hieroglyphic messages are gradually clarified and rendered legible with temporal (and critical) distance. Nor does it neatly map onto Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood's account of the historical contortions that can arise from the material-mnemonic 'flexibility' of artefacts and art objects, whose physical, symbolic and social mutability they have proven to be the ideal vehicle for stretching and 'fold[ing]' mythic and historical time.[50] Rather, it is more specifically to do with a distinctive kind of historical empathy that predisposed the surrealists to scouring the past for suspended conversations, and which instilled in them the conviction that the words of a Paracelsus or an Agrippa, a Bettina Von Arnim or a Novalis, might suddenly (after a pause of centuries and decades) be rekindled to provide answers to the particular quandaries of – taking the case of Brauner – someone on the run from the Gestapo in 1943. In Brauner's case this notion of a transhistorical 'conversation' is not merely an analogy but the reality of his belief in such exchanges.[51] Similarly, in Breton's ghostly evocation of Nicolas Flamel, or Benoît's experiments with revivification, we are casually presented with the prospect of stepping into the mind or thoughts of someone long since dead. In these instances, we approach something perhaps more closely related to what Jorge Luis Borges floated in his essay 'A New Refutation of Time' as the possibility of 'identical moments'.[52] Memorable for Borges' re-analysis of his earlier autobiographical account from 1928 of recently standing on a quiet street corner one night and being absolutely convinced that he was momentarily in the 1890s, the essay is a playful philosophical unwinding of 'successive', 'chronological' or otherwise linear paradigms of history.[53] Explaining his preoccupation with the insistent historical and biographical forms of repetitions and echoes, Borges entertains the possibility that thoughts can be reinhabited, that ideas and states of mind can be repossessed, that points of the past can be reopened wholly and seamlessly through 'identical moments' connected across time, in terms which resonate strongly with certain surrealist cases analysed here.[54] Given my own frequent experience of approaching a specific, dated and located moment in the history of the Surrealist Movement only to find that is not there but (cerebrally, intellectually) elsewhere, decades or centuries adrift, I wish to underscore this consideration of opening up surrealist perspectives on historical temporality here as the seed-thought of future research.

1

Of gold, meteors, stones and crystals: Alchemy and the object in the works of André Breton, Salvador Dalí and Ithell Colquhoun, 1929–49

In 1940, the Romanian surrealist Victor Brauner painted *La Pierre philosophale* (Plate 1), a modestly sized canvas with a glowing polyhedral crystal to the left of centre representing the titular stone: the fabled entity variously sought by alchemists as the magical catalyst of transmutation, the elixir of life and the key to true wisdom. With the entire scene seemingly locked in the ephemeral chamber of a dream, Brauner depicts this core symbol of alchemy alongside luminous apparitions that either radiate out of or draw towards the glowing prism, and which serve to emblematize the stone's powers of spiritual and philosophical illumination. Also in 1940, and in much the same vein, the British surrealist Ithell Colquhoun began painting a series of 'Alchemical Figures', which included among them the work *The Opal (I)* (Figure 1.1): a small and appropriately precious watercolour depicting a radiant, globular opal, which – in the finer details of its blue-crystalline folds and bands of red – becomes highly suggestive of hidden forms; most compellingly that of a female figure whose illuminated silhouette (replete with umbilical) manifests as the stone's alchemical progeny.

The fact that both Brauner and Colquhoun were painting such emphatic celebrations of alchemy by the turn of the 1940s, and that they chose to focus on its technical, procedural expression via the legend of the Philosopher's Stone, raises questions concerning the reception and status of alchemy within the surrealist community at this time and up until this point. Were these images requited with theoretical substantiation within the broader parameters of surrealist discourse? Were the surrealists merely interested in the symbolism of alchemical tradition, or were they committed to finding practical, procedural applications of alchemy as a realized experiment? In exploring the history of alchemy's reception within the surrealist community, this chapter will consider how figures such as André Breton, Salvador Dalí and Colquhoun all provided alchemical discourse with experimental and theoretical applications via certain mineralogical and geological objects that they each wrote about and collected, and which I approach here as the physical ancestors of these twinned paintings of 1940.



Figure 1.1 Ithell Colquhoun, *Alchemical Figure – The Opal (I)*, 1940, watercolour on paper, Tate Archive, London. © Tate. Photo: © Tate.

1929, The Second Manifesto

In the 'Second Manifesto of Surrealism' (1929), Breton famously called for 'the veritable occultation' of the movement.[1] Prior to this grandiose proposal, slightly earlier in the text, he had raised one particular facet of occult philosophy as something that held singular importance for Surrealism. In terms no less equivocal yet much more specific than his occultation mission statement, Breton requested the reader to note the 'remarkable analogy, insofar as their goals are concerned, between the surrealist efforts and those of the alchemists'.[2] Elaborating upon this 'remarkable analogy', he committed to a fairly extensive discussion of alchemy and some of its famous practitioners. Most notable here is his tribute to the purportedly immortal fourteenth-century French alchemist, Nicolas Flamel.[3] Alongside Flamel, he also mentions 'the secrets of Hermes', referring to Hermes Trismegistus: the namesake of hermeticism and legendary author of the *Emerald Tablet*, which is considered by many to be the foundational treatise on alchemy.[4] And from here he goes on to discuss Rimbaud's 'Alchimie du verbe' from *Une saison en enfer* (1873), on terms more familiar to the pre-existent literary paradigm of Surrealism.

While on the surface Breton's statement might read like an enterprising identification with the occult sphere, it could equally have the more innocent meaning of an eclipsing or obscuring of the group's activities. This is the sense in which Bauduin ultimately reads it: in terms of 'a concealment, darkening or occluding that would make Surrealism less or inaccessible'.[5] In the final analysis, Bauduin finds Breton's invocation of the occult to be closer to a sensationalist ploy for exclusivity, developed 'as a strategy of distinction, regardless of occult content'.[6] Although it is certainly justified to pose reservations about the extent to which Breton's fairly enigmatic remarks demonstrate a true 'knowledge of occultism and esotericism', it is harder to dismiss Breton's interest in occult discourses like alchemy as having been inauthentic or disingenuous.[7] Here it is worth staking out the coordinates of Breton's wider researches on the subject of alchemy at this point in his surrealist career in order to test the strength of his 'Second Manifesto' comments, and to establish how serious his investment in alchemy subsequently became in their wake, at the turn of the 1930s.

Reading into alchemy

Surrealism's proximity to alchemy was evident from the movement's origins. As I have written elsewhere: '[i]n the alchemists' efforts to transmute physical matter, the founding members of Surrealism identified a model for their own efforts to transform a world whose moral decrepitude, political dysfunctionality, and social iniquity had been starkly revealed to them by their collective experiences of World War I'.[8] Here we find the 'germ' of alchemy's appeal within Surrealism: summarized by Michael Richardson as 'a means of regeneration, an intimation that change did not have to be destructive [, …] a way of re-energising the world without placing human needs first'.[9]

As early as 1923, as Guy Girard notes, numbers 11–12 of the proto-surrealist journal *Littérature* edited by Breton, Philippe Soupault and Louis Aragon 'offered under the title "Erutaréttil" an extremely varied list of authors […] that included names familiar to any disciple of Hermeticism: Hermes Trismegistus himself, but also [Raymond] Lulle, Flamel, [Cornelius] Agrippa and Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin'.[10] Following these early references, an interest in the legend of the Philosopher's Stone – the fabled tool of alchemical transmutation – is extant in Breton's writing from as early as 1924, when he had declared in an essay on the French Romantic writer Aloysius Bertrand, republished in *Les Pas Perdus* (1924), that '[t]he text hasn't yet been written that would keep us from seeking the philosopher's stone'.[11] In the case of *Littérature*, the future surrealists' identification with these figures was left unqualified. Similarly, Breton's 1924 invocation of the Philosopher's Stone had formed a fairly superficial, undeveloped reference to the 'enchanted' aspect of Bertrand's poetry.[12] By 1929, however, the resonance of alchemy in the context of the 'Second Manifesto' was of an altogether different nature. The heady terms in which the Philosopher's Stone resurfaced here, as that which 'enable[s] man's imagination to take a stunning revenge on all things', mark a far more meaningful interest in the practice of alchemy.[13]

The sales catalogues for the 2003 Hôtel Drouot auction of Breton's collection from 42 rue Fontaine reveal an array of books on alchemy that were readily available to him by the end of the 1920s. The presence of any single one of these titles in his hands at this moment would support the general picture of his growing interest in alchemy at around the time of the 'Second Manifesto'. Among the texts he may have purchased at this time were a number of monographic studies on historical and legendary figures associated with alchemical tradition. Chief among these texts were studies on Nicolas Flamel and Hermes Trismegistus, who both featured in Breton's 'Second Manifesto' discussion.[14] He also owned Albert Poisson's compendium of alchemical treatises, *Cinq traités d'alchimie des plus grands philosophes* (1890), which included a French translation of the *Emerald Tablet*.[15] Bauduin has already noted that Poisson's *Histoire de l'alchimie, XIVe siècle, Nicolas Flamel* (1893) was also in Breton's possession.[16] Poisson's brief but intensive career before his death aged twenty-four would have been especially likely to have caught Breton's eye, and to have attracted comparisons to the fast-burning careers of such surrealist idols as Jacques Vaché, Le Comte de Lautréamont, Tristan Corbière and Novalis who had also died young, and who held a singular attraction to the group as fleeting yet incomparably potent creative spirits. Another notable addition to this collection of famous alchemical texts was Johann Valentin Andreae's *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (1459) – the sixteenth-century tale that recounts the dream-like journey of Christian Rosenkreutz to a royal castle where he unwittingly becomes indoctrinated into the secrets of alchemical transmutation, rebirth and eternal life – of which Breton owned a 1928 French edition published as *Les Noces chymiques de Christian Rosencreutz*.[17] (The legendary life of Christian Rosenkreutz casts a long shadow over the surrealists' researches into alchemy, and resurfaces at several subsequent points in this study in discussions of Colquhoun and Brauner.)

Perhaps the most significant volume in Breton's collection was Grillot de Givry's *Le Musée des sorciers, mages et alchimistes* (1929).[18] Out of all these publications, *Le Musée des sorciers* had a particularly prominent reputation within wider surrealist circles by the close of 1929. Earlier in the year, the book had been reviewed by Michel Leiris in the journal *Documents*, where de Givry was praised for his clear and lucid presentation of alchemical documents and his rich discussion of alchemical symbolism.[19] Breton was almost certainly familiar not only with Leiris's review, but with the book itself by the time he was writing the 'Second Manifesto'.[20]

Breton would have known the work of the English alchemist, astrologer and magician, John Dee, through Leiris's article on Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* that was published in *La Révolution surréaliste* in October 1927. Once again, Leiris's commentary here represents a likely source of inspiration for Breton's discussion of alchemy in the 'Second Manifesto'. In the first place, Leiris's article on Dee deplores the manner in which alchemists had been shunned by modern scholars and philosophers as 'vulgar glass-blowers' and misguided fools – a reputation that Breton would also later contest.[21] More significantly, however, Leiris proposes that magic provides a crucial background to all philosophical tradition, and he points specifically to the works of Hegel and other German 'Philosophers of Nature' to support this claim.[22] Leiris's magical invocation of Hegel, in particular, directly anticipates Breton's conception of alchemy as I shall go on to outline it later in this chapter.

There are other texts that post-date but nonetheless complement Breton's comments from the 'Second Manifesto', and which he subsequently came to admire for their occult content. One such publication was *Les Demeures philosophales* (1930), written by the enigmatic French scholar and alchemist known as Fulcanelli.[23] Breton would later rely on this heavily in his alchemical analysis of Raymond Roussel's *La Poussière de Soleils* (1926) in his 1948 essay 'Fronton-Virage', where he described Fulcanelli as 'the highest modern authority' on alchemy.[24] Bauduin notes that this 1948 citation of Fulcanelli's study is the earliest conclusive evidence of Breton's knowledge of the text.[25] Yet it seems likely that Breton would have become familiar with Fulcanelli's work at the time of its publication in 1930, given its proximity to the 'Second Manifesto', and the precedent that it set for approaching alchemy as a creditable intellectual subject.[26] Fulcanelli's monumental study would have also been appealing on the grounds that it would have expanded Breton's knowledge of specific historical and legendary figures linked to alchemy – including Hermes Trismegistus, Flamel and Abraham the Jew – whom he had mentioned in the 'Second Manifesto'.[27]

In light of this long list of sources for Breton's intensifying interest in alchemy at the turn of the 1930s, it is eminently clear that his call for the movement's occultation was requited with a commensurate opening of the surrealists' horizons and avenues for occult research.[28] Whilst this chapter will not uncover new archival evidence that suddenly exposes the surrealists as coven-attending occultists, it will reveal that there was a distinct shift of the group's interests towards the occult in the 1930s that tallied with Breton's remarks in the 'Second Manifesto'. Crucially, the evidence raised here will demonstrate that the group's interest in alchemy specifically was substantiated through a theoretical discussion that quickly acquired material dimensions and physical analogues via the group's parallel interest in the surrealist object.

For all intents and purposes, Breton's enthusiastic celebration of the hermetic tradition and Surrealism's relation to it in the 'Second Manifesto' should be taken at face value; by no means discouraging readings of the surrealists as a group of practising alchemists. Indeed, by 1933 the surrealists were publishing in Brussels under the company name 'Éditions Nicolas Flamel', such was the strength of their identification with the tradition of alchemy.[29] Following on from the 'Second Manifesto', this name no doubt presented itself as the perfect tagline for their poetic output, as an allusion to the literary dimensions of Rimbaud's 'Alchimie du verbe'. Yet, alongside the cabalistic model of *poetry* advocated by Rimbaud's 'Alchimie du verbe', it was also the practical application of the Philosopher's Stone that had interested Breton in the 'Second Manifesto':

> the philosopher's stone […] brings us once again, after centuries of the mind's domestication and insane resignation, to the attempt to liberate once and for all the imagination by the 'long, immense, reasoned derangement of the senses,' and all the rest.[30]

This discussion of the Philosopher's Stone is paired with a discussion of the 'object' here, where within the same passage Breton turns to consider how the occult rituals surrounding alchemy will become manifest in Surrealism:

> who knows whether we are going to find ourselves at some future date faced with the necessity, in the light of some new evidence or not, of making use of completely new objects, or objects considered completely obsolete? I do not necessarily think that we will resume the habit of swallowing the hearts of moles or of listening, as to the beating of our own heart, to the rhythm of the water boiling in a boiler. Or rather I don't really know, I'm waiting.[31]

These supplementary comments are significant, since they demonstrate that Breton was considering the relevance and possible application of *experimental procedures* linked to alchemy within the frame of surrealist activity.

In the existing scholarship on Surrealism's occult interests, the significance of the actual practice of alchemy – concerning the physical process of transmutation – has remained largely unexplored. Yet there appears to be fertile ground for this discussion within the context of the surrealist object. Considering the fact that Breton had a declared interest in alchemy by 1929, and that there was a wealth of information on the topic circulating through the work of de Givry and other studies at this time, it seems little coincidence that strong similarities should have subsequently surfaced between the practical experiment of alchemy and the practical experiment of object-making within Surrealism over the 1930s. Breton's own reflections on Surrealism's future response to occult tradition, quoted above, plainly link this line of investigation to the 'object'.[32] The innate connection between alchemy and the surrealist object has already been remarked upon by Warlick, where she has noted that 'the chronological proximity of the surrealist shift towards object making and its shift towards hermetic philosophy deserves further explanation'.[33]

Following Warlick's recommendation, in this chapter I consider how the psychologically generative model of alchemical experimentation – as a process perceived to induce 'an interior [psychological] metamorphosis through an exterior [physical] transmutation' – lay at the heart of the surrealists' interactions with the object in the 1930s.[34] This equivalence between their researches into alchemy and the object will be established via my tracing of the group's gradual reconciliation of alchemy with the pre-existing channels of surrealist discourse, including the works of some of its most influential theoretical arbiters, such as Freud and Hegel. In the first instance, I will retrace the path through which alchemical discourse entered the frame of surrealist theory of the object in relation to the work and writing of Salvador Dalí, demonstrating how the model of alchemy appears to have invigorated the somewhat basic psychoanalytical theory through which he had originally embraced the object in the early 1930s. I will then turn to Breton's writings from the mid-1930s, which appear to have developed out of both his own previous discussion of alchemy and Dalí's earlier work. In Breton's writings and elsewhere, rocks and crystals emerged as the surrealist objects *par excellence*. As I set out the case here, this curious reputation ultimately related to the surrealists' contemporaneous recourse to alchemy. Hegel's theory of crystal and his model of dialectics surface here as some of the tools with which the group was able to justify both its project with the object *and* its recourse to alchemy. It is out of this theoretical discussion, by way of conclusion, that the chapter

picks up the thread of surrealist research into alchemy in the context of Colquhoun's art and writing of the late 1930s and 1940s, in which she developed and considerably expanded the crystalline and geological dimensions of alchemy's conceptual resonance at this historical juncture.

Before embarking on this alchemical analysis of the surrealist object, some of the fundamental tenets and principles of alchemy need to be clarified in relation to surrealist discourse.

A sense of the Great Work

The central act of alchemy involves the transmutation of base metals (such as lead) into gold through a series of unspecified procedures that have been variously interpreted. The basic equation for the alchemical process, as it has been cryptically handed down through the esoteric literature, consists of an initial blackening stage (*nigredo*), which is then followed by a whitening stage (*albedo*), a further yellowing stage (*citrinitas*) and finally a reddening stage (*rubedo*).[35] The whitening and reddening stages have traditionally been associated with the use of Sulphur and Mercury, respectively. These elements have in turn been symbolically identified with the figures of the White Queen and Red King within the legend of the Chemical Wedding, whose sexual union also serves as one of the grand metaphors for the generative elemental fusion of the alchemical process (such is the alchemical basis of the symbolism behind *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*).

Alongside the gold-making tradition, alchemy also has a less famous sister branch known as spagyrics, which is closely derived from the work of the sixteenth-century alchemist and polymath, Paracelsus. The practice of spagyrics is concerned with the conversion of plants and natural substances into pseudo-medicinal, pseudo-spiritual elixirs or remedies, often concentrated through supernatural energies such as the light of the moon and the influences of the zodiac.[36] Whilst the subjective application of spagyrics may seem at odds with the supposedly universal science of alchemical metallurgy, the two are in fact integrally related on the plane of affective experience.

Underpinning both gold-making and spagyrics there has consistently been a distinctive psychological dimension to the practice of alchemy (relating to emotional affect and intellectual and spiritual illumination), whereby the physical process of alchemical experimentation has been attributed with complex symbolic significance. This is vividly demonstrated in *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, for example. Though the tale is clearly intimately entwined with alchemical practice in its overarching symbolism of the Chemical Wedding (in the 'adventurous physics' conducted on the Sixth Day and countless other events and details throughout), the purpose of the book is to equate the alchemical process with a spiritual quest covering moralistic matters of modesty and hubris, justice and punishment, and questions of epistemology that offset the dangers of curiosity against the wonders of revelation (questions which serve as a cautionary tale to the reader's own investigatory interest in the book).[37]

It was this symbol- and metaphor- inflected, psychologically affective aspect of alchemy that the seventeenth-century English politician, antiquarian and historian of alchemy, Elias Ashmole, alluded to in the introduction to his alchemical anthology the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (in colloquial prose) in 1652:

> Gold I confesse is a delicious Object, a goodly Light, which we admire and gaze upon *ut pueri in junonis avem* [as boys upon the peacock]; but, as to make Gold (saith an incomparable Authour) is the chiefest intent of the Alchimists, so was it scarce any intent of the ancient Philosophers, and the lowest use the Adepti made of the Materia. For they being lovers of Wisdome more then Worldly Wealth, drove at higher and more Excellent operations.[38]

As Alexander Roob comments in *The Hermetic Museum: Alchemy and Mysticism* (2014), the growing popularity of this philosophical account of alchemy was such that, by the early seventeenth century, the conception of alchemy upheld by 'Theosophical alchemists like the Rosicrucians' (the religio-philosophical cult of Christian Rosenkreutz) was becoming increasingly 'irreconcilable' with the labours of 'practising laboratory chemists […] who sought to improve the empirical foundations of alchemy'.[39] By the nineteenth century, the burgeoning field of occult literature in France (of which the surrealists were the direct inheritors) readily treated alchemy as a spiritual discourse, long since removed from the science of metallurgy. Eliphas Lévi, pioneer of this literary field, wrote in his *Dogme et rituel de la haute magie* (1854) that

> the mediæval alchemists pointed to the Philosophical Stone as the first means of making philosophical gold, that is to say, of transforming the vital forces represented by the six metals into Sol, otherwise into truth and light, the first and indispensable operation of the Great Work […] To find the Philosophical Stone is then to have discovered the Absolute […] the Absolute is that which admits of no errors; it is the fixation of the volatile; it is the rule of the imagination; it is the very necessity of being; it is the immutable law of reason and truth. The Absolute is that which is.[40]

Alongside this daunting proposition that alchemy holds the very law of the macrocosm for the spiritual adept, however, Lévi also notes its application on the microcosmic scale of individual psychology. Part of the intimation of the Absolute in the Philosopher's Stone for Lévi lies in the way in which it reveals the 'rule of the imagination' and the 'necessity of being'.[41] Here we discover the seed of the psychoanalytical dimension of alchemy as a process founded upon a kind of revelatory communion 'between the psyche of the alchemist and the arcane substance', as it has subsequently been developed in the twentieth century by Carl Jung.[42]

As Parkinson has noted, Jung's candidacy as arch commentator on alchemy in modern academic scholarship is upheld by the fact that he produced no less than three major studies on the topic: *Alchemical Studies* (1929–54), *Psychology and Alchemy* (1944) and *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy* (19556).[43] Jung's interest in alchemy was entirely focused

upon the mechanism through which the adept attained the kind of 'philosophical gold' (Ashmole's 'Wisdome') that had long been emphasized as the precious by-product of the physical process of transmutation.[44] By the time Jung was writing in the early-mid-twentieth century, the alchemical quest of making gold could be more or less dismissed as something unattainable in the eyes of science, given that, 'according to atomic theory, gold is an element, a basic [and irreducible] constituent, of matter'.[45] However, rather than detracting from its appeal as a topic of research, this led him to posit that there had always been more to it. Jung was convinced that:

> The alchemical *opus* deals in the main not just with chemical experiments as such, but with something resembling psychic processes expressed in pseudo-chemical language. The ancients knew more or less what chemical processes were; therefore they must have known that the thing they practiced was, to say the least of it, no ordinary chemistry.[46]

Jung was suspicious of the vagueness of alchemy's 'chemistry', and was drawn to the idea that its idiosyncratic symbolism was invested in some other process that was separate from the reactions taking place in its alembics and crucibles. For Jung, alchemy ultimately enacted certain psychological transmutations that result from the subliminal reverberations of its symbolism within the unconscious:

> Everything unknown and empty is filled with psychological projection; it is as if the investigator's own psychic background were mirrored in the darkness. What he sees in matter, or thinks he can see, is chiefly the data of his own unconscious which he is projecting into it.
>
> […]
>
> The profound darkness that shrouds the alchemical procedure comes from the fact that although the alchemist was interested in the chemical part of the work he also used it to devise a nomenclature for the psychic transformations that really fascinated him.[47]

Henderson and Sherwood point out that 'the link between analytical psychology and alchemy began in 1928, when Richard Wilhelm sent C. G. Jung his translation of a Chinese Taoist text, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*'.[48] This observation puts Jung's breakthrough in analytical psychology within a year of the surrealists' first significant forays into alchemical discourse in 1929, around the time of the 'Second Manifesto'. Although these developments within Surrealism derived from entirely separate sources, the coincidence is nevertheless tantalizing. Indeed, it reveals the surrealists' position within a much wider movement towards the intellectual re-evaluation of alchemy in Europe at precisely this moment in the late 1920s.[49]

At the crux of Jung's theory of alchemy, and what is most interesting in relation to the surrealist conception of the object, is this idea of a direct and immediate causal connection between the physical and mental realms, whereby the fireworks of the alchemical process induce a correlative series of psychological acrobatics through the interplay of symbols and metaphors that hang off and dance around the chemical reactants. What Jung's account implies is that this kind of psychological reorientation

can only occur when the individual is properly engaged with a tangible manifestation of the alchemical experiment, suggesting that this unconscious transformation is induced in part by the sensorial experience of alchemical transmutation (whether this actually produces gold or not is irrelevant). Jung was fascinated by the opportunity for mediation between the physical and mental realms posed by alchemical symbolism: where the literal runs neatly parallel with the metaphorical; where, in his words, the symbol is 'neither abstract nor concrete, neither rational nor irrational, neither real nor unreal', but 'always both'.[50] Ultimately, he believed that 'there is an unconscious identity between the psyche of the alchemist and the arcane substance, i.e., the spirit imprisoned in matter'.[51]

Observing the consistency of alchemical symbolism over the centuries, Jung argued that its efficacy in this capacity for psychological revelation was tried and tested, and must therefore be real. On this point, he went on to develop a theory that alchemy's standardized symbolism must in fact correspond to certain underlying motifs and symbols that are engrained within the human unconscious; the hereditary legends of a *collective unconscious*, which alchemy had been specifically devised to stimulate. This is where Jung's views on alchemy become more controversial.

Years later, the relevance of Jung's work to the surrealists' interest in alchemy was debated by Serge Hutin and René Alleau in 1954. In an essay in the journal *Revue Métapsychique* entitled 'L'Art et l'alchimie', Hutin took Jung's theory of the collective unconscious and suggested that all art is in fact derivative of this body of symbolism – a supposition that he perceived to have been upheld within the Surrealist Movement.[52] Just as Jung identified that the hereditary images that he termed 'archetypes' are 'particularly numerous in alchemy', he writes:

> the study of pictorial representations used by the adepts for systematising their intuitions opens up vast perspectives on *Surreality* […] 'Each artist must take up singlehandedly, wrote André Breton, the pursuit of the Golden Fleece'. And is there not more than a coincidence in the fact that the name 'artist' was one of the expressions designating the alchemists?[53]

Meanwhile, in a corresponding essay in the journal *Médium: Communication Surréaliste*, Alleau argued against Hutin's Jungian notion of an 'ancestral unconscious pre-existent at birth'.[54] Finding no little absurdity in the notion that an underlying stratum of human thought is capable of retaining the standard symbols of a complex literary-cum-philosophical-cum-scientific culture of alchemy from generation to generation, Alleau argued instead that it is not so much a collective unconscious but the common, enduring and vital force of the symbol itself – in its various manifestations – that invests art with the revelatory power of alchemy. He laid the case out in plain terms, reasoning that 'this life of relation' embodied by alchemical symbolism does not represent anything other than the 'limits of our horizon and our condition'.[55] In the final analysis, 'the symbols of the adepts and the teachings of the masters' are equivalent to the 'lights of Art and the flames of Nature'.[56]

Jung's notion of a collective unconscious goes against the grain of his one-time teacher and colleague Sigmund Freud's emphasis on the unrivalled role of individual

experience (primarily in infancy) in the formation of the unconscious, which was of central import in surrealist discourse.[57] Nonetheless, in Alleau's overarching diagnosis of the unambiguous role of the symbol as mirror to the unconscious – as the site onto which it is projected and to whose image it is tempered – the fundamental features of Jung's case to do with psychological sensitivity towards the experience of the alchemical process remain reconcilable with surrealist discourse. Indeed, the general idea – bound up within alchemical discourse – of subjecting the unconscious to certain transformations through physical processes, already closely resembles the psychoanalytical model upon which the surrealists conceptualized their encounters with the object from the early 1930s onwards.

Situating the object

The idea of being psychologically invested in the world of objects had been popularized by Freud, and his 1927 essay on 'Fetishism' represents a crucial node for the emergence of a surrealist discourse on the object. Here he had suggested that the fetish object simultaneously satisfies and reinforces a pre-existing desire – a desire that has been transplanted onto the object in the course of its repression in the unconscious. It is a simple equation of desire's displacement, where the fetish functions as a 'substitute'.[58] This Freudian scenario of the fetish seems to have formed the basis of the surrealists' earliest formulations of the object. The early 'Symbolically Functioning Objects' of Dalí – as conceived of in his 1931 essay 'Objets surréalistes' – were treated as 'symbols' of an acknowledged complex, and thus attributed with the power of functioning erotically. Dalí's own *Symbolically Functioning Object* (Figure 1.2), for example, featured a heeled shoe, which Freud had singled out as a stereotypical fetish object (as an object potentially proximate to the male child's first encounter with the mother's sexual aspect, i.e. something associated with the act of dressing or undressing), and a glass of milk, which Dalí associated with a longstanding sexual complex of his own (derived from having seen an image of baby kangaroos half-submerged in their mother's milk as a child).[59] Haim Finkelstein has even suggested that many of the elements of Dalí's object were derived cheaply from existing literature on fetishistic fantasy, such as from Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886).[60] And in this regard, as devised through a 'conscious incorporation of sexual content', these Symbolically Functioning Objects were arguably straightforwardly representational upon the axis of sculpture: as the subjective made objective.[61]

In subsequent formulations of the surrealist object over the course of the 1930s, this relationship was reconceived in opposite terms that posited the object as the site upon which the subject becomes orientated. There was a growing emphasis on the significance of the *encounter* with the object, and the manner in which the experience of its manufacture or discovery facilitated insight into the unconscious. In the context of this theoretical transition from the object being the passive receptacle of predetermined symbolism to becoming the productive site of revelatory meaning, the discourse of alchemy seems to have posed a critical intervention.



Figure 1.2 Salvador Dalí, *Surrealist Object Functioning Symbolically-Gala's Shoe*, edition of 1973 after lost original of 1931, assemblage with shoe, white marble, photographs, a glass containing wax, a gibbit, a matchbox, hair and a wooden scraper, 19 in × 11 in × 3 11/16 in. Collection of The Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, FL (USA) 2022. © Salvador Dali, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, DACS 2022.

As Fulcanelli stressed in *Les Demeures philosophales*, the value of alchemy had always resided in its 'analogical truth'.[62] But whereas traditionally this analogical quality of alchemy had been applied to philosophical questions to do with religion (typical of medieval alchemy) and science (such as Isaac Newton's recourse to alchemy), the paradigm shift of the twentieth century seems to have ushered in a new analogue for alchemy in the form of psychoanalysis, and the great question of the relationship between 'material' and 'psychic' reality, which both Jung and the surrealists shared in.[63] Indeed, the surrealists seem to have been in implicit agreement with Jung's subsequent supposition that alchemy has a strong bearing on 'the evolution of personality' and the 'individuation process'.[64] However, where Jung conceived of this effect resulting from specific symbolism (supposedly hereditarily engrained in the unconscious), the surrealists identified this psychological stimulation within the general frame of the physical encounter with the object (the unconscious repercussions of experiencing a confounding aggregation of substances): an alchemically inspired hypothesis which appears to have formed the template for their interaction with the surrealist object in the 1930s.

Alchemy as an experiment in dialectics

Over the course of the 1930s, the group's idiosyncratic reformulation of Hegelian dialectics dramatically expanded the conceptual purview of alchemy within surrealist discourse. As Michael Inwood has summarized, the dialectical system was conceived of by Hegel as 'the autonomous self-criticism and self-development of the subject-matter, of, [for example,] a form of consciousness or a concept'.[65] It is a system wherein a new entity/answer is reached via a series of successive negations of the original thing/concept through its binary opposite, in order to streamline the thing/concept in hand into its most balanced and enduring form, or sustain its evolution. Inwood elaborates on Hegel's formulation of the process as follows:

> In a wide sense, Hegel's dialectic involves three steps: (1) One or more concepts or categories are taken as fixed, sharply defined and distinct from each other. This is the stage of understanding. (2) When we reflect on such categories, one or more contradictions emerge in them. This is the stage of dialectic proper, or of dialectical or negative reason. (3) The result of this dialectic is a new, higher category, which embraces the earlier categories and resolves the contradiction involved in them. This is the stage of speculation or positive reason. Hegel suggests that this new category is a 'unity of opposites' [… and] holds that opposites, in the case both of thoughts and of things, change into each other when they are intensified.[66]

Given its decidedly open-ended application (universally applicable to things and concepts), it should not come as a surprise that the Hegelian dialectic could have been adopted at some level by the surrealists. Indeed, Hegel's implicit project of accounting for 'why things, as well as our thoughts, systematically cohere with each other' (as summarized by Inwood) already reads like a line from one of the surrealist manifestoes.[67] Nonetheless, the story of how the works of the German idealist philosopher from the turn of the nineteenth century came to take centre stage in surrealist discourse in the 1930s needs some further clarification.

As Steven Harris notes, Breton was reading Hegel with Aragon as early as 1919, five years prior to the Surrealist Movement's inception.[68] Over the course of the 1920s Breton's interest in Hegel deepened. The Hôtel Drouot sales catalogues reveal that by the time of his death in 1966, he owned a vast array of nineteenth-century French translations of Hegel's works, including: *La Poétique* (1855), *Philosophie de la nature* (1863), *Philosophie de l'esprit* (1867), *Logique de Hegel* (1874) and *Philosophie de la religion* (1878).[69] Although we can only speculate which of these texts he had read during the 1920s, each one nonetheless represents a plausible channel for his early Hegelian inquiries. Harris has also identified *Cours d'ésthetique* (1852), translated into French by Charles Bénard, as yet another volume that appears to have been available to him during these formative years of the Surrealist Movement.[70] Further to this, Bruce Baugh has stressed the importance of Jean Wahl's *Le Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (1929) as a piece of secondary literature that likely inspired his growing interest in Hegel at the close of the 1920s.[71] Regardless of his precise sources,

Breton was already referencing Hegel by the time he wrote *Nadja* in 1928, and in 1929 these references were expanded dramatically in the 'Second Manifesto'.[72]

He famously began the 'Second Manifesto' by stating his aspirations for surrealist research to encapsulate the mediating point in between a set of dialectical oppositions:

> Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions. Now, search as one may one will never find any other motivating force in the activities of the Surrealists than the hope of finding and fixing this point.[73]

It is readily possible to draw comparison with the kind of dialectical hypotheses characteristic of Hegel's writing, such as from his *Philosophy of Nature* (posthumously published 1842, but deriving from his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* of 1817), which Breton is known to have quoted from and admired:

> Life is the union of opposites generally, not merely the opposition of Notion and reality. Wherever inner and outer, cause and effect, end and means, subjectivity and objectivity, etc., are one and the same, there is life.[74]

Yet it is also possible to detect the shadow of alchemy upon Breton's thought here by considering this passage alongside the *Emerald Tablet*, which bears the famous dialectical maxim: 'That which is above is like to that which is below, and that which is below is like to that which is above, to accomplish the miracles of the one thing.'[75] The mysterious 'point' that Breton envisaged already appears to be at once of a Hegelian and an alchemical order.[76]

According to the above 'Second Manifesto' statement, Breton wished to push dialectical thinking to a threshold point at which established reality itself would be transformed by the juxtaposition and reconciliation of its own engrained tensions.[77] In the midst of this dialectical overhaul of established reality, the material world embodied by 'the object' represented one of the greatest and most urgent challenges of all for Surrealism: as the empirical fact upon which the scientific conditions of reality were hung, and the conventionally stifling counterpoint to the alternative reality of the dreaming 'subject' that Surrealism championed.

Going into the 1930s, the subject-object dialectic became a central concern of surrealist discourse. As Harris notes, 'the investigation of the relations between subject and object becomes a leitmotif of surrealist activity in the 1930s'.[78] Within the dialectical framework of surrealist thought during the 1930s, alchemy could very easily be appreciated as a phenomenon that tested conventional calibrations of the subject-object equation: where the fate of the object (the chemical reactants) was tied to the thinking subject's forays into occult philosophy; and the subject's quest for revelation, conversely, was bound to the transmutation of the object.

Glenn Alexander Magee's study *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (2001) is particularly insightful on the point of this affinity between dialectics and alchemy. Here Magee posits that this connection is not just theoretically valid, but that it is

actually sanctioned by the writings of Hegel himself, wherein alchemy had been foundational to his thought.[79] In one particularly revealing passage, Magee considers the manifestation of alchemy in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*:

> [Here] Hegel is alluding, of course, to the *necessity* of the move from nature to Spirit. […] Spirit is the telos of nature. Spirit presupposes nature, *and* nature presupposes Spirit. Hegel writes that 'The purpose of nature is to extinguish itself, and to break through its rind of immediate and sensuous being, to consume itself like a Phoenix in order to emerge from this externality rejuvenated as Spirit'.
>
> Spirit is characterized by its drive to overcome the subject-object distinction, to eliminate the 'otherness' of the other. What Spirit achieves is an experience of a world that is 'merely an apprehension of itself'.[80]

Hegel was also preoccupied with the subject-object dialectic, then, only in its very grandest expression as the antithetical pair of 'Spirit' and 'nature'. Yet Magee goes on to demonstrate that this high aspiration was also shared by the alchemists, who similarly sought to 'free spirit from nature'.[81] 'The most interesting connection between Hegel and alchemy', he explains, 'does not consist in his explicit references to alchemical terms or doctrine, but in the parallelism between his philosophical project and the alchemical opus'.[82] Here Magee is alluding to the innate similarities between Hegel's conception of the Spirit-nature dialectic and alchemical estimations of the subject-object dialectic, which similarly addressed the question of mind-matter dualism. The surrealists' interest in such mind-matter dualism during the 1930s was conditioned by their fluency in Marxist theory, and their familiarity with the foundational Marxist concept of dialectical materialism, which posited that all thought is determined and limited by matter, whereby the physical substance of the world – and, more pointedly, humanity's interactions with it (through subsistence, labour and culture) – determines consciousness, belief and all aspects of social praxis.[83] In outlining the 'dual physical and psychical nature of the alchemical opus' Magee helps us to sketch out the broader theoretical resonances of alchemy as it came to be understood within the Surrealist Movement.[84]

Dalí's 'meteor of the imagination'

In the early 1930s, Dalí was the greatest exponent and innovator of surrealist theory on the object. It was Dalí who gave the object its official baptism into 1930s surrealist critical discourse in the essay 'Objets surréalistes', which appeared in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* in 1931. This was followed two years later by a second essay on the object entitled 'Objets psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques', which was published in the same journal in 1933. The 1933 essay describes a hypothetical, specialized procedure for producing an entirely new class of surrealist object. At its opening, Dalí challenges the reader to follow him down 'the explanatory route […] of the "dialectical processes" of the "surrealist object"'.[85] This comment provides a crucial context not only for his personal pattern of thought in 1933, but also for wider

surrealist discourse on the object over the 1930s more generally. Indeed, following the preceding discussion, it becomes apparent how Dalí's essay seems to represent the pivotal moment at which surrealist discourse directly conflated the 'dialectical processes' of the surrealist object with the dialectical structure of alchemy.

Dalí never pursued his own instructions to create a 'working' psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic object, and this surely came down to the fact that the process outlined was laboriously elaborate, and ultimately extremely impractical. Beyond giving the essay the tongue-in-cheek charm of Dalí's self-consciously convoluted experiment, these impractical directions also serve to draw attention to its theoretical premise. Despite the seemingly humorous pretence of the experiment, there is a rich theoretical seam at the heart of the essay.

The process of creating the psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic object is described as follows. The experiment begins with several people depositing invented or pre-existing objects into a dark room. When the number of these objects collected in the room is judged sufficient, another group of people who have had nothing to do with the experiment up to this point are to be shut inside the dark room. This group is tasked with providing oral descriptions of the objects concealed in the room as they perceive them in the darkness, by touch. This group's blind descriptions are passed onto a further group of 'technicians', who are tasked with reconstructing the objects from the room according to the descriptions alone.[86] These secondary objects are then to be dropped from a height of ten metres onto a pile of hay (thus being destroyed or severely damaged), before being photographed *in situ* by a specially positioned camera. In keeping with the consistent criterion of the object's total obscurity, all of this is to be conducted in darkness. As soon as the resulting photographs are developed, they should then immediately be placed into separate small metal boxes, once again without being seen. Finally, the encased photographs should each be dipped into an indeterminate mass of molten iron, and lo and behold: '[t]his formless piece of molten iron of undefined weight and volume will be the "psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic" object'.[87]

This object is illustrated within the article in a table resembling some kind of evolutionary chart (Figure 1.3), which displays no less than fifty-one variations of psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic forms. These imagined psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic objects vary in shape and size, but they all loosely adhere to the generic form of a ferrous mineralogical specimen. Although the relative scale of these entities in relation to actual, existing objects remains unsettlingly ambiguous in Dalí's diagram, their stone-like density is palpable from the furious black scribbling through which they are rendered as solid entities, offset against the airy space of the blank white background.

Dalí speaks of the surrealist object surpassing its 'symbolic stage' here, relinquishing the discrete, recognizable forms of found objects for indeterminate 'formless[ness]'.[88] Indeed, he notes that the only defining feature of the psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic object is its uncategorizable appearance, which he likens to the amorphous forms of 'meteor[s]' (Figure 1.4):

> The human connoisseur of the spiritual and psychological phenomenon enclosed in the formless piece of iron of the 'psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic object' will not be able, I am sure, to help violently feeling all the real lyricism, all the 'objective perversity' of this real and true meteor of the imagination.[89]

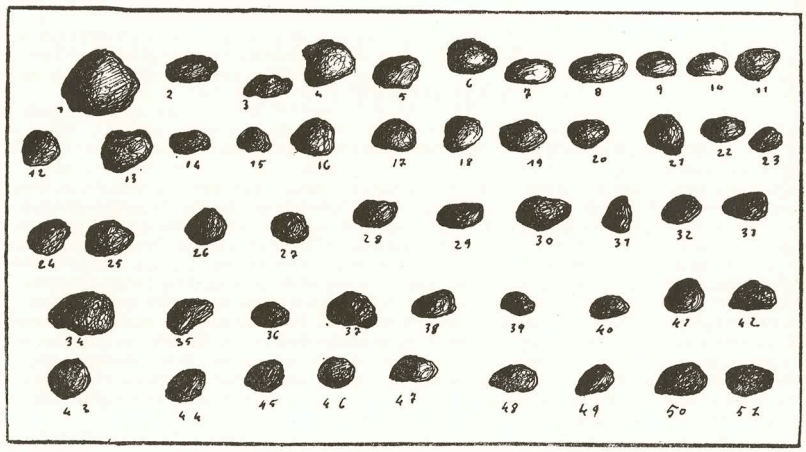


Figure 1.3 Salvador Dalí, *Aspect des nouveaux objets 'psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques'*, 1933, from *Le Surrealisme ASDLR*, no. 5, Collection of The Dalí Museum Library & Archives, St. Petersburg, FL (USA) 2022. © Salvador Dali, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, DACS 2022.



Figure 1.4 Iron meteorite, Campo del Cielo, Argentina. © Susan E. Degginger / Alamy Stock Photo.

As Mircea Eliade reasoned, it was 'inevitable that meteorites should inspire awe' and become associated with magical beliefs, possessing as they are of that 'sacred quality enjoyed only by celestial things'.[90] Dalí's attribution of 'lyricism' onto the barren face of his iron 'meteor' makes for a surprising contrast with his previous discussions of the object, where it was addressed as an obviously and overtly symbolic entity (in the context of his 'Symbolically Functioning Objects'). Questions of why Dalí had become so invested in these enigmatic lumps of iron, stripped of all symbolic content, and of how he came to envisage them in the first place, immediately confront the reader here. The only satisfactory answers to these questions surface through introducing alchemy as a theoretical background to the essay.

Finkelstein has already suggested that Dalí's experiment has certain similarities with alchemical transmutation, though his comments on this point are brief:

> [With] the *objets psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques* […] Dalí utilizes the 'laws of the secret working of the universe' (chance, gravity, etc.) in conjunction with the laws governing the unconscious (automatism, etc.) in order to create an object which embodies in its real 'constitution matérialiste' a 'lyrical enigma.' […] Dalí's *objets psycho-etc.* are the final word in the *transmutation* of things, and a proclamation of the supremacy of the imagination.[91]

It is readily possible to expand upon Finkelstein's remarks here. In the first instance, the anecdotal picture of traditions of laboratory alchemy provides several surprisingly close parallels with Dalí's experiment. Perhaps most plainly, the pseudo-scientific protocol of the 'psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic' procedure – conducted by certain 'technicians' who carefully regulate external factors (light, primarily) that encroach upon the results of the experiment – serves to align it with the occulted chemistry that underpins alchemy. Further to this, the literal darkness that Dalí invokes at every stage of the experiment seems to reflect the metaphorical gloom that has come to stand for the shrouded nature of hermetic discourse, faced with which, as Jung reminds us, '[t]he reader usually finds himself in the most impenetrable darkness'.[92] In relation to this, near the start of the essay Dalí declares that 'the psychic speed [of these objects …] surpasses the most Einsteinian accelerations of new imaginative physics'.[93] Whilst this could simply be an ironic allusion to the blatantly unsophisticated experimental procedure of building, smashing, photographing and casting simple objects, it could also be a playful reference to his efforts to surpass the capabilities of modern physics by recourse to occult metaphysics.

Dalí's use of the term 'anamorphic' also seems resonant with alchemical practice here. Whereas 'anamorphic' might typically be taken within art historical scholarship to relate to the perspectival tricks of distortion and projection encompassed by the technical term 'anamorphosis' (epitomized by Hans Holbein the Younger's skull in *The Ambassadors* portrait of 1533 – an effect which Dalí was well accustomed to in his own painting), its application here in relation to the meteoritic object, born of fire, points towards its alternative etymological stem in the geological sense of 'anamorphism': which refers to the creation of complex minerals in the earth's mantle in igneous

rock formation.[94] Whilst this mass-scale, natural process may appear a far cry from the closeted work of laboratory alchemy, the concomitant phenomena of chemical metamorphosis through intense heat, and the up-scaling of simple minerals into complex minerals, are both fundamentally linked to alchemical procedure.

Historically, there had always been a mineralogical dimension to alchemy. In his 1956 study *Forgerons et alchimistes,* Eliade outlined the widespread belief held across the ancient world that all metal ores would, if left undisturbed, naturally perfect themselves to become gold.[95] In these terms, 'Alchemy only accelerated the growth of metals', and effectively only imitated and enhanced natural worldly processes, in the eyes of alchemists down the centuries.[96] Henderson and Sherwood have similarly discussed the prevalent alchemical connotations of mining in both ancient and recent history, with more specific reference to the procreative inflections of such mineralogical gestation:

> Miners and metallurgists spoke in a language of living metaphor, one that was similar across diverse cultures. Metals were believed to develop in the earth over time, becoming more perfect with age […] The earth was the mother, and the caves were her womb […] A mine was like a cave, and so the mining of an ore involved the audacious act of entering the womb of the Earth Mother to take an embryo [… And similarly,] In European alchemy, it was said that the alchemical fire must burn for forty weeks, the time of gestation of a human embryo.[97]

Theodore Ziolkowski also picks up and elaborates upon this point, where he describes in more direct terms how:

> The belief in a fertile *Terra Mater* accounts for the theory, widely held from classical antiquity into the nineteenth century, that stones and metals grow within the earth like organic matter […] It is a principle repeated routinely in fundamental alchemistic texts that alchemy, when it changes base metals into gold and silver, is simply accelerating the process of nature herself.[98]

These comments seem to resonate with Dalí's mineralogical characterization of the final product of his experiment, where he can also be seen to have been playing with the idea of the 'natural' alchemy of meteors.

Dalí made this connection between geological and alchemical processes more explicitly elsewhere in his 1933 painting *Geological Destiny* (Plate 2), where geological process is equated with no less than the golden egg – a symbol that has historically been associated with the alchemical Great Work.[99] Not only does the title directly relate this symbol to geological processes, but the ovoid pebble shape of the egg itself, and its curious isolation against a rocky desert, recalls Dalí's 1933 illustrations of the psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic object in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (particularly where his illustrations take on a more perfect form in specimens '7', '8', '28', '29' and '30' – Figure 1.3). In the wider context of Dalí's painting, this golden egg

motif appears to have in fact been recycled from certain earlier works, which suggest that his interest in alchemy extended back to at least 1930, roughly coinciding with Breton's comments on alchemy in the 'Second Manifesto'. The golden egg had also appeared in both *Shades of Night Descending* (Figure 1.5) and *Symbiosis of a Head of Seashells* (Figure 1.6) in 1931, for example. Yet it is the earlier painting, *The Font* (Plate 3) of 1930, above all, that stands as the strongest proof of his awareness of the occult dimension of this golden egg motif, where the rest of the image is steeped in allusions to the Grail quest and the Key to the Hermetic Mysteries, among the usual Dalínian repertoire of haunting figures and grasshoppers. In all these works, significantly, the egg motif was also attached notionally to the processes of transmogrification associated with Dalí's recently devised 'Paranoiac-Critical' method, which was itself conceived of in loosely alchemical terms of inducing a psychoanalytically revealing experience through exposure to boundary-distorting accretions and fusions.

In 'Objets psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques', at a more fundamental level, alchemy seems to be manifested through the experiment's inherent emphasis on the unconscious resonances of experiencing the object's metamorphosis; as a phenomenon that represents a correlate to the process of transmutation. The experiment works

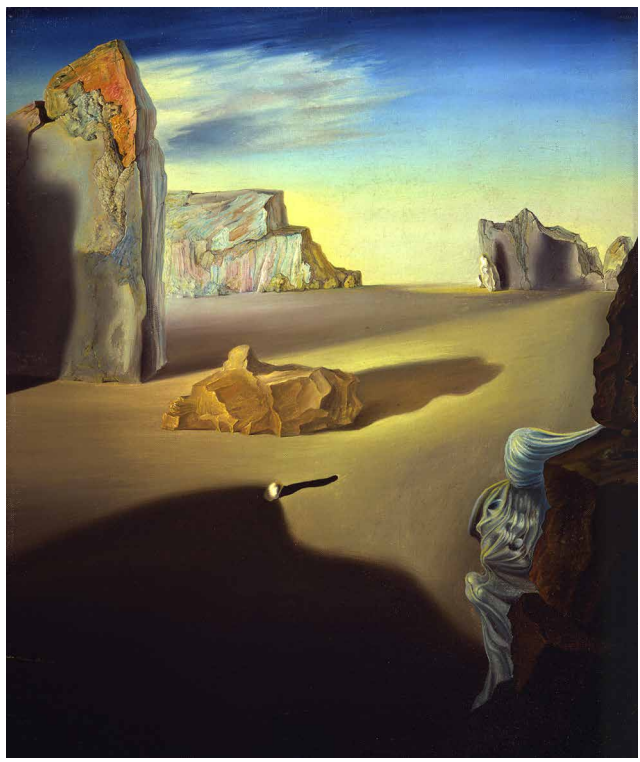


Figure 1.5 Salvador Dalí, *Shades of Night Descending*, 1931, oil on canvas, 24 in × 19 3/4 in, Collection of The Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, FL (USA) 2022. © Salvador Dali, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, DACS 2022.

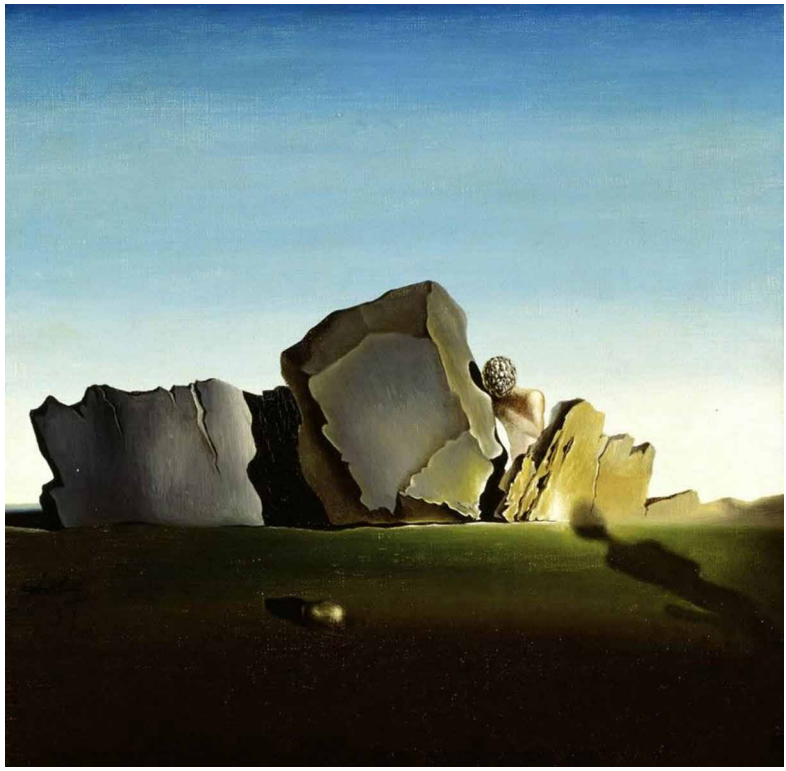


Figure 1.6 Salvador Dalí, *Symbiosis of a Head of Seashells*, 1931, oil on canvas, 35 × 27 cm, private collection. © Salvador Dali, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, DACS 2022.

as a tactile ephiphany. Writing many years later in his influential text *Touching and Imagining* (1983), Jan Švankmajer considered his own experiments with intensified tactile sensation as a kind of alchemy. Here he relayed how:

> Touch is somewhere in the middle, partly objective, partly subjective. While touching, we project a sensation outwardly, outside of us; at the same time we perceive it subjectively, on our skin. It means that touch can play an important role in overcoming the opposition of Object–Subject.[100]

And in these terms he outlined how 'Tactile wooden spoons, pot lids, rolling pins and boards are alchemistic tools and our bodies are the crucibles for the Magnum Opus of tactilism'.[101] Švankmajer's experiments in *Touching and Imagining* were closely inspired by Dalí's own investigations into the revelatory experience of tactile sensation, in particular his project for a *Tactile Cinema*.[102] In its more intimate, less commercial dimensions, Dalí's psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic experiment represents an even closer precedent for Švankmajer's work, and the objects that it produced might similarly be described as 'alchemistic tools'.

The theoretical kernel of Dalí's experiment is the notion that a psychological epiphany is unlocked through the physical process of creating this 'meteor of the imagination'.[103] The whole operation works according to Hegel's alchemically rooted metaphor of dialectical resolution, whereby Dalí's molten object 'break[s] through its rind of immediate and sensuous being, to consume itself like a Phoenix in order to emerge from this externality rejuvenated as Spirit'.[104]

In subsequent essays, Dalí continued to ponder the reformulation and resolution of the subject-object dialectic. Later in 1933, he published another article in *Minotaure* in which he attempted to apply such surrealist dialectics more directly towards physical reality, in a radical reanalysis of Art Nouveau architecture. The essay was entitled 'De la beauté terrifiante et comestible de l'architecture "modern" style', and in it Dalí advanced his theory that Art Nouveau architecture 'embodies the most tangible and delirious aspiration of hyper-materialism' on account of the way in which its elusively soft, sinuous forms appear (and seem to aspire to be) edible.[105] He posited that Art Nouveau architecture had revealed how the ultimate human fantasy is to consume the object of desire: as a very literal collapsing of the subject-object dialectic, wherein the object is physically assimilated into the body of the subject.[106] (He depicted this moment of desirous union in the 1932 sketch, *Cannibalisme des objets*, where subject and object seep into each other as a man sucks up a heeled shoe like a pile of spaghetti.) Here Dalí seems to have made a break with the alchemical model of the subject-object dialectic that had surfaced in his 'Objets psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques', replacing it with his outlandish vision of the 'cannibalism of objects'.[107]

In a letter sent to Dalí on 22 April 1934, Breton congratulated him on his latest attempt to unsettle the objective reputation of material reality. He wrote to Dalí: 'I have, naturally, read your article for *Minotaure* ["De la beauté terrifiante et comestible de l'architecture 'modern' style"] and I have, as usual, judged it to be perfect (magnificently so).'[108] In the same letter, he went on to introduce his own theoretical interrogation of material reality, following on from Dalí:

> I have written a long article for Minotaure entitled: 'beauty will be convulsive' (this is not to contradict you, because I heartily accept therewith that it is also edible, [as] you will judge by my crystals and madrepores). I am quite satisfied by this little manifesto.[109]

In formulating the concept of 'convulsive beauty', Breton's 'little manifesto' would ultimately overstep Dalí's descent into all-consuming 'cannibalism', and reorientate surrealist discourse more perceptibly towards alchemy in the quest to conquer the subject-object dialectic, on terms already familiar from Dalí's 'Objets psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques'. This letter was written just days after Breton's 'magical-circumstantial' encounter with a waitress whose moonstone necklace – chiming with the '"occultation" of Venus by the moon' – had mesmerized him.[110] This encounter must have occurred in the midst of him writing 'La Beauté sera convulsive', and as Breton's reference to 'crystals' in his letter to Dalí indicates, geology would subsequently surface as the central theme of his new article.

The crystal as *Prima Materia* in the writings of Breton[111]

'La Beauté sera convulsive' sits under the banner of Brassaï's photograph of cubic Halite crystals (Figure 1.7), labelled with Breton's caption taken from the main body of his text: 'The house where I live, my life, what I write'.[112] On the following page of the text there is a reproduction of an automatic drawing whose lines resemble the delicate, feathered fractures of a crystal, and further into the essay there are two more of Brassaï's photographs of crystals (alongside corals). The illustrative architecture of the essay constitutes a veritable crystal palace, and this setting is reflected in the text, wherein Breton offers his 'eulogy to crystal'.[113]

Mid-way through the essay, the discussion trickles through a cave in the Vaucluse, then passes into a cave near Montpellier, before Breton arrives at the conclusion that '[t]here could be no higher artistic teaching than that of the crystal'.[114] The crystal is introduced here as a manifestation of his term 'fixed-explosive', one of the three categories for his central concept of convulsive beauty, alongside 'veiled-erotic' and 'magical-circumstantial'.[115] In the case of the 'fixed-explosive', Breton argues that convulsive beauty arises through an 'affirm[ation] of the reciprocal relations linking the object seen in its motion and in its repose'.[116] In these terms, his concept of the 'fixed-explosive' describes the resolution of the dialectical pair of *movement* and *stasis*: something he observes in the crystal, wherein the geological processes that have formed it come to betray the silent, ice-like repose of something frozen in time.

The figure of Hegel is close once again here, in Breton's evocation of the dialectical pair 'fixed-explosive'. Yet the resonances of Hegel's thought run deeper still in the article. Jean-Pierre Cauvin explains how, to Breton's mind, '[t]he hardness and transparency of crystal correspond to that "moment where the mobile and unceasing activity of



Figure 1.7 Brassaï, *La Maison que j'habite, ma vie, ce que j'écris*, 1934, photograph. Paris, musée d'Art Moderne. © Estate Brassaï – RMN-Grand Palais. Photo © Paris Musées, musée d'Art moderne, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / image ville de Paris.

magnetism achieves complete repose," a definition borrowed from Hegel and quoted by Breton in a letter [sent to André Rolland de Renéville in 1932]'.[117] Observing Breton's reference to the Hegelian concept of the 'figure' in 'La Beauté sera convulsive', Jean-Michel Rabaté notes that the essay finds its source specifically in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*:

> 'The house where I live, my life, what I write, I dream that all that might appear from far off like these cubes of rock salt look close up.' Such a trope 'crystallizes' a deep structural homology between 'the world' and the 'subject' […] Hegel explains the process of differentiation and accounts for it by means of the term of 'figure.' A 'figure' is the mechanism of individuality through which form manifests itself in a material way.[118]

Rabaté's analysis not only serves to demonstrate how, via Hegel, Breton perceived crystallization as the single most vital structural principle in the natural world. It also reveals how Breton went on, in more idiosyncratic terms, to conceive of the crystal as being somehow correlative to the thinking subject. Rabaté does not labour this point through an exhaustive explanation of the *Minotaure* essay, but I refer his comments directly back to the text here in order to clarify this aspect of Breton's argument. The 'homology' of which Rabaté speaks appears to be established in the paragraph where Breton introduces his 'eulogy to crystal', where he writes: 'I have never stopped advocating creation, spontaneous action, insofar as the crystal, nonperfectible by definition, is the perfect example of it'.[119] Here Breton conceived of the crystal as embodying a wondrous creative force, manifest in the 'spontaneous [chemical] action' that produces its complex mineral structure. Around the time of the essay's publication in *Minotaure*, he appears to have been gathering a dossier of closely cropped images of crystals that capture this 'action' (Figure 1.8). To his eyes, this seemingly miraculous generative process underpinning the crystal mirrored the unconscious processes structuring the human mind, thus rendering the crystal the ideal template of surrealist 'automatic' creation.[120] This notion of there being a biological aspect to the crystal is closely reminiscent of Hegel's own curious characterization of the crystal as having 'not only an *outer* but an *inner* shape [… a] double formation [which] is, as it were, Notion and reality, soul and body'.[121] And it seems to appeal more generally to Hegel's sense of geological 'magnetism' as a kind of consciousness or 'thought' latent in nature.[122]

Breton's Hegelian figuration of the crystal effectively introduces another familiar dialectical pair to his essay here: the subject-object dialectic. Through his 'eulogy to crystal' Breton envisaged a dialectical threshold that preoccupied the researches of both the surrealists and the alchemists: a point at which the mind appears crystalline and the crystal appears sensitive; where material object and thinking subject become 'interfused', to borrow Henderson and Sherwood's phrase.[123] In his contemplation of these crystalline forms Breton adopts the demeanour and manner of an alchemist. He is expressly interested here in the physical process of complex mineral formation as something correlative to and affective upon the process of 'creative' thought. The way in which he came to consider the crystal as a reflection of the creative thought process – its reactive mirror-image – is strongly resonant with the immersive experience



Figure 1.8 Unknown photographer, *Cristaux*, *c.* 1934–5. Former Collection of André Breton. Photo: © Association Atelier André Breton.

of the alchemical experiment: as a process that stages 'an interior metamorphosis through an exterior transmutation'.[124] As with alchemy, Breton's 'eulogy to crystal' suggests a resolution of the subject-object dialectic whereby mind and matter become interpenetrative and coterminous.

Breton's account of the crystal effectively represented another case of *thinking through things*, such as Dalí had advocated in 1933 with his 'Psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic objects'. Tellingly, Breton also envisaged a mineralogical structure as the vessel for this alchemical communion. He subsequently developed this analogy between alchemical transmutation and geological formation in *Mad Love* (1937), in his discussion of Mount Teide on Tenerife, and *Arcanum 17* (1945), over the course of his lengthy discussion of the 'Rocher Percé' on the Gaspé Peninsula. Many years later, his 1957 essay 'Langue des pierres' published in *Le Surréalisme, même* would offer a more wide-ranging account of the magical application of stones and agates.

In the 1930s, Breton, like Dalí with his meteors, was effectively approaching the crystal as a special category of surrealist object; more specifically, as one of the 'natural objects' which he designated as one of the main categories of surrealist object in 'Crisis of the Object'.[125] The crystal for Breton, as the meteor for Dalí, seems to have represented a uniquely instructive class of surrealist object: where the underlying geological processes that had produced it were potently affective upon the mind of the contemplating subject. Both of these case studies effectively posit the object as the alchemical *prima materia*: matter reduced to its chaotic essence, in a nascent state of becoming. As Eliade wrote in *The Forge and the Crucible*, '[t]he *materia prima* should not be understood merely as a primordial condition of the substance but also as an inner experience of the alchemist'.[126] Elsewhere in the same text, Eliade uses the analogy of shamanic ritual

to present this initiatory dynamic of alchemy. These shamanic rituals tend to involve the instigation of a vision of a spiritual journey that typically culminates in the aspiring shaman witnessing and surviving the violent destruction of their own body on the spiritual plain, before eventually reawakening, their actual body unharmed, but now purified and impervious to earthly perils. Likewise, he explains, 'by endeavouring to "kill" the ingredients, to reduce them to the *materia prima*, [the alchemist] provokes a *sympatheia* between the "pathetic situations" of the substance of his innermost being': 'In other words, he realizes, as it were, some initiatory experiences which, as the course of the *opus* proceeds, forge for him a new personality, comparable to the one which is achieved after successfully undergoing the ordeals of initiation.'[127]

What Dalí and Breton might have been seeking from such transformations of the self is open to speculation, but their individual recourse to alchemy as recounted here, in 1933 and 1934 respectively, closely corresponds to eventful periods of their lives that saw them forging and nurturing new intimate relationships (Dalí married Gala Éluard in 1934, Breton met Jacqueline Lamba in 1934 and they had the first and only child together, Aube, the following year).

Alchemy and magic in the interwar years

The surrealists' alchemical appraisals of these mineralogical objects during the 1930s represent the obsidian reflection, the occulted shadow, of the group's intensive explorations of both psychoanalysis and dialectics in the interwar period. As Mary Ann Caws has commented in relation to *The Communicating Vessels*, the 1930s represent heady theoretical days where Breton

> wants to take history into account and go beyond it; [where] he wants, above all, to be persuasive, even as his style is progressively more difficult, his thought more unfamiliar. [Where h]e wants Freud, Marx, Kant, alchemy, and the entire history of ideas to be summed up and available.[128]

Ever since Breton's discussion of alchemy in the 'Second Manifesto', he had recognized the occult as a sphere that presided over surrealist discourse at a point beyond the pale of its intellectual commitment to discourses such as Psychoanalysis and Marxism. As I have attempted to demonstrate, alchemy was sitting just beneath the surface of surrealist theory on the object during the early 1930s, and by 1934 'magic' had been initiated into the mainstream theoretical terminology of the movement via the concept of the 'magical-circumstantial'. Indeed, Breton's use of this term in 'La Beauté sera convulsive' signalled a critical shift in terminology. This elusive concept of the 'magical-circumstantial' – running in parallel with but distinct from the psychoanalytically inspired theory of 'objective chance' – effectively opened the door within surrealist discourse to a tacit acceptance of unexplained and supernatural forces upon the course of daily life. Breton insisted that it is almost impossible to define the exact operations of such 'magical-circumstantial' forces since it is entirely dependent upon 'how much one can believe in a fact or combination of facts more or

less miraculous in appearance'.[129] Nonetheless, his invocation of magic speaks in the most general sense of forces that have historically been recognized as otherworldly or extra-scientific in nature.

Against this backdrop, it is perhaps unsurprising that Breton's references to alchemy in the 1930s go beyond a mere intellectual flirtation with the subject, and speak instead of an intense obsession that directly impinged on his day-to-day life. Alongside the aforementioned alchemical presentation of Mount Teide, alchemy lurks in the background of *Mad Love* – Breton's most influential publication of that decade – in the form of the Tour Saint-Jacques: a structure whose historical association with alchemical tradition, along with Breton's awareness of it, has been detailed by Margaret Cohen.[130] Closely related to this, in 1936, a year before *Mad Love*'s publication, Breton had begun his essay 'Marvellous versus Mystery' with a convoluted metaphor of an 'orangy-green glow' that envelops certain parts of Paris; a glow that he associates with 'the unappeasable ghost of Nicolas Flamel', who had lived in the centre of Paris (just north-east of the modern Place du Châtelet and Rue de Rivoli) and who had been buried in the neighbouring church of Saint-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie, of which the Tour Saint-Jacques is the only extant remnant.[131] As the metaphor plays out, he suggests that this 'orangy-green glow', which seems to stand for the aura of alchemical tradition itself, might somehow yield a solution to the tense political situation in Europe: as a force which might appease 'Germany as it is in 1936', in the throes of fascism.[132] While history has proven the fallacy of this hope, Breton's words are a resounding testament to the occult atmospheres that enveloped the surrealist Paris of the 1930s, and to the strength of the French group's belief in the transmutational promise of alchemy.

Colquhoun and the stone

It was during the same tense interwar moment that Breton described in *Mad Love*, with Europe poised on the brink of war, that Colquhoun first encountered Surrealism. Her experience of visiting the International Exhibition of Surrealism at the New Burlington Galleries in London in 1936 was the spark that ignited her career-long investment in the conceptual ethers of the Surrealist Movement. However, Colquhoun's interest in alchemy was much deeper-rooted, dating back at least as far as the mid-1920s. Richard Shillitoe attributes her burgeoning awareness and knowledge of alchemy to her involvement in a play entitled *The Bird of Hermes*, which she also adapted into a short story, whilst still studying at art college in Cheltenham in 1925, and still a teenager.[133] After moving to London and commencing her studies at the Slade School of Fine Art she continued to develop her knowledge of the Hermetic art during the late 1920s, and in 1929 published an article entitled 'The Prose of Alchemy' in the esoteric journal *The Quest*.[134] Such was the extent of her early reading into traditions of magic and the occult, by the time she was making her first meaningful forays into surrealist discourse at the end of the 1930s her knowledge of alchemy was already reaching a point of maturity, and was far superior to that of the vast majority of the international surrealist community.

It was this long apprenticeship in the lessons of alchemical tradition that led Colquhoun, simultaneous with her indoctrination in Surrealism, to start work on her alchemically coded novella, *The Goose of Hermogenes*, which she completed in 1941 but which was not published for another twenty years. The book's title itself was rooted in alchemy. As Shillitoe explains:

> Although the title phrase 'Goose of Hermogenes' is an unfamiliar one, it is easily explained: goose is a rather unpoetic name for the phoenix, the fabled bird that overcomes the finality of death; Hermogenes refers to Hermes Trismegistus – Hermes the 'Thrice-Greatest' – the equally fabled founder of hermeticism, the school of magic that bears his name.[135]

The book's narrative content offers little to the casual reader that would betray or explain the alchemical basis of its title. Shillitoe has described the prose of *The Goose of Hermogenes* as having been constructed from lightly edited and expanded dream diary entries that Colquhoun carefully wove together into a sequence of fantastical events.[136] Where a narrative arc is discernible, the tale is ostensibly that of an unsettling pilgrimage undertaken by its heroine-protagonist to her evil uncle's island mansion, and the nightmarish ordeal of her subsequent entrapment there. In these terms, the book has been compared with the supernatural themes and uncanny airs characteristic of the Gothic novel. However, Colquhoun opted to frame the encounters and misadventures of its protagonist under alchemically themed chapter headings that take titles inspired by the images of *The Twelve Keys* (1599) of Basil Valentine and George Ripley's book *The Compound of Alchymy* (1591), which describe (in highly abstract, allusive terms) the successive stages of the Great Work.[137] Under the auspices of this schema, *The Goose of Hermogenes* acquires the aspect of a coded alchemical treatise in the tradition of *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, whereby the processes and phenomena of the Great Work become structuring metaphors for the narrative, and vice versa.

Within *The Goose of Hermogenes* there is further affirmation of the surrealists' widely held notion of a practical application, or at least a physical manifestation, of alchemical processes via the vestigial forms of stones and crystals. At the heart of the protagonist's uncle's designs against her, which constitute the main narrative thrust of the novel, is the matter of him trying to gain access to her 'precious' jewels, which he is convinced are 'possessed of alchemystic powers'.[138] Colquhoun's protagonist explains that her uncle's lusting after her jewels was directly connected to his researches into the 'transcendental aspect of alchemystic philosophy', via which he had become convinced that they 'could provide some link in his quest for the hidden nature of gems and precious metals, and ultimately, perhaps, for that Medicine of Metals which is the elixir of life itself'.[139] In terms that strongly resonate with Breton's alchemical presentation of Mount Teide in *Mad Love*, Colquhoun chose to set the core events of *The Goose of Hermogenes* on a volcanic island whose landscape is underpinned by the 'seething underground cauldrons' of the crowning volcano, known as the Bed of Empedocles.[140] The comparison to *Mad Love* is not merely superficial here, since Colquhoun dedicated the book 'To the Azores', which, as one possible setting for the

tale, would place it in close geographical proximity to Breton's account of the Canary Islands. In an equally bold equation between volcanism and alchemy as that posed by Breton in 1937, Colquhoun had one of her characters reveal that the volcano's most recent eruption had resulted in showers of gold.[141]

The advanced nature of Colquhoun's knowledge of alchemical symbolism is similarly evidenced in her art at the turn of the 1940s; and most notably in the aforementioned series of Alchemical Figures (Figures 1.1, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11) that she executed between 1940 and 1941, whilst writing *The Goose of Hermogenes*. These Alchemical Figures are overtly informed by the anthropomorphic alchemical symbolism of the androgyne and the sexual union of the Chemical Wedding, alongside a schematic, almost diagrammatic depiction of bodily digestion, which, squared with the crystalline textures evoked the banded stains of the watercolours, acquires chemical and geological resonances. These sketches are the pictorial equivalents of Colquhoun's voluminous notes on alchemy from this period. Among her papers within which these watercolours appear can be found a full transcription and many pages of notes on Hermes Trismegistus's *The Emerald Tablet*, for example, in which she analyses its 'familiar', 'yet enigmatic' phrases, and addresses it as the 'memorandum' of an 'instructor', 'cased in a kind of code' to be



Figure 1.9 Ithell Colquhoun, *Alchemical Figure – The Androgyne*, 1941, watercolour on paper, Tate Archive, London. © Tate. Photo: © Tate.



Figure 1.10 Ithell Colquhoun, *Alchemical Figure*, 1940, watercolour on paper, Tate Archive, London. © Tate. Photo: © Tate.

unravelled.[142] Her own personal researches into the subject were doubtless also aided by the fact that her own cousin was the occultist and scholar Edward John Langston Garstin, whose extensive card-file *Alchemical Dictionary* Colquhoun owned, and presumably used as a resource.[143]

Cutting across Colquhoun's pictorial explorations of alchemy, the physical-symbolic form of the stone once again held a central place. As discussed at the outset of the chapter, the most remarkable of her Alchemical Figures consists of an opal painted in blue, red and black (Figure 1.1), which manifests as an original but recognizable adaptation of the historical legend of the Philosopher's Stone. The concept of the stone that is intimated in *The Opal (I)*, to do with stone's essentially geomantic operations (here revealing the hidden image of a woman), was developed further in Colquhoun's writings of the 1940s, most notably in her influential essay on automatism, 'The Mantic Stain', which was published in *Enquiry* in 1949. In 'The Mantic Stain' Colquhoun presents stones as reliable catalysts of creation, outlining how artists' knowledge and use of the seemingly spontaneous, *given* shapes and forms proffered from within gems, agates and crystals predate the surrealists' recent conception of automatic painting by many centuries:

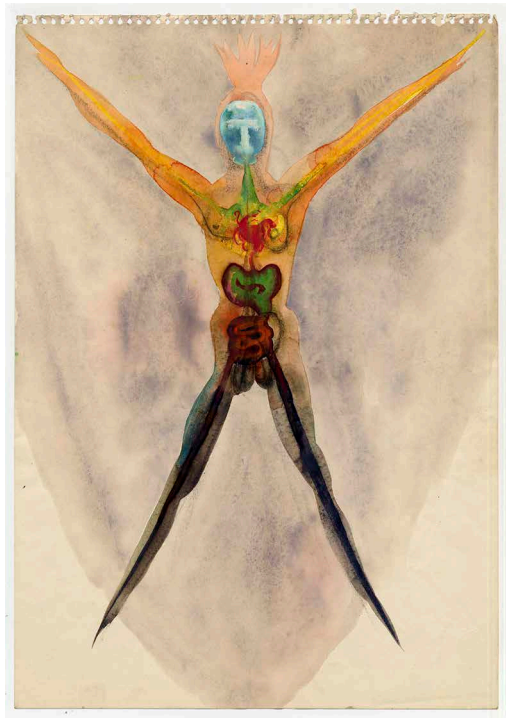


Figure 1.11 Ithell Colquhoun, *Alchemical Figure*, 1940, watercolour on paper, Tate Archive, London. © Tate. Photo: © Tate.

> The principle used in many processes of surrealist painting is to make a stain–by chance, or automatically, as we say, and then to look into it and see what forms it suggests to our imagination: and finally to develop these forms into a completed work of art. The method is at least as old as Leonardo da Vinci–we all know the story of his gazing at the stains of damp in an ancient wall and seeing in these a suggestion of the mountains, ravines and phantastic foliage of a dream landscape. And it seems, too, that in distant China there are sculptors who cut and polish stone in a special way so as to show to best advantage its natural veining, and at times to interpret this pattern in forms carved according to the hints it gives to the artist's vision.[144]

'The famous crystal globe, or "scrying-glass"', Colquhoun continues, 'has approximately the same function.'[145] She goes on to explain how, via a reading of Jung, these 'scrying' operations of stone directly correspond to the alembic-scrutinizing of the alchemists, ultimately suggesting alchemy's derivation from this surely much more ancient stone-based practice.

Beginning in alchemy, Colquhoun's researches into the occulted dimensions of stone quickly acquired an all-consuming force in her intellectual and artistic career

following her move to Penwith in Cornwall in 1946, and her immediate infatuation with the standing stones of the region. The shadow of this future interest was already traceable within *The Goose of Hermogenes*, where, in one of the book's more tangential passages, she had described the 'ancient sensual life' embodied within stone, and called upon the 'blood of beasts [… to] warm the older stones' so that a primeval 'power' may be roused 'from a deeper cave'.[146] Her special fascination with the ancient stone structures of Cornwall that developed towards the end of the 1940s led Colquhoun into studies of Celtic culture and folklore, Iron and Stone Age archaeology, and Druidic magic; interests that she nurtured throughout her later career, until her death in 1988. Her enthusiasm for these topics duly made her a living authority, and led to her publication of the thematically related travel books, *The Crying of the Wind: Ireland* (1955) and *The Living Stones: Cornwall* (1957). Though her conception of standing stones opened out into new territories concerning the energetic magnetism of ley lines and sacred sites, both her writing and art in her later career retained the idea of the stone's fundamentally visionary, revelatory role; as understood in connection to alchemy.

To return to the quandary with which we began, it is clear that Brauner's and Colquhoun's paintings of 1940 did correspond to something akin to what I described as 'procedural application' – or what Eliade refers to as 'alchemical experience' – within the bounds of the surrealist community.[147] By the turn of the 1940s, alchemy had not only settled within surrealist discourse as a metaphorical device that served to support surrealist ideas of revolution and civilizational renewal, but also as a concept that had a transformative effect upon surrealist experimentation around the object specifically. Indeed, as the cases raised here attest, Brauner's depiction of the Philosopher's Stone as a resplendent, illuminating crystal, and Colquhoun's depiction of it as a radiant, pregnant opal, were only the most emblematic expressions of a much more extensive discussion within the surrealist group concerning the alchemical dimensions of such mineralogical forms.

2

Satanic sorcery: Black magic, demons and vampires in the objects and writings of Ghérasim Luca, 1939–45

You who, like a knife thrust,
entered my cringing heart;
you who, strong as a troop
of demons, came, gaily adorned,

To my prostrate spirit,
to make of it your bed and your kingdom;
Wretch to who I am bound
as the convict to his chain.

–Charles Baudelaire, 'The Vampire', *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857), trans. Carol Clark

Wandering the perilous streets of wartime Bucharest, which endured the horrendous violence of pogroms and the mounting destruction of both Allied and Axis shelling, the Romanian surrealist Ghérasim Luca calmly collected the fragments of his broken world and turned them into spells. Unlike the more coded, closeted record of the French surrealists' explorations of alchemy that I unpacked in the preceding chapter, Luca's recourse to a spellcasting black magic was plainly documented in his wartime writings and the accompanying photographs of his purposefully crafted objects. The fact of Luca's earnest invocation of magic is not in question, but what remains to be investigated more fully is the story of how his appeal to magic was guided by, and in turn adapted, an array of surrealist principles.

In the midst of the near-total meltdown of Romanian society that took place during the Second World War, the new branch of the international Surrealist Movement that emerged in Bucharest rewrote Surrealism from without: from a position that was detached and hermetically sealed from the rest of the world by domestic unrest and global conflict. Active during and immediately after the Second World War, the Romanian surrealist community mounted a theoretical response to interwar French Surrealism that belies the brevity of its existence. Indeed, Romania's wartime isolation and unique historical circumstances proved to be a potent catalyst in the rapid evolution of surrealist discourse on its East-European fringes.

The Surrealist Movement had found a platform in Romania relatively early on via the journal *Unu*, which featured the writings of André Breton, Paul Éluard and Louis Aragon, and published the works of Yves Tanguy and other surrealist artists. The future Romanian surrealists Luca, Gellu Naum, Paul Paun, Virgil Teodorescu and Dolfi Trost had all been avid readers of *Unu*, and subsequently established their own avant-garde journal, entitled *Alge*. After hearing first-hand of the French surrealists from fellow Romanian Victor Brauner, who had joined the French group in 1933, Luca and Naum eventually decided to follow his lead and move to Paris. They arrived in the winter of 1938, and over the ensuing months they met various members of the group, including Breton.[1] Their time in France was ultimately short-lived, and they returned to Bucharest in the autumn of 1939 after the outbreak of the Second World War.

Luca's arrest at the Romanian border on his return journey to Bucharest was an early indication of an altogether different environment that awaited him in his native city.[2] In September 1940, Ion Antonescu rose to dictatorial prominence in Romania, and the violently anti-semitic, right-wing political faction known as the Iron Guard achieved mainstream authority in an uneasy alliance with the new leader (Figure 2.1).[3] This coalition, which quickly pledged its allegiance to Nazi Germany and the Axis powers (Figure 2.2), created an extremely hostile environment for Romanian Jews like Luca. Known Jews were routinely harassed and assaulted in public, and in the numerous pogroms launched against Jewish communities people were raped, tortured and murdered, while their businesses and synagogues were looted and destroyed.

In the wake of the War, Luca wrote to Brauner of his nerves being left in an 'unbearable state', describing how he suffered from 'the blackest anxiety' after living



Figure 2.1 Unknown Photographer, Members of the Iron Guard marching along Piața Revoluției, 1940. © Mary Evans / Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo.



Figure 2.2 Unknown Photographer, The War Ministry in Bucharest decorated with portraits of Adolf Hitler, King Michael I, Ion Antonescu and Benito Mussolini, 1941. © Mary Evans / SZ Photo / Scherl.

through these horrors.[4] His private comments intimate the genuine peril that he experienced during the war, at a time when his very existence hung in the balance.[5] John Galbraith Simmons has described this period of Luca's life as a phase of 'suspended animation'; such was the immanence of disaster or death.[6] And yet, against all odds, the war marked one of the most productive periods of Luca's career. Amongst a whole catalogue of other now little-known texts, he wrote *The Passive Vampire*, *The Praying Mantis Appraised*, *The Inventor of Love*, *The Dead Death*, *I Roam the Impossible* and *Dialectics of the Dialectic* (all published in 1945), which have collectively become the most celebrated literary works of Romanian Surrealism.[7] Throughout these texts there are continued references to demons, Satan and black magic, which combine with Luca's evolving reflections on the surrealist object.

The Passive Vampire is the earliest and arguably the richest of these texts. Though not published until 1945, it was completed by November 1941, and Luca's writing of the book spanned what was undoubtedly the most violent period in Bucharest's wartime history – bearing witness to the Legionnaire's Rebellion of January 1941, when the Iron Guard's political suppression by Antonescu boiled over into three days of rampant rioting. The barbaric, unchecked nature of the Iron Guard's campaign of bloodshed and slaughter had led to Antonescu's forcible dissolution of the group by the middle of January 1941. But as the Iron Guard's reign was in its death throes, enraged by Antonescu's restrictions, the group launched a mass riot and pogrom that plunged Bucharest into chaos between 21 and 23 January. Along with thirty soldiers loyal to Antonescu, 125 Jews were murdered and as many as 1,360 Jews are estimated to have been directly affected by the violence and plundering. The violence of the rebellion

was extreme. One group of Jews was abducted by members of the Iron Guard and taken to a local slaughterhouse, where they were tortured and hung from meat hooks. Amongst the carnage, four synagogues were also set ablaze. Even after the Iron Guard had been disbanded by Antonescu in 1941, Jews were still not safe from persecution. Only five months after the Legionnaire's Rebellion, one of the worst pogroms of the entire war was carried out at Antonescu's command in Iași, in June 1941, in which many thousands of Jews were murdered. The systematic extermination of Romania's Jewish population continued at the hands of Antonescu's troops and German forces throughout the course of the war.[8] Despite these dire circumstances, Luca remained steadfastly committed to his surrealist researches throughout this period, and regarded *The Passive Vampire* as a direct extension of the movement's investigations of the 1930s.

It was, more specifically, the surrealist object to which Luca remained attached and committed, for reasons that were conditioned by his wartime situation. Krzysztof Fijalkowski has described Luca and the wider Bucharest surrealist group of Naum, Paun, Teodorescu and Trost as having been consigned to strict 'clandestinity' during the war years, as a 'band of conspirator poets'.[9] Faced with the lingering threat of persecution at the hands of the local authorities, the surrealist object presented itself to the Romanian surrealists as a form of creative output that could conceal their activities and transgress the limitations of their immediate circumstances. Ever since the *objet trouvé* had entered the frame, the surrealist object had become synonymous with the kind of cheap trinkets and oddities that could be bought in a flea market or a bric-à-brac shop: precisely the kinds of items that remained unaffected by the wartime conditions of widespread poverty and stagnant local industry. By implication of this co-existence with everyday things, the surrealist object was also unassuming, and near imperceptible to the prying authorities who might otherwise have recognized the group's creative practice as non-conformist. In these terms, the continued relevance of the surrealist object in the murderous streets of wartime Bucharest should perhaps not be so surprising. What is surprising, however, and indeed entirely novel in surrealist discourse on the object, is the supernatural role the object came to play for Luca as a vessel of black magic and satanic communion.

Familiar and unfamiliar terrain in *The Passive Vampire*

Luca completed *The Passive Vampire* on 18 November 1941, and we can infer that the events that he refers to had taken place within a year or so of its completion.[10] In both its format and content, *The Passive Vampire* was deliberately aligned with the established tradition of surrealist literature, as it existed by the close of the 1930s. Having originally been written in Romanian as *Vampirul pasiv*, Luca then translated the text into French (published as *Le Vampire passif*), and in doing so connected it to the already rich tradition of Francophone surrealist literature. As Petre Răileanu notes, 'remaining connected to French surrealism and to the international movement it had generated, by means of the French language, was for the Bucharest group a condition necessary to its existence'.[11] The text itself follows a loosely autobiographical, narrative format, which Fijalkowski has compared to the 'theoretical-autobiograpical testimonies' given by Breton in *Nadja* (1928), *The Communicating Vessels* (1932) and *Mad Love* (1937).[12] Further to this, the book was illustrated with black-and-white photographic plates

(photographs taken by Théodore Brauner, Victor's brother), which were arranged in a format that was also closely reminiscent of those seminal works by Breton. Fijalkowski has noted that Luca's preoccupation with the object in *The Passive Vampire* derives from the fact that '[his] first encounter with Surrealism came at a period when this at times obsessive concern with the object among the surrealists was at its height [in the 1930s]'.[13] He has also described how the book is plainly indebted to certain key theoretical statements on the object dating from this period, such as 'the Bretonian oneiric apparition [which accounted for the dream-objects he described in his essay "Introduction au discours sur le peu de réalité", published 1927] and the Dalínian *objet à fonctionnement symbolique*'.[14]

Over the course of the book, Luca gives an ostensibly paranoid autobiographical account of a series of auspicious events and seemingly predetermined relationships in his social life which all revolved around the central figure of the object. These episodes are threaded together by interconnected themes of erotic desire, objective chance and magic.[15] Luca's gathering of these particular themes around the object already had a strong precedent in surrealist literature by this point. At the time Luca had his last direct contact with the surrealist group in Paris in 1939 the most prominent theoretical commentary on the surrealist object was Breton's *Mad Love*, in which he had similarly advocated a resignation to uncontrollable forces that he categorized in his tripartite theory of convulsive beauty.[16] In terms which are already close to Luca's acceptance of magic, Breton's account of the encounter with the *objet trouvé* in *Mad Love* was tantamount to an acceptance of a pseudo-psychoanalytical, pseudo-supernatural mechanism of predestination manifest in objective chance.[17]

As in *Mad Love*, in *The Passive Vampire* many of Luca's objects are also found in the streets, in markets or in junk shops. At one point, for example, he recalls his discovery

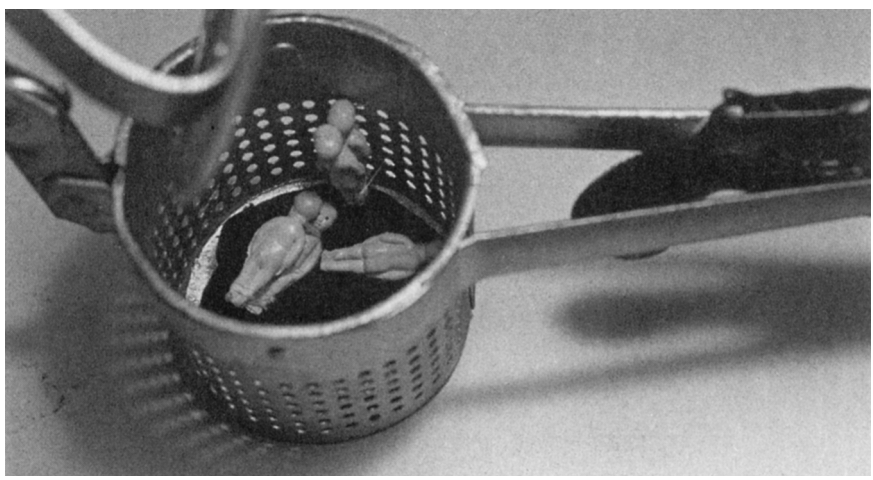


Figure 2.3 Gherasim Luca, *The Statue of the Libido*, photographed by Théodore César Brauner, *c.* 1941–5, as published in *Le Vampire passif* (Les éditions de l'oubli, 1945). © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. © Micheline Catti-Ghérasim Luca. Image courtesy of Twisted Spoon press.

of a discarded wooden spool on the streets of Paris in an episode closely analogous to Breton's famous discovery of a wooden spoon in the Saint-Ouen flea market in *Mad Love*.[18] Much like the found objects in *Mad Love*, Luca's objects in *The Passive Vampire* are closely bound up in the politics of objective chance, where they similarly constitute certain mysterious references and signals that announce their meaningful relationship to his life.

In one of the most captivating passages of the text, Luca relays how three object assemblages that he made on 9 November 1940 (each composed of found materials) corresponded to an earthquake that he later endured that night (at 4am on 10 November).[19] Writing after the event, he realizes that the figurines of 'sodomized children' contained in the object *The Statue of the Libido* (Figure 2.3) were predestined to 'mak[e] love, on their own or in pairs' under the force of the 'splendid rocking of the earthquake'.[20] Similarly, he suggests that the object *The 'No'* (no surviving image) had anticipated the earth's motions in the way in which its loose components of a ball bearing on a porcelain plate seemed to welcome such a rocking movement, like the arm of a seismometer. The third object, *The Ideal Phantom* (Figure 2.4), 'belonged' to the



Figure 2.4 Gherasim Luca, *The Ideal Phantom*, photographed by Théodore César Brauner, *c.* 1941–5, as published in *Le Vampire passif* (Les Éditions de l'oubli, 1945). © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. © Micheline Catti-Ghérasim Luca. Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Georges Meguerditchian.

earthquake not only on account of the symbolic release-action of its spring-loaded rod, but also on account of its title.[21] Through a series of twisting references, Luca cryptically explains how this object and the earthquake had interacted via the intermediary figure of 'G.' (his friend the poet Gellu Naum), who – being Luca's intended recipient of *The Ideal Phantom*, and bygone witness to Luca declaring that he desired to experience a 'major catastrophe' two years earlier – arrived unannounced at his door half an hour after the quake 'like a phantom'; thereby reawakening the memory of his longstanding desire for a catastrophe, and at that very moment receiving *The Ideal Phantom* from him in what manifested itself as an 'ideal' alignment of the earthquake, the object and their historic conversation.[22]

Following Breton's definition of objective chance in *Mad Love* as '*the form making manifest the exterior necessity which traces its path in the human unconscious*', in *The Passive Vampire* Luca similarly observed how objective chance produced events that corresponded (or indeed responded) to unconscious desires.[23] Yet just as Breton's account in *Mad Love* intimated the possibility of supernatural forces being at work in the encounter with the object, Luca also presented the object in terms that afforded it with a providential aura, and a magical determinism beyond the pale of rational explanation. Bound up within Luca's account of the physical attributes and actions of *The Statue of the Libido*, *The 'No'* and *The Ideal Phantom*, for example, there is also a clear sense that some kind of spell-casting mechanism had inadvertently been set in motion.

Although *The Passive Vampire* diligently traverses certain aspects of the conceptual debates from Breton's writings, reaffirming several of the fundamental tenets of his theory through fresh analogies and anecdotes, it also presents certain new developments. To some extent, this drive to reinvigorate the discussion of the object can be attributed to Luca's strong aspiration to impress Breton in order to eventually enter the ranks of the Parisian surrealist group, and in the meantime to establish his immediate intellectual circle in Bucharest as a legitimate and recognized branch of the international surrealist community.[24] To a much greater extent, however, the theoretical adaptations presented in *The Passive Vampire* were the direct result of Luca's unique wartime circumstances.

The most noticeable difference between Breton's and Luca's works lies with their respective tones. Fijalkowski has commented that 'while the *trouvaille* as annunciation and crystallization of love remained in Breton's eyes (in *Mad Love*, for example) a predominantly benevolent apparition, for Luca the object might also be found to have assumed control'.[25] And I would add to this that whilst for Breton the object represented a positive, self-affirming experience – '*in the sense that it frees the individual from paralyzing affective scruples*' (by revealing and releasing the distractive pressures of repressed thoughts in the unconscious) – for Luca it represented something much more volatile and dangerous, with potentially damaging consequences for its bearer.[26] To him, the object did not promise a fortuitous encounter in the vein of the Holy-Grail-like discoveries made by Breton and Alberto Giacometti in *Mad Love*.[27] By contrast, Luca produces a far more ominous picture of a life lived under the sign of the object in *The Passive Vampire*, infused with the explosive atmosphere of wartime Bucharest.

Luca's foreboding opening to the second half of the text vividly captures the combination of awe and dread that the object and its powers inspired in him:

> Objects, these mysterious suits of armour beneath which desire awaits us, nocturnal and laid bare, these snares made of velvet, of bronze, of gossamer that we throw at ourselves with each step we take; hunter and prey in the shadows of the forests, at once forest, poacher, and woodcutter, that woodcutter killed at the foot of a tree and covered with his own beard smelling of incense, of well-being, and of the that's-not-possible.[28]

Whilst fascist rule held dictatorial sway over Luca's existence, stripping him of his autonomous powers of control in very real terms, within the bounds of the book *objects* are the arbiters of his actions. In a comparable feat of domination, objects comprise so many mysterious material coordinates of his social life, which appear to exercise total control over its events.

Bewitchment and black magic in *The Passive Vampire*

There is a magical mechanism at work in many of the objects Luca discusses, whereby their preparation and physical manipulation yield a sorcerous efficacy. A case in point is the episode in which Luca offers several objects to Naum, relaying how he experimented with their forms in an attempt to secure the terms of a certain power play in his love life. From the outset of this episode, the manipulation of these objects is demonstrated as having a direct bearing upon the course of events. Among the objects offered was a 'very thin' glass tube that vaguely resembled a 'male member'.[29] In the first instance, the choice of the material was significant here. Luca explains how the magical operation of this object functioned according to its vulnerability to physical manipulation:

> I refused to give a man a male member that could then be used to attract all women to him. So instead I offered G. an object whose male sexual form he could grasp, but one that would also threaten him: if he takes my women, his member will break.[30]

In this black-magical trap, Luca tests a mechanism that not only warns Naum, symbolically, of the fragility of his masculinity and the cursed fate of his supposed plots for male dominance, but also somehow actually threatens to shatter and destroy his penis.

These strange physics carry over into other aspects of this offering. Luca relays how he also came to attach a number to the glass tube, which formed a further curse over G.:

> I was looking for a number on a plate covered in dust and tokens. When I looked at my fingers, I noticed that they were dirty, something that annoyed me for no

> particular reason given that I was not concerned about my cleanliness […] I chose the number 7 because of the mindless state that was provoked by a sudden feeling of mind-destroying hygiene, and with it, the number 22.[31]

Although upon first inspection this numerical attribution might appear haphazard, Luca goes on to explain how it was in fact carefully considered for the specific purposes of killing G. The number 22, which appeared alongside the number 7, had very specific associations for Luca with a poem by Aureliu Baranga, whom he knew from the *Alge* group in the early 1930s: '22 made me think of Aurèle Z, Aurèle C and Aurèle B in the poem *RIOI*, in which all three die at that age and in which even the poem's title contains the repetition of a number which again makes 2.'[32] The number 22 thereby acquired a 'macabre association' with death, which in turn extended to the numbers 13 (which shared in this 'banal mystery') and 7 (due to the fact that it sprang to his mind alongside 22).[33] Whereas the number 22 would kill G. 'too directly', Luca carefully selects the number 7 for this magical operation on the grounds that it would

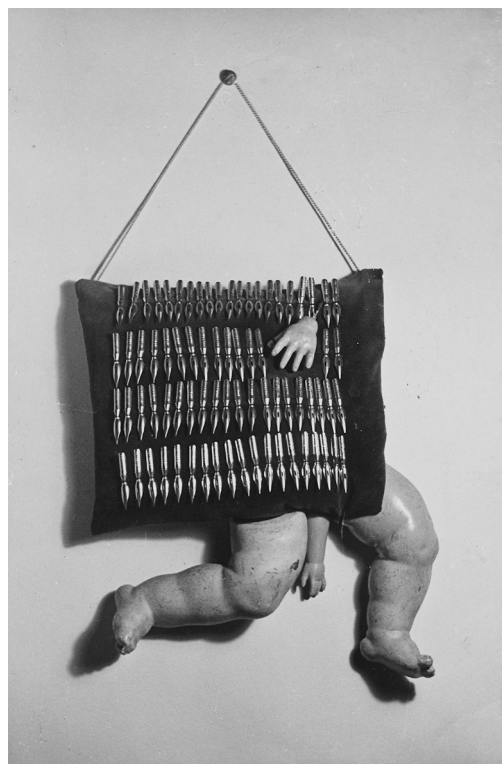


Figure 2.5 Gherasim Luca, *Dusk*, photographed by Théodore César Brauner, *c.* 1941–5, as published in *Le Vampire passif* (Les Éditions de l'oubli, 1945). © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. © Micheline Catti-Ghérasim Luca. Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Georges Meguerditchian.

still kill G. because of its correlation to the number 22, but only indirectly and in due course.[34] With an unshakeable belief in the ostensibly tenuous links that compose this death curse, Luca relates slightly later in the book how the very same numerical formula had been responsible for the death of Brauner's father via the object *Dusk* (Figure 2.5).[35]

Elsewhere in the first section of the text, Luca makes specific reference to a strain of black magic being at work in his object *The Letter L* (Figure 2.6), which took the form of a hybridized, two-headed doll studded with razor blades.[36] In a footnote, he obliquely suggests that the object had caused the death of a little girl that his wife had stayed with at the time he was creating it.[37] The doll's conspicuous connection with childhood, and its non-specific connection with the little girl via his wife, seemingly led Luca to suspect that the mutilated form of the object had induced the girl's death by some kind of sympathetic mechanism of black magic.[38] Following this, he proceeds to describe how *The Letter L* 'began to murmur a black-magical language' between



Figure 2.6 Gherasim Luca, *The Letter L*, photographed by Théodore César Brauner, *c.* 1941–5, as published in *Le Vampire passif* (Les Éditions de l'oubli, 1945). © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. © Micheline Catti-Ghérasim Luca. Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Georges Meguerditchian.

himself and Breton via the Hachette almanacs that he had chopped up and pasted all over the doll's body:

> This secret and mysterious communication lasted uninterrupted for several days. Every riddle glued to the woman's body, having been chosen at random […] gave me the satisfaction I would have gained from a conversation (?) with Breton in Paris.[39]

Under this spell, it appeared to Luca as though the object itself had possessed him and Breton, and set them in this telepathic exchange.[40] And in this moment he 'discerned sorcery's demonic power'.[41]

The theme of black magic is given its most vivid expression in the second section of *The Passive Vampire*, in a passage that describes the activities of a certain 'lyric-magician', who we assume must represent Luca himself.[42] Here the text converges on the two fundamental models of sorcery. At the start of the passage, Luca describes his own ritualistic practice of collecting 'little bits of nail clippings, single hairs found on a dress, linen with the fresh smell of sweat, mistakes, interrupted images, fragments of dreams [… and] incomprehensible gestures' from his 'beloved'.[43] Meanwhile, in the 'darkest corner' of his room, 'the lyric-magician looks at a wax-figure through dark-ringed eyes':[44]

> the wax doll, through which he sends the faint trace of marsh alongside the trace of a thin vein, awaits the tender caress and the skilful torture. Several miles away the beloved feels her flesh riven with desires or torn by a wild atrocity, a hand in a velvet glove sliding a sperm of silk or sulphur down her thighs. At the hour of the cockcrow, when night hangs over the city by a single thread, the lyric-magician closes his four-bladed knife and restores a black torpor to the room around him, like a field leaning against a shoulder. Behind him, the image of the beloved, who hasn't lost a single drop of her blood, intoxicated by the echo of distant flesh.[45]

As the scene slips between Luca in the first person, his work as the lyric-magician, and the figure of his beloved, the actions described are unmistakably recognizable as rituals based upon principles of sympathetic magic. In the first instance, the notion of controlling his beloved through physical remnants, including exuviae such as hair and nails, follows a well-established model of 'contagious magic'. As defined by the anthropologist J. G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, his pioneering study on magical belief and practice, contagious magic is the species of magic that

> rests on the assumption that things which have once been conjoined remain ever after, even when disjoined from each other, in sympathetic relation, such that whatever is done to the one affects the other in like manner.[46]

Frazer goes on to explain here how this effect is often worked upon humans via 'severed portions' of their body such as 'teeth, hair and nails', in terms that shine a new light on Luca's own perverse practice of collecting.[47]

Further to this, the parallel occurrence of the lyric-magician's 'skilful torture' of his wax effigy and his beloved feeling her 'flesh riven with desires or torn by a wild atrocity' resonates with the concept of 'imitative', or 'homeopathic magic'. Frazer describes imitative magic as being founded upon the notion that 'by imitating the desired effect you can produce it'.[48] And once again, his account of imitative magic closely aligns with the actions described in this passage of *The Passive Vampire*, in its description of the method's special application towards people:

> Perhaps the most familiar example of homeopathic or imitative magic is the practice of making a magical image of the person whom the magician desires to injure. By cutting, stabbing, or otherwise injuring the image he believes that he inflicts a corresponding injury upon his enemy whom the image represents.[49]

Frazer even cites wax as one the most common materials used in this practice.[50] In these terms, the correlation between the lyric-magician's torture of his wax doll and the riven flesh of his beloved (who seems to experience some kind of corresponding *erotic* torture) appears to be something carefully engineered via these sanctioned principles of magical manipulation. With an air of condescension typical for anthropological studies of its time and genre, Frazer disparagingly considered how these 'two main logical fallacies', the principles of contagion and imitation, govern *all* magical activity.[51] Yet their particular applications in this episode of *The Passive Vampire* invoke them within the frame of black magic, more specifically. Indeed, the lyric-magician's sadistic wish to torture the soul of his beloved via her exuviae and her image clearly resonates with black magic in its most basic sense, as ritual aimed 'to do harm' (the nature of the arousal Luca's magician is invoking ultimately being of a decidedly macabre, tainted nature).[52]

In the wider context of *The Passive Vampire*, Luca's obsessive treatment of such phenomena would seem to present him grappling with black magic as a conduit of control – as a means of regaining influence over his life. On closer inspection, however, what at first appears to be a purposeful invocation of sorcery in fact represents something far more chaotic. As Răileanu has commented, the text ultimately represents 'a treatise of black magic which obscures more than it illuminates'.[53] In every instance of sorcery Luca describes here, the object's powers had either taken him completely by surprise, or he only understood their operations in the very loosest, vaguest sense. At no point in the text does he intimate any kind of effective mastery of their magical laws in a capacity to wield them towards determined ends. In the event of the rogue number 22 on *Dusk* having killed Brauner's father, for example, he only appreciated its poisonous potency and the path its curse had taken after the fact. Where he deliberately invoked the number 7 in the offering of the glass tube to kill Naum, with the apparent intent of an evil sorcerer, he was nonetheless working blindly. He only knew that it 'would kill him' in some indirect manner, leaving it down to fate to decide how his death should manifest. With a similar sense of mystery shrouding the object's powers, Luca posed the death of the child of his wife's friend as a possible effect of *The Letter L*, only hesitantly drawing the link in a subsidiary note to the text. And the object's status as an unknown quantity was confirmed here by the way in which *The Letter L* suddenly initiated a telepathic exchange with Breton, which caught Luca completely off guard and was of no deliberate design.

Even the sorcery of the lyric-magician, which at first seems so deliberate and decisive in light of its resemblances to contagious and imitative models of magic, only arises as an unspecified possibility. The manner in which Luca describes the lyric-magician's actions in the third person renders the episode distant and obscure, as though he is not privy to the secrets underpinning such sorcery. And his vivid, lyrical prose – 'the faint trace of marsh alongside the trace of a thin vein' – clouds the passage with oneiric imagery that blurs and distorts the case for any kind of magical causal nexus in reality: thus distancing the episode from the more candid discussion of the preceding case studies in the overtly theoretical opening section of the book.[54]

Rather than presenting these objects and their incumbent scenarios as the calculated invocations of a practised sorcerer, Luca characterized his exposure to black magic as for the most part accidental:

> I was taking part in a ritual with massive magical import but whose contents remained beyond my grasp. My gestures may have been those of an initiate; I carried out the slightest details as though I understood why, but only I knew how

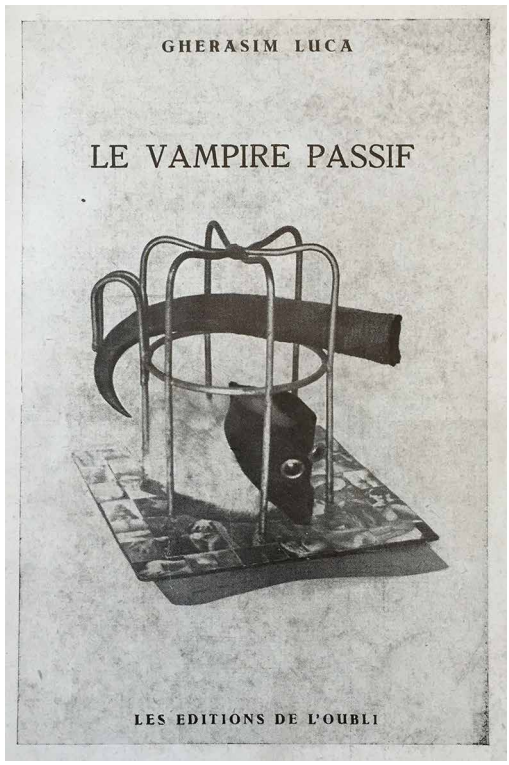


Figure 2.7 Gherasim Luca, *Latent Powers Considered as Possibilities*, photographed by Théodore César Brauner, *c*. 1941–5, as published in *Le Vampire passif* (Les Éditions de l'oubli, 1945). Collections of the National Galleries of Scotland. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. © Micheline Catti-Ghérasim Luca.

> terrified I was of the precipice between the determinant and the determined, and how strange, mysterious, and dark my own movements seemed to me.[55]

At one point, Luca asks rhetorically: 'What magic formula was being acted out? What secret was trying to pierce through this hallucinatory and hermetic language?'[56] Throughout *The Passive Vampire*, black magic and sorcery are figured as 'latent powers considered as possibilities', as Luca himself reasons in his caption to the object on the book's cover (Figure 2.7).[57] In perceiving magic and sorcery as spheres that were ultimately beyond his grasp, Luca surrendered himself to the untold powers of the objects around him. In these terms, black magic became a metaphor in Luca's writings for life's many mysterious and malevolent conspiracies.

In *The Passive Vampire*, as throughout Luca's written works, black magic is idiosyncratically redefined as a manipulative atmosphere, or a unique attitude of unappeasable suspense, which typified his chaotic experience of wartime Bucharest.

The Gothic world of *The Passive Vampire*

The chaotic events of Luca's life were not straightforwardly the unwitting outcome of objective chance and the 'mysterious,' 'hallucinatory' mechanisms of magic. He described the objects that haunt *The Passive Vampire* and other works as 'phantoms', likening them to the legendary demons, the 'incubus' and the 'succubus', under whose influence they resided.[58] Such figures imbue the book with a prominent Gothic dimension, within the context of which objects wield the malevolent influences of the collective forces of evil. In its central subjects and events, Luca's text mines the rich vein of Gothic literature with which the Surrealist Movement had ingratiated itself over the preceding decades. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is a perhaps inevitable point of reference for Luca's portrayal of the titular vampire. Similarly, Luca's repeated references to pacts with Satan recall the central theme of Matthew Gregory Lewis's early gothic novel, *The Monk* (1796), while the sinister figure of Melmoth, from Charles Mathurin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), also seems to sit closely behind the book's evil emissaries. Another notable source of inspiration is J.-K. Huysmans's latter-day Gothic novel *The Damned* (1891), which explores the satanic cults of nineteenth-century Paris, and which Luca cites in the second section of the book.

Even as he was writing the events of his recent life into *The Passive Vampire*, Luca seems to have envisaged himself moving through the deathly halls of some underworld. Throughout the text, he repeatedly returns to an image of Bucharest as a hellish landscape, stalked by the devil in his various guises. At several points in the text, Luca addresses the devil with a crazed passion:

> The dreamer, the lover, the revolutionary are all unknowingly committing demonic acts. For, whatever your name: Sammael, Phiton, Asmodeus, Lucifer, Belial, Beelzebub, Satan, we shall only recognize you, O Demon, in our valid actions and ideas.[59]

And similarly elsewhere:

> Young demon, I can hear your legendary laugh smash into the four horizons and the four dimensions. Each blow struck by your outburst, like a corroded pearl, sets in motion an unknown mechanism buried in the living vaults of humanity as though in a bath of blood.[60]

Over the course of the book, these recurring references combine into a disturbing picture of a life 'completely given over to the Demon', and Luca declares this allegiance through numerous references to his blood pacts with Satan.[61]

Alongside Satan, the pages of *The Passive Vampire* are also stalked – as one may anticipate – by the terrifying figure of the vampire, whose appearance and actions run uncomfortably close to the figure of Luca himself in his largely autobiographical narrative:

> At another operating table, by the window whose open curtains let in the rays of moonlight, stands the handsome, silent vampire. In evening dress, his lips glued to a bared neck like a bird, now he resembles a flautist playing pulses of blood on living instruments. At slightly increasing intervals the drops flow from the instrument to his lips.[62]

This passage, like many others, recalls the atmosphere and events of the experimental Gothic novel *The Songs of Maldoror,* written and published by Isidore Ducasse under the pseudonym Le Comte de Lautréamont in 1868 and 1869, which became arguably the single most influential piece of literature upon the genesis of the Surrealist Movement after Philippe Soupault's rediscovery of the text in 1917.[63] In the First Song is a scene in which the figure of Maldoror – who is evil incarnate – looms at the door of a happy family before the scene descends into torturous abandon and murder. In their terrified protestations the family recall that Maldoror's surname was rumoured to be '*vampire*', and it is as a vampire that Maldoror signs off at the end of the First Song, by assuring the reader that they 'have a friend in [him] the vampire'.[64] As with Lautréamont's portrayal of Maldoror, there is considerable slippage in *The Passive Vampire* between the vampire's activities as a narrated character and his primacy as conscious author of the text. On account of this proximity, as with his encounters with Satan, Luca is openly sympathetic towards the vampire, and shares in his sadistic compulsions.[65]

Luca cites Lautréamont at several points in the book, and borrows from *Maldoror* in both style and content.[66] Luca's formulation of evil, and his chaotic, self-effacing narrative, are heavily indebted to the genre-less, shifting pages of *Maldoror,* where eroticism, violence and laughter cohabit the same image, where each plot lead is a dead end, each passage obliterates the last and each line is a snare that ties itself into incoherence. Just like *Maldoror*, *The Passive Vampire* is composed of formless scenes shrouded in relentlessly mutating chains of metaphor, and structureless passages condemned to a stammering inarticulation. Luca's writing mirrors here what Breton observed in *Maldoror* as a writing that tests and expands 'the limits within which words can enter into rapport with words, and things with things [, …] the language of Lautréamont [being] at once a dissolvent and a germinative plasma'.[67] There are

other, more subtle but no less deliberate allusions to Lautréamont's masterpiece buried in the text. Luca's passing reference to the figure of 'the Creator', for example, vividly recalls the escapades of Maldoror, whose adventures and exploits are continually pitted against those of his nemesis, the Creator, who is the pivot around which he wages his campaign of evil.[68] Fijalkowski has suggested that *The Passive Vampire*'s 'appeal to the archetypal figure of the vampire probably owes more to the manic Gothic of *Maldoror* than to the currency of popular legends from Luca's part of Europe'.[69] However, there are a number of more contemporary appropriations of the vampire legend that may have had a bearing on Luca's casting of the 'passive vampire'.

Luca's conflated image of the vampire as demon *and* criminal seems to fit closely with certain popular stereotypes of the vampire from the 1920s and 1930s. Fijalkowski has pointed elsewhere to the case of the 'Vampire of Düsseldorf' (real name Peter Kürten), who committed a series of gruesome murders in the German city in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The Vampire earned his nickname on account of his claim to have drunk the blood of some of his victims, which he gleefully reported with sadistic satisfaction (his subsequent interviews with Karl Berg eventually informed Berg's famous book of 1945, *The Sadist*). As Fijalkowksi has noted, this complex public figure – whose exploits were internationally reported (the Ripper murders of their day) – emerges as a likely point of reference for Luca's exaggerated characterization of the vampire as both legendary folkloric monster and violent criminal.[70]

The manner in which Luca plays upon the vampire as a manipulative figure who cohabits his own unconscious seems to hark back to Bram Stoker's seminal portrayal of



Figure 2.8 F. W. Murnau, (Still from) *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens*, 1922. © F. W. Murnau / PRANA-FILM. Photo: Allstar Picture Library Limited / Alamy Stock Photo.

the vampire in *Dracula* (1897). If not *Dracula* itself, Luca was at the very least familiar with *Nosferatu* (Figure 2.8), the internationally acclaimed 1922 film adaptation of Stoker's novel directed by F. W. Murnau, which took its title from a Romanian term for vampire (*Dracula* itself having been loosely based on traditional Eastern-European folklore). He would have been aware of Breton's reference to *Nosferatu* in *The Communicating Vessels*, where he described and analysed his encounter with a 'Nosferatu necktie' in a dream of 26 August 1931.[71] He may even have been aware of Yves Tanguy's 'vampiric' object, *De l'autre côté du pont* (1936), which referenced the famous caption from the film: '[w]hen he was on the other side of the bridge, the phantoms came to meet him' (a line which Breton had also discussed in *The Communicating Vessels*).

Nosferatu was responsible for popularizing Stoker's image of vampire-induced somnambulism in its iconic scenes of Greta Schröder playing the character Ellen, sleepwalking with outstretched arms at the whim of the vampire (Figure 2.9). Somnambulism is a key theme in Stoker's novel, and it seems to be particularly pertinent to Luca's concept of vampirism in the context of his encounter with the 'handsome vampire', in that it seems to explain how his mind is suddenly bent to the vampire's thoughts.[72] Indeed, Luca's encounter with the object *The Letter L*, which set him in telepathic exchange with Breton for several days, already seems to be closely



Figure 2.9 F. W. Murnau, (Still from) *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens*, 1922. © F. W. Murnau / PRANA-FILM. Photo: Landmark Media / Alamy Stock Photo.

related to the kind of telepathic control that the vampire exercises over Ellen in the film (and Mina Harker in Stoker's novel).

Over the course of *The Passive Vampire*, this image of the domineering vampire merges with the figure of Satan as a fellow 'Lord of Misrule', where both jointly represent the spirit of the phantom-objects that took hold of Luca's life during the war.[73] At first glance, this haunted world of demons and vampires would seem to mirror Luca's contemporary experience of Bucharest, and the hellish reign of Romanian fascism.[74] As Simmons has noted, it stands to reason that Luca's writing of this period inevitably reflects 'the disciplined madness of the immediate world around him in the early 1940s'.[75] On the surface, these gothic references might appear to serve merely as a metaphorical outlet for expressing the evil atmosphere of the unravelling city. But on closer inspection, Luca's outward allegiance to these arbiters of evil – validated at several points in the book through his blood pacts with them – speaks of something else entirely: something verging on a faith, or even hope, in the power of these demons.

As Luca's wartime writings collectively attest, there came a point at which he actively welcomed the presence of these evil characters in his life, and even began to enjoy the risk of his own annihilation. Rather than merely marking a passive fatalism, and a cheap resignation to the dangers that faced him, Luca's wartime revelling in death and destruction in fact represents a novel repurposing of surrealist theory towards the most absolute kind of nihilism.

Reality's eternal diversion

> *Everything must be reinvented, nothing exists anymore in the whole world.*
> –Ghérasim Luca, *The Inventor of Love* (1945)

In his wartime writings, Luca outlined his ambition to reach what he termed a 'non-Oedipal position of knowledge', an anti-epistemological position that could be defined only according to its oppositionality to all established precepts and defined schools of thought.[76] To achieve this non-Oedipal condition, Luca conceived of a train of thought in which everything

> must first be retained and then negated in dialectic mode, a revolutionary mode of thinking, always rejecting with indignation any attempt at being imprisoned inside a certitude, no matter how fascinating it may be. Because I will never stop confusing the sense of life with the sense of love, the definitive superimposition of the love of Oedipus causes me to desperately negate the unbearable character of the absolute it contains, the most direct consequence of my fierce negation, of this imperious negation of the negation.[77]

This task of dialectical negation would become the defining principle of Luca's wartime writing. His model of a dialectic left to play out to a self-defeating perpetuity

represents a much more extreme version of Surrealism's pre-existing recourse to dialectics. From its origins, the Surrealist Movement was heavily invested in dialectical theory. Inspired by Hegel's conception of dialectical negation as the autonomous self-criticism and self-development of an idea or action, the dialectic quickly came to constitute a kind of shorthand justification for the necessity of Surrealism as a vital counterpoint to modernity's naturalized sense of reality (as manifest at the interstices of rational consciousness and a state-sanctioned code of morality and behavioural norms founded upon capitalism, religion and scientific empiricism).[78] In Breton's 'Second Manifesto', which he had written after re-reading Hegel in Brittany in the summer of 1929, he declared that the Surrealist Movement's sole aspiration was to dialectically collapse certain debilitating 'antinomies' that he perceived to have become constraining influences upon modern civilization: namely 'life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low'.[79] Here he also remarked that 'it seems impossible to me to assign any limitations – economic limitations, for instance – to the exercise of a thought finally made tractable to negation, and to the negation of negation'.[80] In this brief comment, Breton acknowledged the logical fallacy of regarding dialectics as a finite process of reasoning, where it is in fact infinite in the scope of its possible negative counter-positioning once preconceived goals are removed. Jonathan P. Eburne has summarized how, from the 1920s onwards, the surrealists appreciated dialectical negation 'as something other than a logical formula or a world-historical pattern', as a principle that much more fundamentally encapsulated 'the dynamic functioning of consciousness in its relationship to the world', by capturing its habitual 'restlessness'.[81] This distinction was of central importance to the Romanian surrealists' re-conception of surrealism and its dialectical basis.

Building upon Breton's passing comments in the 'Second Manifesto', the Romanian surrealists enthusiastically broke the bounds of Hegelian dialectics by refusing to place limits on negation: ignoring dialectical negation's conventional role in the service of *progressive development* within the Hegelian system. This theoretical position was clarified in the theoretical text *Dialectics of the Dialectic*, which Luca co-wrote with Trost in 1945, and which Fijalkowski describes as being 'the closest one might come to the manifesto of the surrealist group of Bucharest'.[82] Here Luca and Trost hypothesized that in order for Surrealism to be 'continually revolutionary' it had to occupy 'a dialectical position of permanent *negation and of the negation of negation*'.[83] Only through such relentless negation, they argue, can Surrealism exist, as it necessarily should, in 'continual opposition to the whole world and to itself'.[84] To this effect, they go on to list their outright rejection of the great epistemological scaffolds of history, memory, nature and human biology, which collectively represented the foundational ordering systems of modern civilization. Instead they explain that their taste for negation draws them to the principles of objective chance, love and eroticism, which they perceived to be life-shattering, singularly incomprehensible phenomena, which continually resist and transgress 'all established order'.[85]

Luca defined this principle of relentless negation in terms of a demonic impulse: referring to it as 'that demonic dialectic to which my thought process is so faithfully

fixed'.[86] To Luca's mind, demons embodied the destructive spirit of negation that he recognized to be the essence of Surrealism's revolutionary message, and it is within the context of this equation between demons and negation that his longstanding loyalty to these evil overlords begins to crystallize into a theoretically motivated position. Satan's reputation as the demonic antithesis to love, life and light encouraged Luca to conceive of him and his minions as the symbolic figureheads of this dialectical revolution of the world.[87]

Satan, or more specifically Lucifer, had also carried great conceptual significance for the group of intellectuals who formed the Collège de sociologie in the late 1930s – Georges Bataille's famously short-lived school of sacred philosophy, which existed 1937–9. Although it is unclear whether Luca had any direct contact with the Collège during his time in Paris in 1938–9, the group's interpretation of Lucifer is nevertheless strongly resonant with his roughly contemporary interpretation of Satan. As Roger Caillois subsequently explained in an interview in 1970, several decades after his involvement in the Collège, Lucifer had represented for them the only 'truly effective rebel'.[88] But more than that, Lucifer had also symbolized the triumph of magic over religion. 'Magic is a theurgical act that forces the supernatural powers to obey', he explains, 'whereas religion essentially entails submitting to God'.[89] In the context of this antinomy between magic and religion, Lucifer's status as the fallen angel who had renounced God's dominion rendered him a potent sign of the subversive forces of magic for the Collège group. In parallel terms, Luca's consistent conflation of *black* magic with the work of the devil seems to similarly uphold Satan's reputation as the ancestral inventor of magic. In this capacity, Satan's presence as overlord of Luca's life in *The Passive Vampire* and elsewhere is altogether less mysterious. Indeed, in this light, the 'satanic energy' of Luca's work is refigured as a source of supernatural salvation.[90]

As Dominique Carlat notes, Luca's 'carnivalesque' dialectical framework ultimately reveals death to be nothing but 'the *imposed* limit to the projection of the dialectical method on the natural processes'.[91] Luca explained this liberating dialectical caveat in an essay entitled 'The Dead Death':

> The distension of this necessary death which must not traumatically contradict life and which must resolve it in the sense of an uninterrupted negation in which reciprocity and causal reversal must be possible, the distension of this objective death as a retort to my objective life […] forces me today to traverse a terrain of desolation without margins, of moral catalepsy taken to the point of theoretical void and insoluble despair of a macabre and revolutionary kind.[92]

Over the course of the essay, Luca documented and analysed five of his own successive and apparently real suicide attempts. As Fijalkowski has commented, the text (and its title) posed the dialectical negation of the negation as a solution that could 'transform [death] into a place of liberty and endless desire'.[93] He thereby conceived of his demonic dialectic as a means to '"short-circuit" natural process and face the economy of death', where the negation of nature necessarily negated death.[94]

By implication, through a similarly drastic dialectical rerouting, Satan – lord of death and destruction – became emblematic of the very possibility of denying death as a definitive, absolute end.

In place of the established, mainstream discourses of natural science and history, Luca and Trost described their wide-ranging theoretical stakes in Non-Euclidean Geometry, the fourth dimension, Brownian Motion, Quantum Space-time and Homeopathy – all ground-breaking concepts which had each in their own way significantly disrupted the *status quo* of scientific rationalism.[95] Yet above all, as they affirmed in 'Dialectics of the Dialectic', they were invested in 'the devastating and maleficent materialism of black magic'.[96] In another text from 1945, they pronounced a similar set of non- or anti-rational theoretical interests in the catalogue to their exhibition, *Presentation de graphies colorées, de cubomanies et d'objets* (7–28 January 1945), and 'black magic' once again featured prominently in this list:

> We are in agreement with delirious inventions, tears, somnambulism, the real functioning of thought, the elixir of long life, the transformation of quantity into quality, the concrete, the absurd, the negation of negation, desire, hysteria, furs, black magic, the delirium of interpretation, the dialectic of the dialectic, the fourth dimension, simulacra, flames, vice, objective chance, manias, mystery, black humour, cryptesthesia, scientific materialism and spots of blood.[97]

Alongside other occult traditions such as alchemy (alluded to here in Luca's and Trost's reference to 'the elixir of long life'), the privileged status of black magic among the Bucharest surrealists was clearly not in question by 1945. Indeed, black magic comprised an essential theoretical component of Romanian Surrealism writ large. Via Luca's and Trost's writings, the concept of black magic was itself dialectically expanded: shifting from a term that referred to an archaic set of prescriptive magical formulae, into a term which stood for the group's dynamic principle of revolutionary regeneration. Negatively weighted in both its 'black' and 'magical' aspects – which associated it with evil and destruction, alterity and occultation – the term 'black magic' became shorthand for Luca and Trost's maxim of the negation of the negation. This exploded definition finally offers an explanatory coda to Luca's bewildering 'black-magical' encounters with the object in *The Passive Vampire*, *The Praying Mantis Appraised* and *The Inventor of Love*, which all in fact had more far-reaching, liberating implications.

A revolutionary nihilism

> *No one before these visionaries and augurs perceived how destitution – not only social but architectonic, the poverty of interiors, enslaved and enslaving objects – can be suddenly transformed into revolutionary nihilism.*
>
> –Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia' (1929)

The object had long since held a reputation within surrealism as a vital vessel for subverting reality, targeted precisely because of its reputation as the objective bedrock of empirical science and rational order. In the writings of Walter Benjamin, the surrealist object was ascribed a more distinctly revolutionary force and role, being raised to the plain of political history. It was specifically the *objet trouvé*, found and salvaged from the stream of everyday life, that Benjamin was concerned with here. As he had theorized in an essay from 1929, Breton and the surrealists were

> the first to perceive the revolutionary energies that appear in the 'outmoded', in the first iron constructions, the first factory buildings, the earliest photos, the objects that have begun to be extinct, grand pianos, the dresses of five years ago, fashionable restaurants when the vogue has begun to ebb from them. The relation of these things to revolution – no one can have a more exact concept of it than these authors.[98]

In Benjamin's analysis, the surrealists' celebration of such objects served to enshrine their outmodedness as a tangible fact, which in turn demonstrated and activated the revolutionary course of history by intimating the inevitability of the future's radical divergence from the present and thereby revealing the actual possibilities for revolutionary change. Benjamin famously conceived of this revolutionary lesson as a facet of his theory of '*profane illumination*', and described the surrealists' attitude to retrograde material culture as a form of 'revolutionary nihilism'.[99] While at one level the objects of *The Passive Vampire* and Luca's other works of the 1940s fully align with Benjamin's theory, as outmoded things found entire or compositions made from found materials, they also push and extend the nihilistic power Benjamin assigned to the object.

Perhaps the most significant departure Luca made from the surrealists' earlier experiments with found objects was his decision to bestow them with figurative form. One immediately recognizable difference between Luca's objects and those that fill the pages of Breton's *Mad Love*, for example, is the way in which the theoretical *demonization* of objects in Luca's writing was requited with the object's *physical animation* in his working practice. In *The Passive Vampire*, Luca's objects take a variety of anthropomorphic forms, from the more straightforward examples of dolls to limbed hybrids and humanoid ephemera. Similarly, in the text 'I Roam the Impossible', the illustrated objects announce their alternative, 'black-magical' existence through a dramatic *animism*: variously brought to life by taking on plant-like, insectoid and serpentine forms (Figures 2.10–2.14).

The objects of 'I Roam the Impossible' were supposedly gifts from a female acquaintance, which Luca claims he had received a few days before he began writing the text.[100] As Fijalkowski observes, however, these objects' affinity with those pictured in *The Passive Vampire* – all small-scale, multi-media assemblages, hallmarked by an intricate construction and sleek composition – suggests that they were more likely to have been made by Luca's own hand.[101] The animistic aura of these objects – so perfectly captured in the atmospheric photographs of 'I Roam the Impossible' – imbues them with an embodied reserve of agency that grants them an air of self-possession, and which makes them appear all the more defiant in the face of their conventionally

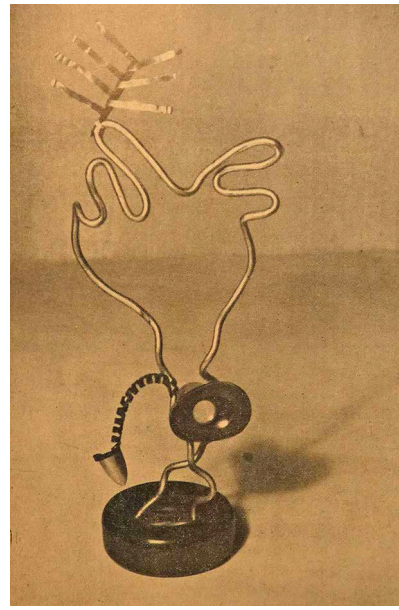


Figure 2.10 Unknown Photographer, *Object 'I'*, *c*. 1944, as published in *Inventatorul Iubirii* (Editura Negaţia Negaţiei, 1945). Collections of the British Library, London. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. © Micheline Catti-Ghérasim Luca.

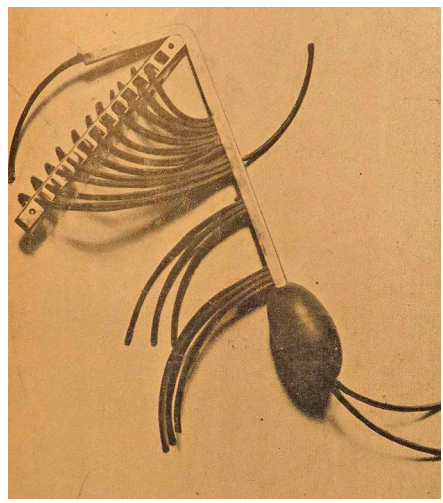


Figure 2.11 Unknown Photographer, *Object 'II'*, *c*. 1944, as published in *Inventatorul Iubirii* (Editura Negaţia Negaţiei, 1945). Collections of the British Library, London. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. © Micheline Catti-Ghérasim Luca.

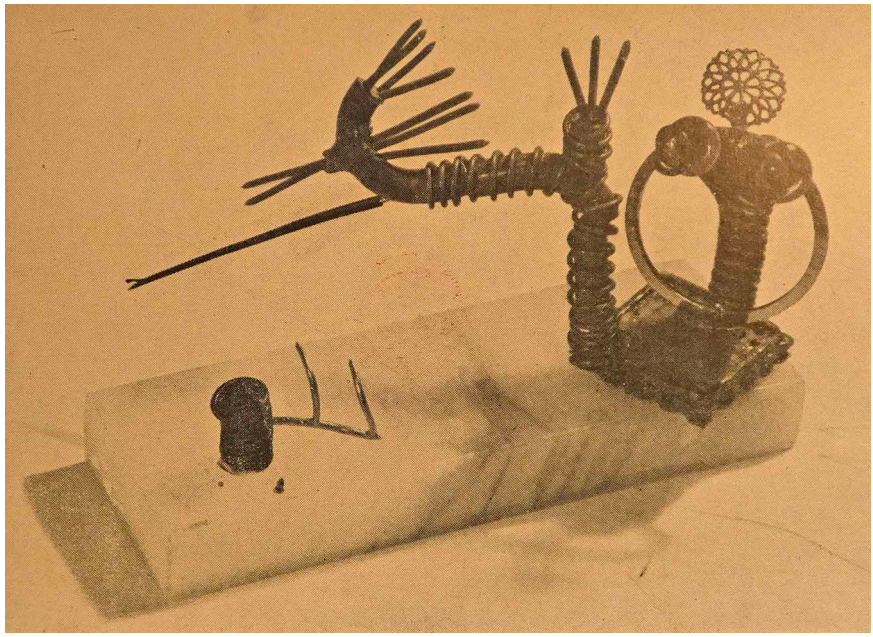


Figure 2.12 Unknown Photographer, *Object 'III'*, *c.* 1944, as published in *Inventatorul Iubirii* (Editura Negația Negației, 1945). Collections of the British Library, London. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. © Micheline Catti-Ghérasim Luca.

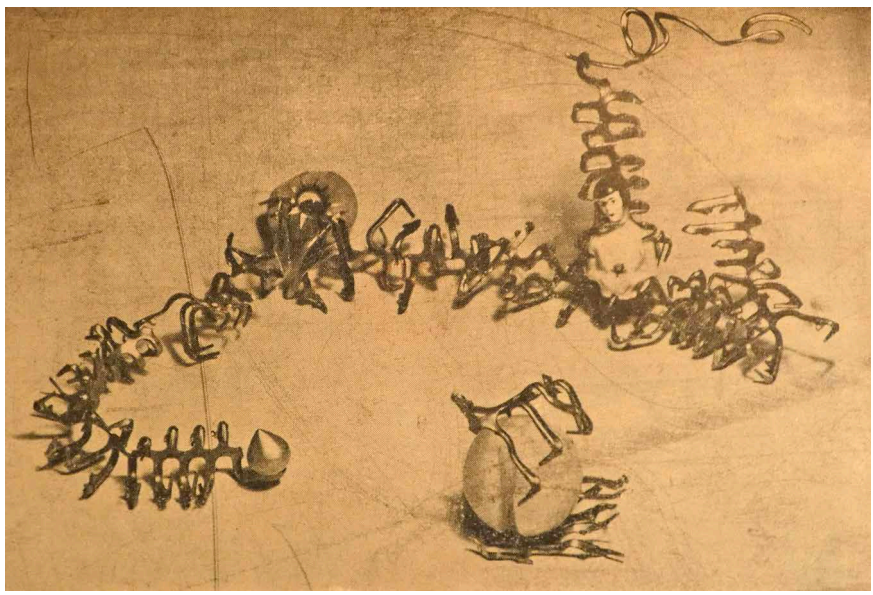


Figure 2.13 Unknown Photographer, *Object 'IV'*, *c.* 1944, as published in *Inventatorul Iubirii* (Editura Negația Negației, 1945). Collections of the British Library, London. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. © Micheline Catti-Ghérasim Luca.

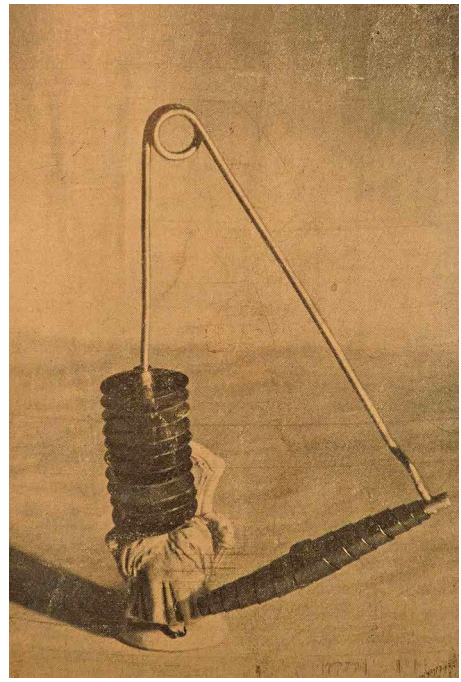


Figure 2.14 Unknown Photographer, *Object 'V'*, *c.* 1944, as published in *Inventatorul Iubirii* (Editura Negaţia Negaţiei, 1945). Collections of the British Library, London. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. © Micheline Catti-Ghérasim Luca.

designated values and roles. In this animistic capacity, these objects veer away from the revelatory historical illuminations Benjamin attributed to the surrealists' earlier *objets trouvés*, and stand instead as unintelligible ciphers that deny any interpretation through their monstrous visceral presence – always on the brink of a shapeshifting movement. In their categorical deviancy, Luca's objects are physically invested with the demonic energy of negation that he attributed to them in his writings. They give palpable form to the 'inexpressible delirium' the Romanian surrealists propagated through their nihilistic mantra of negation.[102]

Up until 1944 there had been consistent allied bombing of Romania on account of its status as the main fuel supplier to the German military. After Antonescu was overthrown in 1944, the tables were turned, and the bombing continued for a further year at the hands of the Nazis. Throughout this period, Luca was subjected to forced labour as a street cleaner, and there is a strong probability that some of his objects were constructed from the debris of the many bombing raids over Bucharest.[103] Rising out of the ashes of war in this manner, these objects can be seen to set in motion a remarkable chain of negations: born of the physical negation of the history and culture of Bucharest, destroyed in the most dramatic fashion by explosion and immolation, they proceeded to negate the limits of their own death by assuming a demonic afterlife,

an afterlife in which they continued to radiate this negative influence through their disruptive black-magical presence in the lives of Luca and the Romanian surrealists.

The manner in which Luca consistently intimated the object's demonic agency ultimately gave it the breathing space to escape servility to the manifest conditions of wartime Bucharest. The anthropomorphized objects of *The Passive Vampire* and the hybrid objects of 'I Roam the Impossible' were thereby animated as rogue beings, which both endorsed and enforced the compulsion to 'demonic' theoretical deviancy that Luca sought to live by.[104] As Luca writes in the closing paragraphs of 'I Roam the Impossible,' he regarded these objects as 'the most secret expression of [his] thought processes': their 'brute form' defying translation, and emitting – by an 'aphrodisiac' contagion – the airs of 'presentiment' and 'systematic evasion' that defined his intellectual life.[105]

Răileanu has discussed a contemporary theory of the object that arose in the work of Naum under the name of 'The Demonology of the Object'.[106] Naum had actually conceived of this phrase as the title for a proposed article in a never-realized issue of *Minotaure*: a special issue on the surrealist object that was drawn up by Breton but abandoned at the outbreak of the Second World War.[107] Naum's theory would not find proper expression until 1945, when this theory of demonology was finally penned in his text *Medium*:

> In effect, the staggering persistence of the aggressiveness of the object, the avidly succubus character of gloves, of hats, of chairs, of glasses […] the vampiric lycanthropy of a moneybox in the form of an animal or the simple lycanthropy of a candelabra-owl-serpent […] the parasitic larvae of handkerchiefs or boats that take in water like mistletoe, the finger of hands, [and] the chimneys on houses reveal profusely, with a superb demonstrative tenacity this demonic aspect of the object, in light of which the most innocent connection finds itself tainted with the vast colours of evil.[108]

As Răileanu explains, this demonology of objects – also variously designated as vampirism and lycanthropy – refers to their analogical duplicity, and their ability to bond with (vampirism) and metamorphose into (lycanthropy) different things.[109] He observes that we are clearly in the same demonic territory as *The Passive Vampire* here (also *I Roam the Impossible*), yet rightly insists that 'the most important [thing] is not to establish chronological primacy but to note the fluid which circulates between the texts of the two Romanian surrealists'.[110]

The consistency between Naum's and Luca's common attribution of 'demonic' powers to the object is striking, and speaks to the strength and radical originality of the Romanian surrealists' theoretical position. Indeed, by the war's end, the Romanian group had almost completely repurposed Surrealism to fit the world-ending moment in which they found themselves, by reconfiguring the object as a site of destruction, bewilderment, and 'unhing[ing]', which cultivated revolutionary nihilism through its crazed, uncategorizable presence:

> To gaze at the object and everything that surrounds me as if our pupils were filled with dynamite, to gaze in order to destroy and become bewildered, in order to

> become unhinged, in order to become systematically intoxicated and insane, brings us closer to the mystery of the inner and outer world, this permanent complicity with the destructive forces of evil being the most certain guaranty of my objectivity.[111]

In these terms, the group's black-magical objects ultimately stood as so many sentinels overseeing their satanic pact with life. It comes as little surprise to discover that the satanic blood pacts that Luca repeatedly discusses in *The Passive Vampire* were not merely for narrative effect, but that one of his objects – the anthropomorphic vial known as *Black Love* – physically embodies one such pact. Bound to Luca's person by blood, caught somewhere between guardian and gaoler, *Black Love* is emblematic of the role that the object played in the lives of the Romanian surrealists during the war.

A cubomaniac magic

Luca's experimentation with objects during the war ran in parallel with his development of the 'cubomanie' technique. The cubomania was Luca's response to the surrealists' longstanding fascination with collage, and was created through a process that involved slicing a paper image (or sometimes multiple copies of the same image) along a grid pattern, and rearranging the squares in a sequence dictated by chance: the resulting composition being perceived to reveal and unlock a latent subtext or thematic content that had remained unseen in the original (Figure 2.15). In *Presentation de graphies colorées, de cubomanies et d'objets*, the short, but theoretically rich, catalogue that Luca and Trost produced to accompany their corresponding display of automatic drawings, cubomanias and objects, Luca proposed an experiment that he described as a 'practical lesson of cubomania in everyday life'.[112] His suggestion reads as follows:

> choose three chairs, two hats, some stones and umbrellas, several trees, three naked women and five very well-dressed women, sixty men, some houses, cars of all eras, gloves, telescopes, etc.
>
> Cut everything into little pieces (6/6cm for example) and mix them well in a large public square. Reconstitute them according to the laws of chance or your own fancy and you will obtain a landscape, an object or a woman unknown or recognised, the woman and the landscape of your desires.
>
> […] The fragment and the whole find themselves in relation to one another as content-container, but uniquely in the antithetical sense.[113]

Luca equates the process of this experiment to what happens to 'a street during an earthquake', and subsequently compares its effects to those of 'bewitchments' on the plane of 'magic'.[114] This proposal for a 'practical lesson of cubomania' is perhaps the clearest expression of the diverse associative resonances and complex personal value of magic for Luca: evoking an all-consuming 'bewitchment' that is equivalent to the force of a natural disaster, or even – we can freely assume – a war, and which channelled the inventive potential of destruction. The objects with which Luca surrounded himself during the war are all micro-expressions of this experiment: born from the wreckage



Figure 2.15 Gherasim Luca, *Tenter l'impossible, c.* 1945, as published in *Presentation de graphies colorées, de cubomanies et d'objets* (Imprimeriile Independenţa, 1945). Collections of the British Library, London. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. © Micheline Catti-Ghérasim Luca.

of Bucharest, and collaged into physical spells that project the simultaneously disaggregating and liberating forces that were inherent to their making. It was in these terms that objects became the guarantors of a black-magical contract over Luca's life, which manifested itself as a nihilistic refusal of 'all forms, all categories, all acts, all plans, all laws' – but which also carried within it the liberating prophecy, that 'anything can occur in this world without a past, without points of reference, without knowns.'[115]

3

Cosmic magic: Talismans and ciphers in the objects of Victor Brauner, 1940–6

> *MAGIC* – starlike *force. Through magic man will become powerful like the stars – on the whole, he is intimately related to the stars.*
>
> –Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon* (*c*. 1798–9), trans. David W. Wood

Like Ghérasim Luca, Victor Brauner came to attribute the object with magical powers during the Second World War. The conflict ultimately played out very differently for Brauner, who remained in occupied France rather than returning to Romania. The pair had no contact during this period, and consequently their respective invocations of magic diverge considerably. Whereas Luca had considered black magic as a destructive principle that yielded a means of overturning the oppressive ideological structures of wartime Bucharest, Brauner conceived of the opportunities of magic in contrasting, optimistic terms, as a means of personal protection, and as a positive force of transformation.

Fleeing the Nazi capture of Paris, in mid-June 1940 Brauner travelled south: spending roughly a year moving between Perpignan, Canet and Marseille across the lower limits of the Free Zone along the French Mediterranean coast. Between January and April 1941, he began to make frequent visits to the Villa Air-Bel in Marseille – east of the city centre, in the La Pomme district – where Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee famously concealed and aided numerous figures of the European avant-garde and intelligentsia with the aim of helping them escape Nazi-occupied Europe. Amongst other artists, writers and friends, Wifredo Lam, Oscar Dominguez, Jacques Hérold, André Masson, Max Ernst, Benjamin Péret, René Char, André Breton and his wife Jacqueline Lamba were all regulars at the Villa during this period.[1] In April 1941, Brauner's ties to the Villa and Marseille were threatened when the Vichy authorities assigned him a fixed residence in the village of Saint-Féliu d'Amont, West of Perpignan. But by August that year he had managed to obtain permission to return to Marseille for the purposes of teaching in an art academy, and from September 1941 he lived permanently at the Villa Air-Bel.[2]

In the strange airs of a port at the edge of all familiarity, awaiting inevitable military occupation from the north, and hemmed in by piratic seas to the south, the atmosphere at the Villa was apprehensive, with its inhabitants oscillating between reflection and

distraction. Whilst some days were spent in deep conversation of the works of Novalis or surrealist scholar Pierre Mabille's occult anthology *Le Miroir du merveilleux* (1940), others were given over to games and creative collaborations like the surrealist card deck of the Jeu de Marseille. Whilst such pastimes had been rife during Brauner's earliest visits to the Villa, the opportunities for games and collaborations gradually began to dwindle as members of the Air-Bel community made the necessary arrangements to get out of France. Throughout 1941 and into 1942 Brauner desperately tried to arrange a visa that would allow him to escape to the United States (following the likes of Breton, Lamba, Lam and Ernst) or Mexico (following Leonora Carrington, Victor Serge and Laurette Séjourné). But by this point in the war the persecution of Jews in France intensified, with the first French train leaving for Auschwitz in March 1942.[3] By May 1942, as a Romanian Jew still waiting on a visa that would allow him to leave the country, Brauner was forced to take up a clandestine existence within France's borders in order to evade the Vichy authorities and the Gestapo.

Incredibly, Brauner spent the final three years of the war concealed as a shepherd in the region of Les Hautes-Alpes, among the villages and hamlets of Remollon, La Plaine de Théus and Les Celliers de Rousset; his existence physically foregrounded by the fast-flowing course of the Durance River, stretching out like a great crystalline artery.[4] Brauner developed an intimate connection with his new environment, and his fascination with the local landscape is commemorated in paintings like *Stable instable, plaine de Théus* (1942) whose title refers to the area of fertile land below the village of Théus that overlooks the banks of the Durance river.

Though Brauner remained in grave danger of discovery and deportation by the authorities throughout the period 1942–5, his experience of the war was mercifully more sheltered than Luca's experience of wartime Bucharest. The conditions of day-to-day life in Les Hautes-Alpes dictated a frugal existence. Despite these circumstances, Brauner settled into an intensive, inspired period of creativity whilst living in Les Hautes-Alpes, incorporating found objects and natural substances into his work to make up for the lack of art supplies. This phase of Brauner's career during the later years of the war has been characterized as inciting a primitive turn in his life and practice, not only in terms of his hand-to-mouth existence, but also in terms of a reorientation of his beliefs. Didier Semin has described Brauner's life at this time as having been 'thrown into a moral and material situation that returned him to an earlier world where art, more than ever before, took on a vital urgency'.[5] The primitive 'material' situation that Semin and other commentators have discussed relates to Brauner's wartime techniques of painting with wax or paraffin, and his use of found materials including wood, leather, clay, stone and wire to create objects during this period.[6] The mysterious 'moral' situation pertaining to 'an earlier world' that Semin refers to relates to Brauner's growing interest in magic, which culminated in the objects he made in 1943 (Figures 3.1 and 3.2, Plates 4 and 5).

The war represents the most legitimately 'magical' phase of Brauner's life, during which he began to seriously experiment with the mechanisms and formulae of talismanic magic as learned through his assiduous reading of Jean Marquès-Rivière's *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles* (1938) – a text which sits somewhere between historical study and practical guide. Didier Ottinger has described the shrine-like boxes that Brauner started making in Les Hautes-Alpes as veritable '*objets magiques*'.[7] Daniel

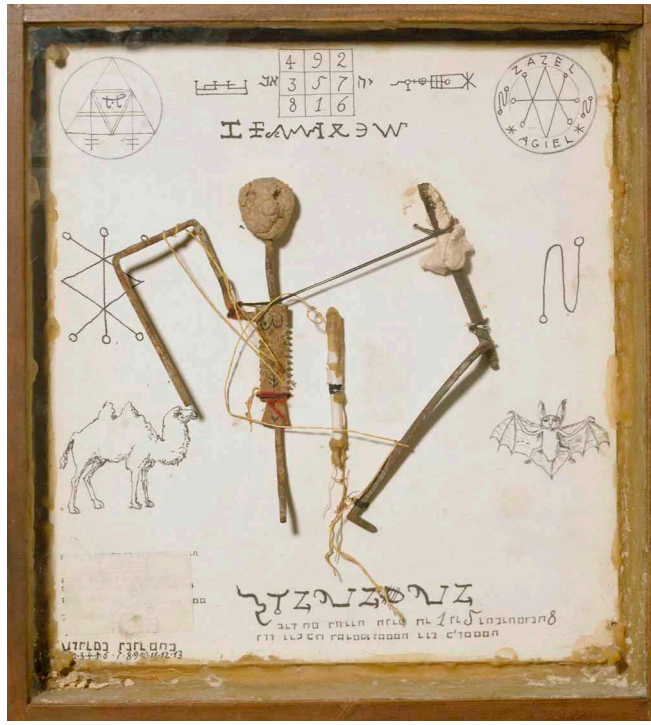


Figure 3.1 Victor Brauner, *Les Amoureux*, 1943, Mie de pain, pâte à sel, cire, métal, fils, encre de Chine sur papier, vélin, bois, verre, 25.8 × 23.7 cm, Centre Pompidou, Paris. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / image Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI.

Zamani has characterized *Objet de contre-envoûtement* (1943) and other objects from this period as 'totemic charms against wartime dangers'.[8] Michèle Cone has similarly described *Objet de contre-envoûtement* as 'a desperate resort to keep evil – namely the Gestapo – away from him'.[9] And Didier Semin has relayed how Brauner more generally 'saw […] magic as a protection against the hazards of the time', and describes these objects in terms of 'folk magic recipes'.[10]

The prevailing account of these tendencies in the scholarship on Brauner is that he was ultimately forced to make this plea towards higher powers of magic on account of his destitute circumstances. Whilst it is clear that the dire situation of the war encouraged Brauner to incorporate elements of magic and sorcery into his work – more specifically, the concepts of bewitchment, black magic, talismans and pentacles that Sarane Alexandrian has singled out – the situation was far more complex than a sudden and desperate turn to the supernatural.[11] Brauner already had an established interest in magic and the occult by the turn of the 1940s. Shortly after his arrival within the French surrealist community in the 1930s, and long before his more purposeful research into these fields, he developed a reputation among the surrealists as their magician in residence.[12]

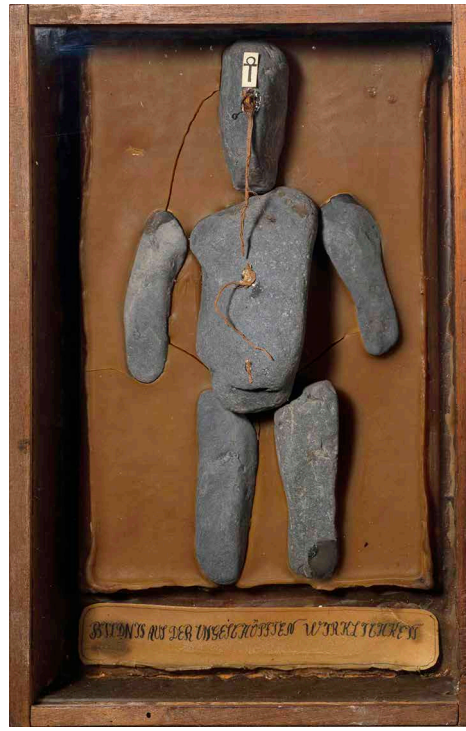


Figure 3.2 Victor Brauner, *Image du réel increé*, 1943, Assemblage dans une boîte en bois vitrée, 28.8 × 18.6 × 6.5 cm, Centre Pompidou, Paris. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / image Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI.

A history of magic

Over the course of his surrealist career, Brauner harboured a reputation as a figure immersed in the occult. As Susan Davidson has commented:

> Few surrealists entered the movement with as remarkably fertile a background as Brauner's founded as it was in folklore and the occult. His place of birth – the Carpathian Mountains of Romania – was steeped in the mystical and bizarre legends of vampires and werewolves […] In addition, Brauner's father was a practising spiritualist, and he himself was exposed to both mystical Kabbalistic teachings and séance experiences that would later recur as motifs in his art.[13]

Brauner's diverse interests in occult theories – ranging from mediumism to animal magnetism – have been diligently traced in a study by Camelia Darie, which provides a detailed insight into the early roots of these interests, and their subsequent conflict and overlap with surrealist discourse in Brauner's later career.[14]

As Darie makes clear, Brauner's background in occult tradition was firmly established by the time he was invited to join the surrealist group in 1933, after having been introduced to Breton via his then-neighbour, Yves Tanguy.[15] However, it was only after his return to Paris in the summer of 1938 that his reputation as a magical visionary was sealed by a now-famous incident that led to the loss of his left eye. On the night of 27 August 1938, after an evening out with friends in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Brauner followed the party back to the studio of Óscar Domínguez. It was there, later that night, that an argument developed between Domínguez and Esteban Francés, which soon escalated into a fight. Brauner intervened to try and break them apart, and in the confusion a glass was hurled across the room and struck him in the left eye. The eye was severely damaged, and had to be removed the following day. In the wake of the accident, Brauner and various others noticed unsettling references to his injury across some of his earlier works, which seemed to suggest that it had somehow been fated to happen. Brauner himself noticed a premonitory warning of the incident in a photograph he had taken in 1930 of a large man, closely resembling Domínguez, blindfolding the eyes of a woman seated on a chair on the pavement on Boulevard Montparnasse mere metres away from Domínguez's apartment where he would suffer his eye injury eight years later.[16]



Figure 3.3 Victor Brauner, *Paysage Méditerranéen*, 1932, oil on canvas, 65 × 80.5 cm, Centre Pompidou, Paris. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Philippe Migeat.

In 1939, the incident received detailed coverage in *Minotaure* in an essay by Pierre Mabille entitled 'L'Œil du peintre'. Here Mabille sought to prove how 'Brauner's whole life converged around this mutilation', according to the 'official thesis of the play of chance'.[17] The essay mapped the references to eye loss across several of Brauner's early paintings, including the curious example of *Paysage Méditerranéen* (Figure 3.3), where a male figure has his eye socket skewered by a rod that supports a letter D floating overhead, which, Mabille notes, happened to be the initial of the man who had caused the accident (it was Domínguez who had thrown the glass).[18] Mabille also considered Brauner's 1931 self-portrait (Figure 3.4), in which he had famously painted himself with one eye missing, apparently in anticipation of the injury. Alongside the hypothesis of objective chance, Mabille introduced the notion of some kind of bewitchment being at work in these paintings as the cause of the injury; a theory that was encouraged by the fact that Brauner 'had lived his childhood in proximity to a father who was indulging in experiences of spiritualism and empirical trials of magic'.[19] Mabille pondered: 'Have the mutilated forms not set to work magical forces, [and] created



Figure 3.4 Victor Brauner, *Autoportrait*, 1931, oil on wood, 22 × 16.2 cm, Centre Pompidou, Paris. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / image Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI.

a psychic climate of which the accident had to be the inescapable end?'[20] On the one hand, as Semin comments, Brauner 'assumed the weighty role of serving as a living emblem of the objective chance encounter' as a result of the incident.[21] On the other hand, as Alexandrian comments, the incident took on a supernatural significance comparable to the Norse legend of Odin, where Brauner was regarded as having had his magical powers of visionary insight confirmed through the loss of an eye.[22]

Mabille notes that these two theses – objective chance and magic – need not necessarily be opposed to one another (as long as one maintains that Brauner was unaware of the curse he was slowly weaving for himself through his unconscious obsession with eye-loss).[23] Years later, magic remained a hypothesis that Brauner himself was still entertaining. In a notebook that he was using during the war years, in a section dating from 1944, he wrote:

> With a photographic precision I painted a self-portrait of a fundamental accident of my life […] There are two solutions: either bewitchment (unconscious) or prediction. It is without great importance because it is irreparable. For the moment one does not know any satisfactory explanations.[24]

Despite his professed resignation to being unable to answer this mystery, the question evidently preoccupied him. By all accounts, his special interest in magic and sorcery had already crystallized by the close of the 1930s.

Brauner's notion of bewitchment appears to adhere to the system of mimetic magic. The most basic intimations of this supernatural mechanism seem to have initially emerged out of Brauner's working practice as a painter. J. G. Frazer explains how mimetic magic is premised on the principle that 'by imitating the desired effect you can produce it' (via action conducted at a distance); and in these plain terms it is immediately apparent how this system was already inscribed in the eye incident.[25] Frazer's definition may have even had a direct bearing on Brauner's understanding of this principle, since he owned a copy of *The Golden Bough*.[26] Out of all of Brauner's paintings, the 1931 self-portrait remains the one that is most clearly demonstrative of this model of bewitchment, since it is the only work that firmly binds the mimetic effects of an image of an eye-injury to his own person. By Brauner's own reckoning, it was the self-portrait above all else that foretold the 'fundamental accident'.[27] After the revelation of the symmetry between the portrait and the incident of 1938, this formula of bewitchment could hardly be ignored. However, evidence of Brauner's awareness of this formula runs deeper still in his oeuvre of the 1930s.

There is in fact a pervasive theme of injury in Brauner's paintings between around 1930 and 1938, prior to the incident. Indeed, upon surveying the back-catalogue of his works from the 1930s, it seems slightly less remarkable that so many should converge upon motifs relating to eye-damage. Out of the many works that are flooded with scenes of bodily mutilation, one could just as easily compile an iconographical genealogy of an alternative injury in Brauner's oeuvre of this period (cf. Brauner's *Anatomie du Désir* series, 1935–6). Elsewhere in this catalogue of brutal images we encounter a 1934 painting in which Brauner has depicted a savagely disfigured bust

of Adolf Hitler (Figure 3.5). Here he paints Hitler mortally wounded by the umbrella, stick, hammer, sword, hook, knife, nails and blocks of marble that have been jammed into his head, face and neck. Whilst this painting has conventionally been interpreted as a caricature of the kind of barbarism that Hitler himself was culpable of, within the context of bewitchment opened up by the eye incident it seems equally credible that the painting might represent a more concerted attack upon Hitler's person than mere shaming. Brauner's overwhelming disdain for Hitler is clear to see in the exaggerated violence inflicted upon his portrait. Within the frame of mimetic magic, however, this representation would not merely represent a death-wish, but an effective curse. Through the medium of the portrait, Brauner has bound the violence to Hitler's person, in the hope that the same torturous injuries might befall his nemesis. The violence seems deliberately calculated in the way in which it has blocked up the sensory and speech organs, as though Brauner sought to ensure that Hitler would at least be incapacitated and robbed of his essential powers as a politician, if not killed. In this quite literally damning portrait, Brauner appears to have been testing the powers of mimetic magic a full four years in advance of its accidental emanation in the eye incident of 1938.



Figure 3.5 Victor Brauner, *Sans titre (Hitler)*, 1934, oil on cardboard, 45.3 × 43.2 cm. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / image Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI.

In 1939, in the months leading up to conflict in Europe, Brauner began exploring another tranche of magical tradition when he created multiple sketches of mandrake roots: the gnarled, woody roots of the perennial mandrake plant to which European folklore ascribed anthropomorphic qualities belying supernatural sentience. One drawing presents a detailed study of a mandrake root (Figure 3.6), replete with mouth and waggling tongue. Another drawing (Figure 3.7), titled *La Mandragore*, features a mandrake within the familiar realm of Brauner's personal mythological universe, wherein the root appears as the companion homunculus to a female figure; as the embodying guarantor of her safety in the face of physical harm (there are visible wounds down the figure's nearest arm yet her expression suggests she is unharmed). These mandrake images were created just two years after the publication of Breton's *Mad Love* (1937), where he had included Man Ray's iconic photograph of a mandrake root resembling 'Aeneas carrying his father' (Figure 0.2), which Breton explains he had a habit of invoking as a divinatory object.[28] It is in a similar vein that Brauner presents the mandrake in *La Mandragore*, where the accompanying figure is depicted with the closed eyes of a seer, feeling the future by extension of their woody homunculus, in a scene that is hard to disassociate from Brauner's personal desire in 1939 to know a very uncertain future.



Figure 3.6 Victor Brauner, *Sans titre (mandrake)*, 1939, pen and ink on paper. 31.1 × 47.8 cm. Legs Jacqueline Victor-Brauner, 1987 n° inv : 90.10.128. Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Yves Bresson / Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole.

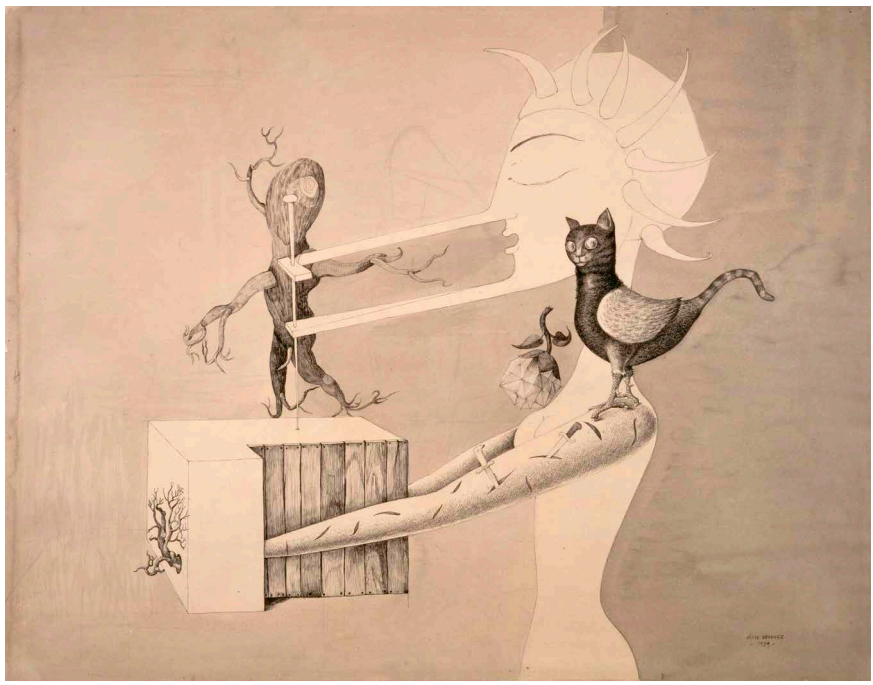


Figure 3.7 Victor Brauner, *La Mandragore*, 1939, graphite lead and Indian ink on paper. 50 × 64.5 cm. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Jean-Claude Planchet.

The path to the Castle of the Magi

Our life is *no dream – however it should and perhaps will become one.*
–Novalis, *Das Allgemeine Brouillon* (*c*. 1798–9),
trans. David W. Wood

After the Nazi invasion of France of 1940, Brauner found himself out on the road, regularly moving between cities, towns and villages across the Free Zone. Not yet settled in Marseille, and moving back and forth along the French-Mediterranean coast, roads, pathways and tracks became the most significant features of Brauner's world. Between May and October 1941 Brauner wrote a self-mythologizing narrative entitled *Promenade*, which at once clearly reflects and wholly transforms his peripatetic existence at this time.[29] A heady blend of love story, medieval-style quest and science-fictional adventure, *Promenade* traces Brauner's pseudo-autobiographical journey through the dream-like dimensions of his innermost psyche towards the 'Castle of the Magi', in search of the unassailable truths of the universe. In its psychological undertones and universal themes the narrative readily acquires the lofty proportions of a mythological adventure.[30] *Promenade*

was almost certainly written for Laurette Séjourné, whose name echoes around the text to the rhythm of Brauner's enraptured thoughts.[31] Brauner had met Séjourné and her future husband the former Russian revolutionary Victor Serge at the Villa Air-Bel before they left France for Mexico in 1941, and fell madly in love with her. His lovesick longing for Séjourné became a central theme in his work of this period. Redrafted and revised multiple times, and originally intended for publication (Brauner approached Peggy Guggenheim and Dina Vierny but the project fell through), *Promenade* was ultimately of central importance to his personal life and his wartime oeuvre. Most significantly for the purposes of this chapter, the narrative revolves around a set of twenty-five 'beneficial objects' – all imbued with magical powers – which would become the archetype for several actual objects that Brauner created later in the war.

Camille Morando, having carefully edited and reconstructed Brauner's drafts and notes in *Victor Brauner, écrits et correspondances* (2005) in collaboration with Sylvie Patry, has already provided an excellent shorthand summary of the key events of *Promenade*, which provides further colour and insights into Brauner's 'intense and personal cosmogony'.[32] As Morando notes, the text fundamentally describes 'the nocturnal wanderings of a painter accompanied by twenty-five "beneficial" objects, which seem both to deliver a treasure and hold a secret'.[33] However, there are certain aspects of the narrative that are worth relaying in detail here.

The text begins with the distinctive, fantastical air of the events that follow:

> Again that night I awoke at my usual hour and I went out to the many noises of nocturnal silence and my friends of the night and already the toads were waiting for me and approached and accompanied me on my search for the path that I had finally found at the end of the preceding night after years of meticulous research.[34]

Not only is the discovery of this path befitting for the opening of the text's own narrative thread, but the path itself constitutes the main setting for the story as a whole, which concerns Brauner's mind-bending promenade along it. From the outset of his journey in *Promenade*, Brauner's progress is jeopardized by 'armies of bewitchers', who were 'lying in wait for [him] at every turn and […] trying to prepare ambushes for [him] that could have been fatal'.[35] Here again, as Morando notes, it is hard not to see the 'quotidian' of Brauner's wartime situation resurfacing in this reference to a threat of ambush and capture.[36]

To defend himself against this threat, Brauner explains that he carried with him his 'famous collection of beneficial objects'.[37] This collection consisted of a set of twenty-five eclectic objects that he finds on his advance along the path, on the other side of a small wall.[38] The objects were 'arranged in a semi-circle[,] and each was framed by an ornament of sand and bore a label on top'.[39] In the vein of surrealist commentaries of the 1930s Brauner designates them as 'objets trouvés', yet they were ultimately of a supernatural order that distinguished them from their surrealist ancestors.[40] Momentarily after discovering the objects, Brauner senses malevolent forces at work as he comes to realize that the nearby wall was made of 'curdled blood or something similar', and appeared to be breathing.[41] 'Naturally', he explains, 'I held in hand my

"geometric talisman", the one that I had inherited from my venerable master, X'.[42] Hereafter, talismanic magic is revealed as the driving principle behind Brauner's experiments with objects, as a means of protection against the perils of his journey, and against the evil work of the bewitchers. Subsequently, for example, as darkness draws in, Brauner pulls out the twenty-fifth object of his collection – a fragment of a painting on wood – and hangs it around his neck as a protective talisman. 'After a small purring', he writes, 'the fragment of the painting began to launch jets of light so intense that I could henceforth see the rest of my journey'.[43] Suddenly, the mundane object emerges as a magically efficacious instrument that is deserving of the 'beneficial' status Brauner had originally awarded it.[44] Seemingly offsetting his previous fears about the threatening powers of the bewitchers, he too now wields supernatural powers through his objects.

After the incident at the wall, Brauner packs the curious collection of twenty-five objects into his bag for further protection and goes on his way. Following this encounter, he reflects on how the nature of his journey down the path seemed to have been entirely transformed by these objects:

> All of a sudden I felt exalted and one could have said that the contact with these objects had amplified my strength and full of enthusiasm I hurled myself forward in the pursuit of this path. All my being reflected an immense joy because I approached the point at which I would find the Key to the Great Mystery, I would possess by turns all the steps of the unforgettable secret of the 'Chemical Wedding' because I had undoubtedly crossed the wall into the domain of the 'Castle of the Magi'.[45]

Having crossed the wall into the domain of the Castle of the Magi, apparently at the very moment he crossed the low wall where he found the objects, the rest of the text opens out into a realm infused with magical possibility. First and foremost, it is his collection of objects that becomes enchanted: yielding supernatural means of overcoming the obstacles he encounters, and producing allusive leads that aid him on his quest to discover the Key to the Great Mystery and the alchemical secrets of the Chemical Wedding. Hereafter, the objects are no longer merely the vessels of talismanic magic, but also bear the hermetic key to true wisdom. From this point onwards, Brauner's promenade begins to acquire the hallmarks of an alchemical quest.[46]

The magical objects soon take on the sacrosanct aspect of so many guiding stars to his journey. Indeed, their reverential status is framed through an awesome astrological metaphor that is endorsed in a vision, projected as entities bearing all the momentous force and gravity of the cosmos:

> In the sky there appeared in enormous proportions, like gigantic stars and in the manner of illuminated adverts all the objects of the collection that I had taken, following their order and their label, and next to each object a phrase, in letters of fire.[47]

In its vivid imagery, this event is reminiscent of the scene from Brauner's painting *La Pierre philosophale* of 1930 (Figure 3.8). In *Promenade*, his path is similarly illuminated by a wondrous vision in which he receives the objects' sacred message, and this scene's

resemblance to *La Pierre philosophale* only reinforces the alchemical dimension of *Promenade*.[48] He subsequently encounters images of the same objects on the walls of the Castle of the Magi, where he finally receives the secrets of the Chemical Wedding through a series of visions that emanate from a giant incandescent egg (emblematic of the Golden Egg of alchemy).[49]

Significantly, the 'grand celestial parade' of objects outlined in the passage above manifests itself in outer space.[50] Following Brauner's preceding declaration that '[t]he night was becoming more and more profoundly black[,] so black that all notion of spatial-depth, height etc. disappeared', all of the events from hereon in the text, after entering the domain of the Castle of the Magi, seem to rise out of the darkness of deep space.[51] The marvellous possibilities that Brauner attributed to the domain of the Castle of the Magi were seemingly only conceivable within an abstract space more typical of a science fiction novel:

> The path that I was following was now changing beyond all that is known in this domain […] it was a path without a path. I found myself walking in the air, below my feet an enormous black crevasse,[52]

Through its setting in fantastical deep space, *Promenade* aligns the laws of magic with the physical laws of the cosmos. At the same time, the events of the text are also



Figure 3.8 Victor Brauner, *La Pierre Philosophale*, 1930, oil on canvas, 91 × 73 cm, Private Collection. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London.

plainly linked to sorcery, talismans and alchemy as defined genres of magic, where Brauner was defending himself against the army of bewitchers with his talismanic objects, and searching for the secrets of the Chemical Wedding. These disparate references to bewitchment, talismans, alchemy and the cosmos would all ultimately coalesce to inform Brauner's practical experiments with the object later on in the war.

The object as talisman or 'pantacle'

> *THEY say that the power of enchantments and verses is so great, that it is believed they are able to subvert almost all Nature. Apuleius saith that with a magical whispering, swift rivers are turned back, the slow sea is bound, the winds are breathed out with one accord, the Sun is stopped, the Moon is clarified, the Stars are pulled out, the clay is kept back, the night is prolonged.*
>
> –Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (1531)

During the war, Brauner was reading Jean Marquès-Rivière's *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles*, which had recently been published in Paris in 1938. The cover to the book is adorned with a reproduction of Rembrandt's 1652 etching *Doctor Fautrieus*, otherwise known as *The Alchemist at Home in His Study*, which sets the tone for the text as a whole in its memorable depiction of a scholar busy reading and meditating upon an apparition of occult symbols (Figure 3.9). It is in a similarly studious vein that Marquès-Rivière proceeds to trace the long history of talismanic traditions from around the world, variously encompassing charms, amulets and 'pantacles'.[53] But he begins the text by reflecting on the current relevance of those traditions in twentieth-century modernity:

> The amulet and the technique of its fabrication offer a curious example of these mental complexes which, stemming from primitive civilisations, from distant epochs when magical phenomena played a primordial role, have dwelled intact and living in the subconscious in order to suddenly reappear in beings belonging to very advanced civilisations. Suffice one important fact: [with] war, danger of death in a car or a plane, sporting competition, risks of the lottery and in gambling that old background of magic imposes itself more forcefully than we notice.[54]

This opening passage, and in particular Marquès-Rivière's reference to war, seems to have directly inspired Brauner's own research into the magical application of objects as talismans during this period. In plain and lucid terms, Marquès-Rivière introduced the talisman as a 'scientific' object that functions according to certain sets of 'laws'.[55] It was precisely these laws that Brauner sought from the book in order to bring order to his precarious existence, while he lived under threat of arrest or even death.[56]

Marquès-Rivière formulated the magical laws underpinning the talisman within the theoretical framework of 'sympathetic magic', and mimetic 'correspondences', in terms that would have resonated with Brauner's pre-existing notion of mimetic magic.[57] He explains, for example, that

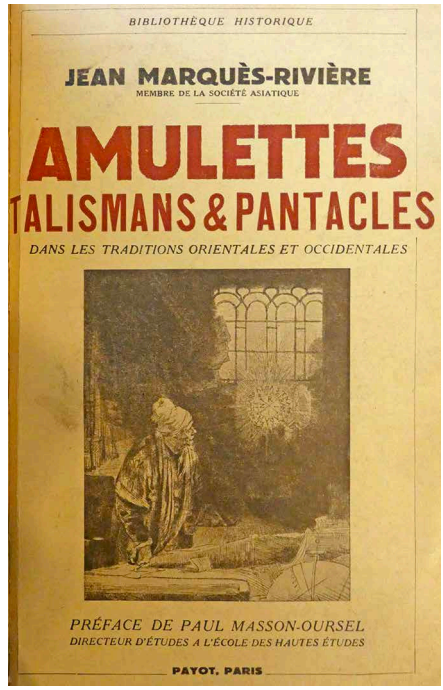


Figure 3.9 Cover to Jean Marquès-Rivière's *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales* (Paris: Payot, 1938). © Éditions Payot & Rivages. Photo: Author.

> The influence with which [the talisman] is attributed is dependent on a reasoning sometimes logical, always symbolic and analogical; the sunflower will be a plant of the Sun because it turns itself towards it; the ruby will be a stone of Mars because it is red like fire and blood. The analogy is maybe puerile or ridiculous, but regardless; it comes from profound sources.[58]

This theory of an analogical law of correspondence is already familiar from Brauner's early forays into bewitchment. But the scope of this magical law of correspondence is significantly expanded here, where the emphasis shifts from *mimesis* to *symbolic analogy*.

While the Baudelairean notion of 'correspondence' may be the most obvious point of reference for surrealist theories of symbolic analogy, Marquès-Rivière's discussion in *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles* is more closely linked to the writings of the esteemed renaissance scholar-magicians Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and Theophrastus Paracelsus.[59] Both Paracelsus and Agrippa were also floating in the intellectual ethers of surrealist discourse during the 1940s. Kurt Seligmann, the surrealists' main authority on magic, published a translation of Paracelsus in the American journal *VVV* in 1943, and he would later go on to provide dedicated sections on both figures in his major

study *The Mirror of Magic* (1948). The interest in these figures evinced by Seligmann seems to have taken root among the wider surrealist group as early as the 1930s. Certainly, the writings of both figures were already familiar to Brauner by the start of the war. Alexandrian, who was a personal acquaintance of Brauner's, vouches for the fact that he had taken an active interest in both figures during the late 1930s. It was more specifically the eye injury of 1938, Alexandrian recalls, that persuaded Brauner that he 'was less a Painter than a Seer', and which led him to seek out grimoires and treatises such as Agrippa's *La Philosophie occulte et la magie* (*c.* 1533) and Paracelsus's *Les Sept livres de l'archidoxe magique* (published posthumously, 1591) in order to explore the 'magical value' of his painting.[60]

In one particular section of *La Philosophie occulte et la magie* (known in English as his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy or Magic*), Agrippa proposed that 'everything moves and turns itself to its like'.[61] He perceived that contact with a magically efficacious thing had the effect of imbuing proximate entities with its powers:

> THOU must know that so great is the power of natural things that they not only work upon all things that are near them, by their virtue, but also besides this, they infuse into them a *like* power, through which, by the same virtue, they also work upon other things.[62]

In these terms, he considered how, for example, by carrying a body part from a crow or a bat, animals associated with special powers of 'watchfulness', the bearer would be unable to sleep until they had cast the object away due to the vigilance induced as a result of its presence.[63]

In *The Mirror of Magic* (1948), Seligmann would later describe how Agrippa believed that:

> we should explore the world by means of *resemblances* […] As there is accord between things akin, there is discord between things hostile. Experience has shown, for instance, that between the sunflower and the sun there is accord; whereas between the lion and the cock there is hostility, just as between the elephant and the mouse. It is the task of the magus to recognize these sympathies and antipathies in order to operate magically through nature.[64]

Seligmann then went on to discuss how '[s]imilar dispositions are to be found in the planets'.[65] And on this point, he discussed the writings of Paracelsus in parallel terms:

> In vain Paracelsus explained that in this physical world all things were related, that the sign of a specific talisman was endowed with astral forces; that such ore used for the magic medal was related to that same planet, enforcing thus the power of the talisman; that these signs were the marks imprinted by the stars like signatures upon earthly bodies.[66]

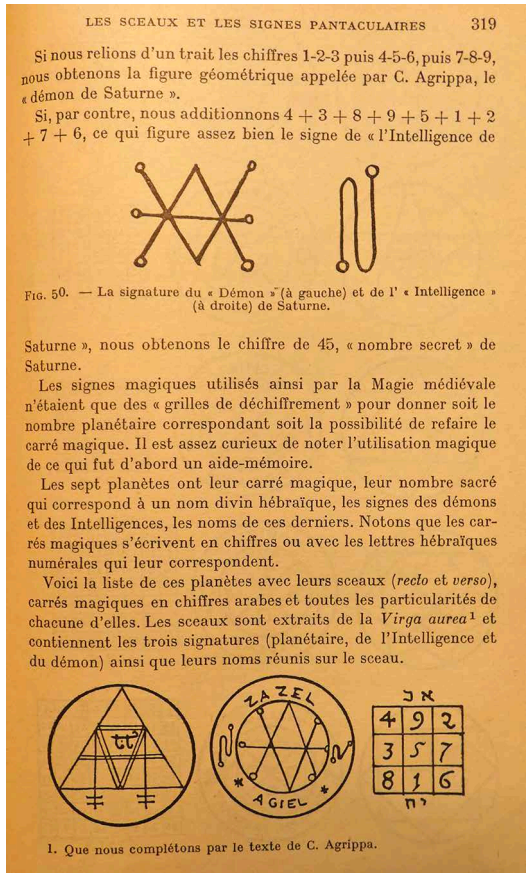
In his *De Natura Rerum* (1537), Paracelsus made the inspirational claim that by following this law of correspondence 'the stars are subject to the wise man, and are forced to obey him, not he the stars'.[67] Alexandrian has commented on how the trace

of Paracelsus's theory is readily apparent in Brauner's work of this period, where he similarly subscribed to the idea that 'in all the kingdoms of Nature, everything contains a special mark indicating its value in the universe and its utility for man'.[68]

It was the cosmological law of correspondence, in particular, that most fascinated Brauner, and this happened to comprise a key strand of discussion in *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles*. Marquès-Rivière introduces the 'pantacle' as a specialized form of talisman that channels 'astrology or the science of celestial influences'; a class of object that he considers to be 'the most evolved form of the talisman'.[69] Above all, it is the specialized operations of the pantacle – acting 'in accord with the powers of the Cosmos […] in accord with the mysterious vibrations of the Universe' – that seem to have informed Brauner's experiments in devising his own effective talismans during the war.[70] After the war, these talismanic objects would remain in Brauner's studio for the rest of his life, such was their sanctity in his eyes.[71]

In the objects he made in 1943 (sometimes referred to as 'tableaux-objets' on account of their framing and relatively shallow dimensions) Brauner seems to have been directly inspired by Marquès-Rivière's discussion of pantacles and the role of planetary influences in talismanic magic. Marquès-Rivière's comments on this theme converged on the idea of invoking the planets to produce 'talismans of defence and counter-attack': a specially defined class of objects to which he devotes a dedicated subsection, but which also typifies the prevailing characterization of the talisman throughout the text as a whole.[72] That Marquès-Rivière was (unbeknownst to Brauner) by this time a Nazi collaborator – hunting Freemasons and writing for heinous antisemitic projects such as the journal *Au Pilori* and the film *Forces occultes* (1943) – makes Brauner's concotions of 'defence' from his pre-war work all the more profound and authentically subversive. Verena Kuni has already analysed Brauner's objects of 1943 in great detail, including aspects of their recourse to Marquès-Rivière in terms which I seek to build upon here.[73]

In its title, *Objet de contre-envoûtement* (Plate 4) spells out the fundamental goal of Brauner's researches into talismanic magic: as a system of defence. This object is effectively the material equivalent of one of the 'beneficial' objects from *Promenade*; devised to protect him from the perils of his wartime existence in much the same way as they protected him from the 'army of bewitchers' in his fantastical narrative. The protective mechanism of *Objet de contre-envoûtement* depends singularly upon its analogical correspondence to Saturn. Saturn is first of all invoked materially, through Brauner's use of lead in the head of the central figure, which follows Agrippa's attribution of lead as an element 'under the power of Saturn'.[74] This figure is further designated as an embodiment of Saturn by the 'S'-shaped figure that features in a lateral orientation on the head, which represents 'l'"Intelligence" de Saturne' (Figure 3.9); a sign that Brauner lifted straight from *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles* (Figure 3.10).[75] This symbol is repeated, intertwined with its counterpart, 'le "Démon" de Saturne', in the top-left-hand portion of the box.[76] Saturn is also invoked through the magic square written in Hebrew characters in the bottom-right, which is derived from Agrippa and once again discussed by Marquès-Rivière (Figure 3.11).[77] As Kuni comments, it is as though Brauner was calling upon Saturn as 'god protector' through this constellation of symbols.[78]



LES SCEAUX ET LES SIGNES PANTACULAIRES 319

Si nous relions d'un trait les chiffres 1-2-3 puis 4-5-6, puis 7-8-9, nous obtenons la figure géométrique appelée par C. Agrippa, le « démon de Saturne ».

Si, par contre, nous additionnons 4 + 3 + 8 + 9 + 5 + 1 + 2 + 7 + 6, ce qui figure assez bien le signe de « l'Intelligence de

FIG. 50. — La signature du « Démon » (à gauche) et de l' « Intelligence » (à droite) de Saturne.

Saturne », nous obtenons le chiffre de 45, « nombre secret » de Saturne.

Les signes magiques utilisés ainsi par la Magie médiévale n'étaient que des « grilles de déchiffrement » pour donner soit le nombre planétaire correspondant soit la possibilité de refaire le carré magique. Il est assez curieux de noter l'utilisation magique de ce qui fut d'abord un aide-mémoire.

Les sept planètes ont leur carré magique, leur nombre sacré qui correspond à un nom divin hébraïque, les signes des démons et des Intelligences, les noms de ces derniers. Notons que les carrés magiques s'écrivent en chiffres ou avec les lettres hébraïques numérales qui leur correspondent.

Voici la liste de ces planètes avec leurs sceaux (*recto* et *verso*), carrés magiques en chiffres arabes et toutes les particularités de chacune d'elles. Les sceaux sont extraits de la *Virga aurea*[1] et contiennent les trois signatures (planétaire, de l'Intelligence et du démon) ainsi que leurs noms réunis sur le sceau.

1. Que nous complétons par le texte de C. Agrippa.

Figure 3.10 '"L'intelligence" de Saturne' / 'le "Démon" de Saturne' (and other symbols), as pictured in *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles* (Paris: Payot, 1938). © Éditions Payot & Rivages. Photo: Author.

In *Les Amoureux* (Figure 3.1), similarly, Saturn is once again invoked through the symbols of 'l'"Intelligence" de Saturne' and 'le "Démon" de Saturne', which are inscribed either side of the central stick-figure. Several of the symbols along the top of the box also pertain to Saturn, and have once again been copied directly from *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles* (derived from Agrippa); with the magic square of Saturn this time being expressed in the more familiar form of Arabic numerals (Figure 3.10).[79] The image of the bat, to the lower right of the box, also appears to relate to Saturn, following Agrippa's designation of the bat as an animal that exists 'under the power of Saturn'.[80] The overall optical effect of the dense web of signs, symbols and sigils that adorns Brauner's objects of 1943 is one of almost impenetrable complexity, and this is something that both Morando and Fabrice Flahutez have ascribed to a further magical mechanism at work in Brauner's oeuvre, in the guise of 'apotropaism': the age-old

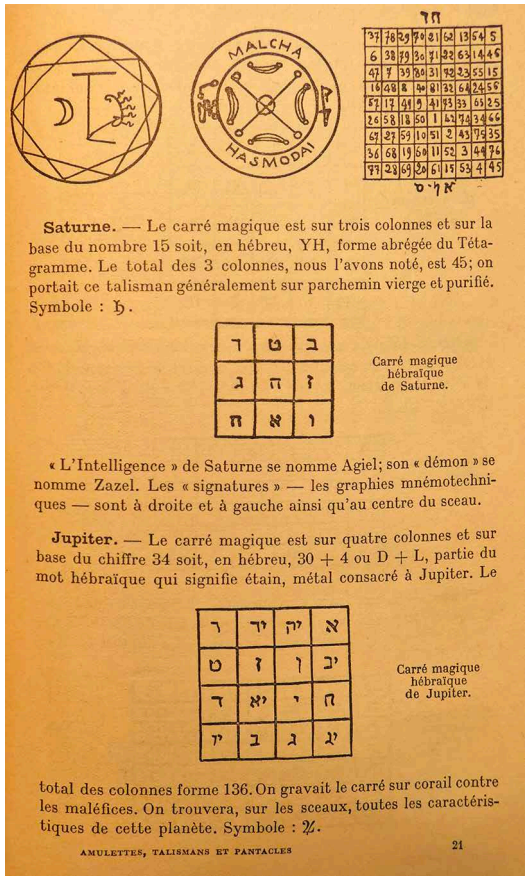


Figure 3.11 Carré magique hébraïque de Saturne (and other symbols), as pictured in *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles* (Paris: Payot, 1938). © Éditions Payot & Rivages. Photo: Author.

magical concept which posits that intricate designs and convoluted patterns can afford protection from evil by creating a puzzling, confounding or otherwise intimidating barrier on the surface of an image or object.[81] Indeed, the 'tattooed' appearance of some of these objects makes Morando's and Flahutez's suggestion all the more compelling, given apotropaism's close historical connection with body art. Even in their aesthetic appearance, then – practically covered in scrawled annotations and figures – Brauner strove for his objects to fulfil a protective function.

Some of the symbols that decorate *Les Amoureux*, such as those of 'l'"Intelligence"' and 'le "Démon" de Saturne', are rounded or beaded at their extremities. This is a feature that is prevalent across the inscriptions and insignia of Brauner's wartime oeuvre, and is more blatant in *La Charmeuse de serpent* of 1943 (Plate 6), which is revealed by a preliminary sketch (Figure 3.12) in the collections of Le Musée d'art moderne et

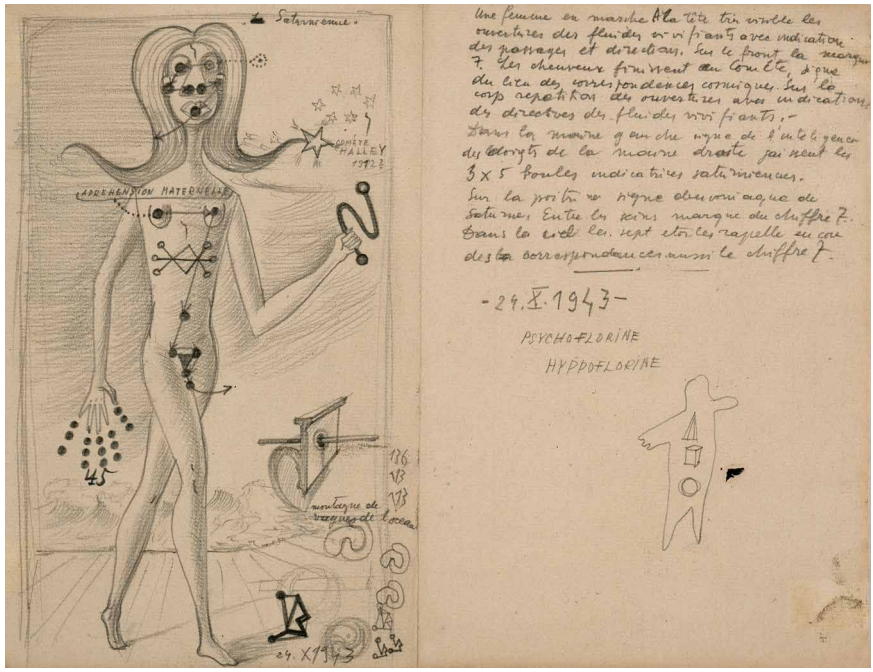


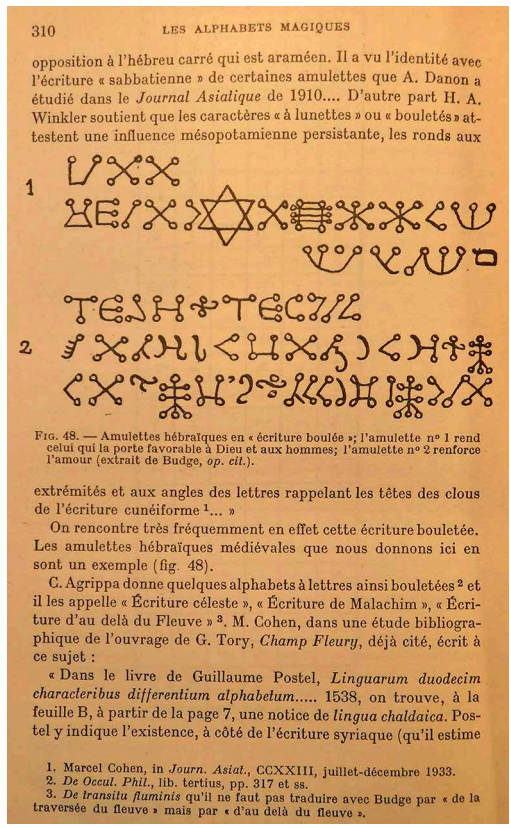
Figure 3.12 Victor Brauner, *La Saturnienne*, 1943, pencil on paper, Legs Jacqueline Victor-Brauner 1987 n° inv : 90.10.136, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Yves Bresson / Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole.

contemporain Saint-Etienne, contrary to the finished work's title, to be a 'Saturnienne' figure designed to set in motion certain celestial 'correspondances', and which Brauner originally depicted beside a star-studded sky and a representation of Halley's Comet.

Morando notes that this 'pelleted' line was used throughout his work for several years from 1943 onwards, and was based on the inscriptions of 'Hebrew amulets'.[82] Given Brauner's appreciably limited access to Hebrew amulets in the middle of the war, leading his secluded life in Les Hautes-Alpes, it should come as little surprise that there is a corresponding passage of *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles* that describes the application of this distinctive script. In a section on 'Les Alphabets Magiques', Marquès-Rivière discussed a certain style of 'beaded writing' that was common among Hebrew amulets of the medieval period, and he included a diagram for reference (Figure 3.13).[83] He then went on to explain that Agrippa had described this as the 'writing of Malachim [the angels]', 'writing from beyond the river', and 'celestial writing'.[84] In this light, Brauner's widespread use of this script across his paintings and objects of this period appears as yet another occulted strategy of invoking planetary influences. The 'beaded' writing closely resembled the dot-to-dot outline of constellational charts, and the technique was used liberally across Brauner's figurative works as a shorthand method of invoking the cosmos. Nowhere is this effect more striking and vivid than in

Brauner's drawing of 1945, *Hommes supércelestes pantaculairiens* (Figure 3.14). Here Brauner has threaded the outline of four figures and what appears to be a dog or cat through a sky's worth of 'stars': a miniature galaxy from which these beings emerge as new heroes of the zodiac, in place of the likes of Perseus, Hercules, Andromeda and Cassiopeia. In such remappings of the cosmos, Brauner seems to take Paracelsus's word quite literally that 'the stars are subject to the wise man, and are forced to obey him, not he the stars'.[85]

The cosmological symbolism continues in Brauner's *Portrait de Novalis* (Plate 5), which contains references to both the stars and the moon. In the first place, the moon is invoked through the pronged symbol that features on top of the central clay head, which represents a lunar symbol copied from *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles*.[86] The moon is also represented by the crescent shaped piece of paper, which rests underneath the clay head. The same piece of paper bears an inscription taken from Novalis's epic poem *Hymns to the Night* (1800), which reads (in translation):



310 LES ALPHABETS MAGIQUES

opposition à l'hébreu carré qui est araméen. Il a vu l'identité avec l'écriture « sabbatienne » de certaines amulettes que A. Danon a étudié dans le *Journal Asiatique* de 1910.... D'autre part H. A. Winkler soutient que les caractères « à lunettes » ou « bouletés » attestent une influence mésopotamienne persistante, les ronds aux

1

2

Fig. 48. — Amulettes hébraïques en « écriture boulée »; l'amulette nº 1 rend celui qui la porte favorable à Dieu et aux hommes; l'amulette nº 2 renforce l'amour (extrait de Budge, *op. cit.*).

extrémités et aux angles des lettres rappelant les têtes des clous de l'écriture cunéiforme [1]... »

On rencontre très fréquemment en effet cette écriture bouletée. Les amulettes hébraïques médiévales que nous donnons ici en sont un exemple (fig. 48).

C. Agrippa donne quelques alphabets à lettres ainsi bouletées [2] et il les appelle « Écriture céleste », « Écriture de Malachim », « Écriture d'au delà du Fleuve » [3]. M. Cohen, dans une étude bibliographique de l'ouvrage de G. Tory, *Champ Fleury*, déjà cité, écrit à ce sujet :

« Dans le livre de Guillaume Postel, *Linguarum duodecim characteribus differentium alphabetum*..... 1538, on trouve, à la feuille B, à partir de la page 7, une notice de *lingua chaldaica*. Postel y indique l'existence, à côté de l'écriture syriaque (qu'il estime

1. Marcel Cohen, in *Journ. Asiat.*, CCXXIII, juillet-décembre 1933.
2. *De Occul. Phil.*, lib. tertius, pp. 317 et ss.
3. *De transitu fluminis* qu'il ne faut pas traduire avec Budge par « de la traversée du fleuve » mais par « d'au delà du fleuve ».

Figure 3.13 Amulettes hébraïques en 'écriture boulée', as pictured in *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles* (Paris: Payot, 1938). © Éditions Payot & Rivages. Photo: Author.

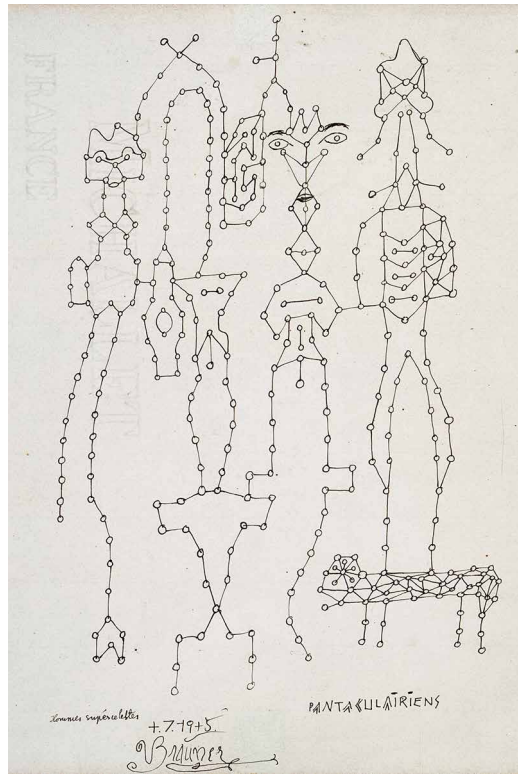


Figure 3.14 Victor Brauner, *Hommes supércelestes pantaculairiens*, 1945, pen and ink on paper. Legs Jacqueline Victor-Brauner, 1987 n° inv : 90.10.284 Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Yves Bresson / Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole.

> More heavenly than those glittering stars we hold the eternal eyes which the Night hath opened within us.[87]

Alexandrian singles out *Hymns to the Night* as Brauner's most cherished reading material of his wartime exile, and this is perhaps unsurprising given Novalis's unique formulation of night: as the great transporter into dreams, desires and memories (a salve to Brauner's loneliness); as the visionary ether of seers and prophets (appealing to his self-identification as a magician); and as the otherworldly haunting ground of his lost lover, Sophie von Kühn (no doubt directly substituted in Brauner's mind with Séjourné).[88]

In *Image du réel increé* (Figure 3.2), also from 1943, cosmological symbolism is less abundant. The object consists of a crude figure made up of six palm-sized stones, which are set in a deep block of wax. Beneath the figure is the German inscription 'Bildnis aus der ungeschöpften wirklichkeit', adapted from the original French title, which was itself inspired by an aphorism from René Char's poem

'Partage formel', which he had sent in a letter to Brauner in September 1943.[89] Morando has suggested that Brauner opted to present the title in German on the face of the object as a homage to the corpus of German Romantic literature with which he was so preoccupied at that time.[90] And indeed, the literal sense of Brauner's chosen title would seem to corroborate this idea. Loosely translating as 'likeness of an uncreated reality', his evocative title seems to encapsulate the utopian promise of the fantastical content of so much Romantic literature. Aside from this inscription, the only other meaningful detail of *Image du réel incréé* is the label on the stone that represents the figure's head, which is adorned with the ancient Egyptian symbol of Ankh: 'the sign of life'.[91] This symbol effectively imbues the stone effigy with life, and Brauner's inspiration for this invocation may have once again been to do with manipulating planetary influences. In a note regarding one of the symbols of Saturn that Brauner had copied in *Les Amoureux*, Marquès-Rivière mentions in passing that it has the power to 'change living beings into stone'.[92] With this in mind, Brauner's talismanic spell to change stone into a living being can be interpreted as an effective counter-spell, designed to fend off this unwanted, malevolent influence of Saturn.

Through such weighted symbolism, Brauner ultimately found the means to wield the divine forces of the cosmos in these four objects and others. Via his early forays into mimetic magic, and his immersion in the talismanic magic of Marquès-Rivière, Agrippa and Paracelsus, he discovered the means to deliver the stars and planets into the palm of his hand. Two years later, in March 1945, he penned a poem titled *'Lune'* in which the opening lines proclaim this achievement:

> Moon, diamond cutting the silence of joy.
> You are in my hand, the red of my melancholy.[93]

It was this same effect of celestial capture which Breton remarked upon in a 1946 essay on Brauner, where he described how, upon looking at his recent paintings, he had the sensation that '[i]n the hollow of one's hand, the stars have resumed their courses in the sky'.[94]

Novalis and the poetic wellsprings of magic

> *To me it seems that the poets do not exaggerate nearly enough, since they content themselves with darkly surmising the magic of nature's language and with playing on fancy as a child might play with his father's magic wand. They do not know what forces they have as vassals, what worlds are bound to obey them.*
>
> –Novalis, *The Novices of Saïs* (*c*. 1798–9)

The diverse theoretical reference points of Brauner's magical objects – encompassing talismanic magic, alchemy, Rosicrucianism and Gnosticism – all find a common source in the writings of Novalis, where these occult traditions find an implicit or manifest basis.

Brauner's frequent references to Novalis during the war coincided with similar references by Breton, and almost certainly shared a common source. Semin attributes Brauner's discovery of Novalis to his stay at the Villa Air-Bel in Marseille in 1941, at a time when Breton's longstanding interest in the poet intensified.[95] In a note from the end of 1941, made eight months after Breton's departure to the United States, it was in direct relation to Novalis and Lautréamont that Brauner recalled his now distant friend:

> In this chemical night
> The meeting of Lautréamont Novalis and
> André Breton
> Liberated mankind[96]

In another note, Brauner once again spoke of Breton alongside the German Romantics, where he beseeched: 'Novalis, Clemens Brentano, Hölderlin, André Breton, Bettina [von Arnim] and all my friends of diverse and distant countries who have a taste for the inexplicable and the extraordinary, [come] see me, ask me to tell [you] in detail, look at my paintings [and] drawings and try to read in them poetic destinies'.[97] Whether or not Breton was in fact the source of his interest in Novalis, Brauner became completely immersed in the poet's work whilst in hiding in Les Hautes-Alpes.

Alongside *Hymns to the Night*, the archives show that Brauner came into the possession of a 1939 edition of Novalis's *Les Disciples à Saïs* (*The Novices of Saïs,* originally *c.*1798–9) illustrated by fellow surrealist André Masson and translated by the occasional surrealist collaborator Armel Guerne, as well as a 1942 edition of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (originally 1800); both of which he almost certainly acquired before he went into hiding in 1942.[98] In his wartime poetry Brauner refers to the quest for the Blue Flower, which is the central metaphor for the titular character's quest for spiritual illumination in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.[99] Indeed, the pair of poems by Brauner in which this reference occurs recall both *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and *The Novices of Saïs* in their ecological-cum-pantheistic reflections on nature, and their implicit assertion that poetry offers the most direct means of engaging in this communion with the universe.[100]

The theoretical coordinates of Novalis's writings are revealed in all their complexity in a series of later portraits that Brauner made of the poet in 1945, two years after making his original *Portrait de Novalis*. The images are all referred to as *Portrait Pantaculaire de Novalis*, and consist of a mixture of preparatory sketches and finished iterations of the same designs.[101] The two examples under consideration here are a drawing (Figure 3.15) and a painting executed in ink and wax on paper (Figure 3.16).[102] As their title suggests, these portraits were designed first and foremost to operate as talismans, invoking Novalis as protective spirit according to the talismanic principle that once something is sufficiently fixed and embodied in symbolic form then its influence is real. Brauner's decision to invoke Novalis in the form of a talisman may in fact have been inspired by the poet's own comments on talismanic magic. In *The Novices of Saïs*, Novalis wrote specifically of the talisman where he alluded, albeit cryptically, to its mechanism of correspondences:

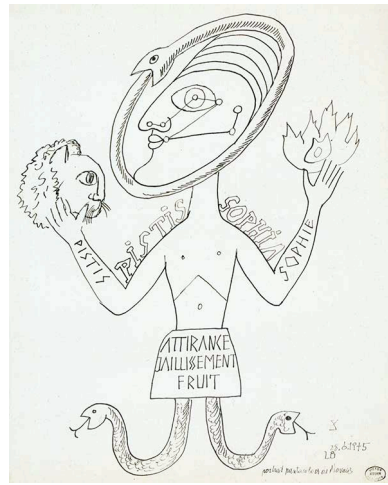


Figure 3.15 Victor Brauner, *Portrait pantaculaire de Novalis*, 1945, pen and ink on paper, 34.2 × 25.2 cm. 28 juin 1945, Legs Jacqueline Victor-Brauner, 1987 n° inv : 90.10.1558 Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Yves Bresson / Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole.



Figure 3.16 Victor Brauner, *Portrait pantaculaire de Novalis*, 1945, Encre de chine cires de couleur sur papier découpé, 74.5 × 52.6 cm, Centre Pompidou, Paris. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Philippe Migeat.

> 'They are right', say some, 'here or nowhere lies the talisman. We sit by the source of freedom and look; it is the great magic mirror, in which all creation is disclosed clear and pure, in it bathe the tender spirits and images of every kind of nature, and here every chamber is open to us. What need to journey wearily through the dismal world of visible things?'[103]

Beyond their immediate role of invoking protective influences, these pantacular portraits also contain a panoply of symbols that extend their frame of reference into territories of alchemy, Rosicrucianism and Gnosticism.

The pantacular portraits both take the same fundamental composition: of a generic profile portrait of Novalis, whose head is encircled by a serpent taking the form of the alchemical symbol of the ouroboros, who is holding the head of a lion in one hand and a flame in the other, whose body bears very similar inscriptions to those that appeared on *Portrait de Novalis* ('Pistis Sophia'; 'Attirance/Jaillissement/Fruit'), and whose legs are composed of yet more serpents. The inscription 'Pistis Sophia' (and its corruption 'Pistis Sophie') refers to the fourth-century gnostic text of the same name, thus linking the 'pantacular' portrait (and Novalis) to Gnosticism and its central tenet of personal communion with the divine.[104] (The term Pistis Sophia also seems to have been chosen to evoke the figure of Sophie von Kühn, who became the focus of Novalis's spiritual and melancholic poetic projections.) This Gnostic terrain had surprising currency in 1940s surrealism, subsequently receiving a full write up and analysis in Seligmann's *The Mirror of Magic* (1948).[105] The lion is a Gnostic symbol often paired (as here) with serpentine forms, whose significance is contested but is probably linked to Laldabaoth, one of the Archons who comprise the Demiurge: the divine pantheon which constitutes and keeps the physical universe (as opposed to the spiritual realm). In these terms, the Lion head might be taken as a symbol of the boundedness of the physical universe. The flame, as offset against the lion, would seem to represent Gnosis, or spiritual enlightenment: a point of entry into the divine light of the Monad. The lower portions of the figures in these examples are modelled on the basilisk-legged figure of Abraxas: a talismanic symbol of divinity widely used by the Gnostics on amulets, coins and gemstones. *The Novices of Saïs* seems to be an important connecting thread in Brauner's thought once again here, wherein Novalis's narrative about the young novices' quest for higher wisdom and secret knowledge closely resembles the Gnostics' emphasis upon *Gnosis*, and the endeavour towards spiritual insight. Brauner may also have been folding Gnosticism in with Novalis on the grounds of his reputation as a poet of the night (*Hymns to the Night*), chiming with the Gnostics' astrological pursuits.

Each of these elements corresponds to a particular aspect of Brauner's wartime philosophy. The ouroboros – symbolizing the infinite cycle of the world's elemental reconfiguration and regeneration – stands for the intimate cohesion of all life, and the unity of the universe; a symbol that Brauner would later bestow upon himself by incorporating the lemniscate or infinity symbol into his signature, to 'signify his pantheistic rootedness in the world'.[106] The lion held a unique place within Brauner's 'Mythology of L': the alliterative, tripartite formula 'Lion/Lumineux/Libre' that he devised during the war under the sign of 'L' in homage to (Laurette) Séjourné, which stood for the code of courage, hope and freedom that he sought to live by.[107] The

flame, meanwhile, symbolizes the transformative force of poetry. In his notes Brauner repeatedly associated the flame with the creative energies of the dream, asserting that 'the flame solidifies the dream'.[108] This was also fundamentally how Novalis conceived of the flame, as something analogous to the 'ego' or 'soul'.[109]

The inscription 'Attirance/Jaillissement/Fruit' ('Attraction/Spurting/Fruit') is a variation upon 'Attirance Explosion = Fruit' ('Attraction Explosion = Fruit'), which featured in Brauner's 1943 *Portrait de Novalis*. At a basic level, these equations evoke sexual union in their reproductive connotations, especially in the examples shown here, where in both instances it features over the figure's groin. In more abstract and significant terms, however, their tripartite formulation seems to adopt the structure of Hegel's dialectical *aufhebung*, according to the pattern: proposition >< contradiction = mutually mitigated resolution. This dialectical *aufhebung* frames the synthesis of two distinct and often diametrically opposed things into a mitigating third possibility, which carries a measure of each of them forward in unison. In its emphasis on 'Fruit', Brauner's formulae seem to channel such generative syntheses as occur in the natural world, ranging from sexual intercourse to pollination. And in this natural dimension, these inscriptions seem to have been devised to invoke the regenerative forces of the universe, and Novalis's acute awareness of them. Once again, *The Novices of Saïs* seems to be a crucial point of reference here, as his great homage to the miraculous generative powers of nature.

The wax and ink version of the *Portrait Pantaculaire de Novalis* (Figure 3.16) also features an upside-down rose hanging from the figure's torso. This rose represents the Rosy Cross of Rosicrucianism: the esoteric religious brotherhood that sprang up in seventeenth-century Europe as an order committed to uncovering secret knowledge of the magical and spiritual workings of the universe. *The Chemical Wedding* was among several other manifestoes accredited to the seventeenth-century theologian Johann Valentin Andreae, which were instrumental in popularizing Rosicrucianism. With purported origins in the early fifteenth century (in the legendary life of Rosenkreutz himself), the Rosicrucian order came to prominence in the early seventeenth century as a religious sect claiming to possess an occulted philosophical wisdom, and preaching selfless acts of beneficence and charity (Rosenkreutz and the founding members having purportedly dedicated their lives to healing the sick without once accepting remuneration). As the narrative of *The Chemical Wedding* demonstrates, Rosicrucianism was intimately connected to alchemy and the pursuit of what Carl Jung called 'philosophical gold', and its symbolism is consequently alchemically inflected.[110] In its earliest forms, the movement's founding symbol of the Rosy Cross represents a single rose in bloom; often with a cruciform branch structure (or set within a crucifix), and sometimes accompanied by bees. In these terms, it embodies the alchemical principle of regeneration: just as the blood of Christ found the earth, so the earth rises into the life-giving flower. The thorny, blood-licked Rose represents a nascent destruction, a sacrificial creation. It contains the dual promises of life and death, with each one begetting the other. Rosicrucianism was closely linked to alchemy. *The Chemical Wedding* embedded the generative and regenerative alchemical motifs of the Chemical Wedding, the incubation and hatching of eggs, and the legend of the Phoenix within Rosicrucian philosophy. Rosicrucianism's symbolic distillation

of alchemy and its philosophical commentary upon the checks, balances and cycles of the universe was an important precedent for Brauner's symbolic portraits of Novalis and his wider work of this period. With this knowledge, he used the symbol of the rose to expand the alchemical resonances of both the ouroboros and the inscription 'Attirance/Jaillissement/Fruit' in *Portrait Pantaculaire de Novalis*. The symbol of the Rosy Cross recurs in the floral wands carried by many of Brauner's painted figures of the 1940s, such as in *The Poet in Exile* (1946). In these flower-themed works, the alchemical aspect of the Rosy Cross's symbolism is carried through to the process of pollination, whereby the secretive rituals of the bees miraculously harness new life from the fecund residues of the flower.

As this chapter has shown, the magic instilled in Brauner's wartime objects is activated through symbols, signs, sigils and ciphers. In his posthumously published *Das Allgemeine Brouillon* (*c*. 1798–9), known in English as his *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, Novalis described magic in the following terms:

> MAGIC. (mystical theory of language)/*Sympathy* of the *sign* with the signified (One of the fundamental ideas of the Cabbala.)/Magic is utterly different from philosophy etc. and constitutes a *world* – a *science* – an art in itself./Magical astronomy, grammar, philosophy, religion, chemistry, etc./*Theory of the reciprocal representation of the universe*.[111]

Brauner's wartime experiments with magic might be anchored in this rich statement: similarly concerned with exploring this concept of magic as the 'theory of the reciprocal representation of the universe'; a universe which, according to this law, can be structured by its representation.

Talismans, alchemy and the law of universal correspondence

> *Thus all things are a great manuscript to which we hold the key, and nothing comes unexpected because we know the motion of the great clockwork in advance.*
>
> –Novalis, *The Novices of Saïs* (*c*. 1798–9)

Marquès-Rivière explained the talismanic 'law of correspondence' in direct relation to alchemy, with specific reference to the *Emerald Tablet* of Hermes Trismegistus. Speaking of the physical composition of the talisman in a section on 'The talismanic support', he wrote:

> The material of the support, one suspects, is not indifferent to the required result […] it belongs to the theory of propitiation, when magical forces are conceived at the stage of magico-sacred personification. The great philosophical text that can serve as the basis of this law is the famous 'Emerald Tablet' of Hermes […] this text continually inspired medieval magical speculations and played an important role in the edification of pantacular science. One phrase establishes this law of correspondence: 'That which is below is like that which is above and that which is

> above is like that which is below, to make the miracles of the one same thing.' […] This law of analogy is linked to a metaphysics of essences and qualities.[112]

Rather than the practical experiment of laboratory alchemy, Marquès-Rivière was concerned with the analogical, metaphorical basis of alchemical discourse (the White Queen, the Red King, the Chemical Wedding, etc.), and the implications this has for a talismanic 'law of correspondence' premised on the magical efficacy of symbolic affinity. Brauner's close reading of Marquès-Rivière's discussion is evidenced by a sketch he made in 1944, which is plainly labelled with the phrase 'law of correspondence' (Figure 3.17). As has been demonstrated, Marquès-Rivière's extensive analysis of the analogical mechanisms of magical symbols sits closely behind Brauner's wartime oeuvre. In connection to this, Brauner simultaneously uncovered a closely related idea of the potency of symbolic analogy in the writings of Novalis, for whom it was not only possible to read the symbolic superstructure of the universe, but also to write it, and animate the world like a mirror-language. Novalis spoke of the 'mystical theory of language' outlined in the Cabbala, which posits that there is a metaphysical '*Sympathy* of the *sign* with the signified'.[113] This constituted the foundations of what he described as the '*Theory of the reciprocal representation of the universe*': premised on the idea that 'a grammatical mysticism lies at the basis of everything'.[114] The specific emphasis on the power of symbolic representation that Brauner found in common between Novalis, the Gnostics and the Rosicrucians stood to furnish the poet and the artist with supreme magical abilities. These intricately conflated precedents seem to have proved to Brauner that the imaginative analogies produced by poets and artists are entities that are constantly reinventing and redefining their surroundings: propelled as if through a chain of Venn Diagrams, continually being drawn into new sets of relations with the universe. For Brauner, it was the shared task of both the poet and magician (interchangeable in his mind) to discover and channel these lines of analogical correspondence in order to transform the world. Following Marquès-Rivière's direction in *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles*, Brauner believed that one must 'rediscover the macrocosm in the microcosm':

> One must rediscover the macrocosm in the microcosm and the cosmic influences on creation. This will be the great law called 'signatures'. The Zohar especially developed this idea; here is a passage of that essential book of the Kabbala:
>
> 'Just as the firmament is marked with stars and other signs legible to wise men, in the same way the skin which is the enveloped exterior of man is marked with wrinkles and lines legible to wise men […]'
>
> […] all of nature participates in these mysterious correspondences; here medieval alchemy and spagyric medicine join a universal tradition. All matter […] bears the signature of the macrocosm and the microcosm.[115]

In this expansive symbolic universe, everything is meaningful, and everything is also movable and negotiable according to the law of analogical correspondence.

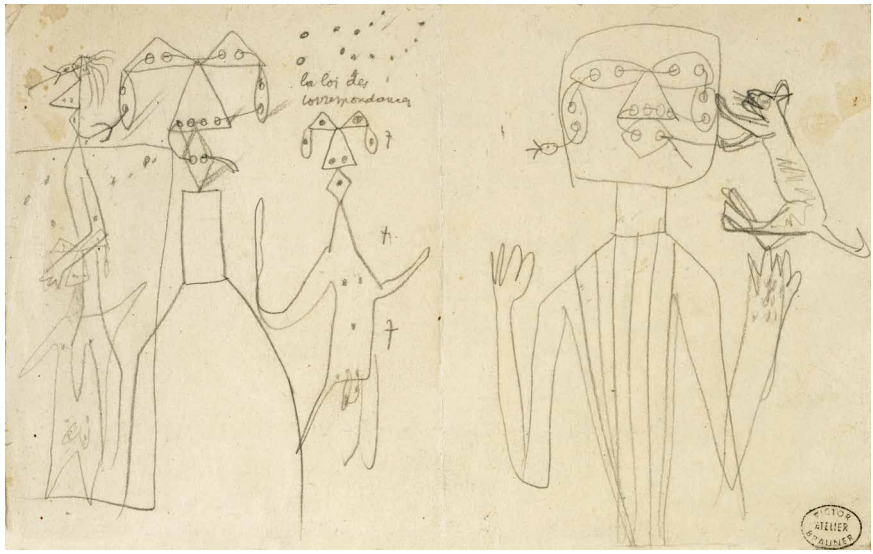


Figure 3.17 Victor Brauner, *La Loi des correspondances*, 1944, pencil on paper, 11.7 × 18.8 cm, Legs Jacqueline Victor-Brauner, 1987 n° inv : 90.10.1485 Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Yves Bresson / Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole.

In 1946, Breton wrote an article on Brauner's wartime oeuvre in *Cahiers d'art*, and it was the symbolic complexity of this body of work that he reserved for his concluding remarks:

> On the occult volet hinged to each picture the poet Fabre d'Olivet, in the posture of a donor exempt from any appearance of humility, holds out his scholarly work *La Langue hébraïques restituée* (1816). But, through ardent attraction reinforced by an invocation of *the number*, all is resolved here in favour of the most sublime harmony. And, in my opinion, the beeswax which has just recently replaced the pure goatskin parchment of the Ancients as a means of conveying to us Victor Brauner's priceless message confers upon him the power of the pentacles, that of exorcism: to invoke all the powers of the *self* in order to exorcise all those powers of the *impersonal* which are increasingly harmful to us all.[116]

The fact that Breton comments specifically upon the magical powers of 'numbers' and 'pentacles' in these works is notable here, since it seems to stand as tacit proof that Brauner had personally explained the sophisticated talismanic mechanisms underpinning his wartime oeuvre. In its decidedly laudatory tone, Breton's article is suggestive of a similar shift in his own thought: towards an acceptance of occultism on its own terms, beyond the purview of earlier surrealist discourse.

Published in 1946, this article sits at the threshold of Breton's own self-confessed turn to magic and the occult, which he celebrated the following year in the magic and occult-themed international exhibition of Surrealism, *Le Surréalisme en 1947*. Brauner's wartime oeuvre unquestionably impacted upon the 'mytho-magical' researches of the French surrealist community in the post-war period, which continued long after Brauner's sudden dismissal from the group in 1948.[117] This wartime chapter of Brauner's career ultimately represents the first shoots in a new theoretical field of magic that was being sown within Surrealism during the mid-late 1940s. In the years after the war, the magically efficacious 'law of correspondence' tested by Brauner would go on to inform Breton's and Gerard Legrand's conception of magic in their ambitious art historical survey, *L'Art magique* (1957). Following in Brauner's footsteps, Breton and Legrand turned to Novalis here for theoretical clarification, declaring at the very outset of the book that 'one can preliminarily find enlightenment on the matter [of magic] in […] Novalis'.[118] Later on in *L'Art magique*, their discussion focused more specifically on Novalis's concept of the 'great cipher' from *The Novices of Saïs* in order to give expression to their theory of magic, which manifest itself as a variation upon the talismanic 'law of correspondence'.[119] And as they read Novalis's description of the novices' teacher in this text, in preparation for the writing of *L'Art magique*, they no doubt recognized shades of Brauner's wartime researches:

> Everywhere he found the familiar, only strangely mixed and coupled, and thus strange things often ordered themselves within him. Soon he became attentive to the connections that are everywhere, to meetings and encounters. It was not long before he ceased to see anything by itself. […] Sometimes the stars were men for him and sometimes men were stars, sometimes the stones were beasts, the clouds plants; he played with forces and phenomena, he knew where and how he could find this and that, or make this and that manifest itself; he himself plucked the strings in search of chords and melodies.[120]

4

Primordial myth and magic in the writings of André Breton and Benjamin Péret, 1942–59

What a shame that nature remained so marvelous and incomprehensible, so poetic and infinite, in spite of all efforts to modernize it.

–Novalis, 'Christendom or Europe' (written 1799), trans. Margaret Mahony Stoljar

In August 1945, Breton and his new wife Elisa Bindhoff were driving between Arizona and New Mexico visiting native territories of the Navajo, Hopi and Zuni. Having seen out the majority of the war in New York, the couple spent several months travelling around North America in 1944 and 1945. In August 1944, they visited the Gaspé Peninsula on Canada's eastern seaboard, where Breton wrote *Arcanum 17* (published 1945) by the hazy half-light of the Atlantic sunrise, which inspired the mutational imagery of the book.[1] Having returned to New York in October 1944, their subsequent trip to the American Southwest in the summer of 1945 was as much cultural as scenic sightseeing. Dotted across the desert plains and perched high upon the flat-topped mesas were the communities of the Navajo, Hopi and Zuni, whose cultures Breton had long admired. Their journey through the Navajo Nation, the Hopi Reservation and the Zuni Reservation was a veritable pilgrimage for Breton, on which he realized his longstanding desire to visit the communities from which the Kachinas and Sand Paintings associated with the region originated.[2]

Breton and Elisa visited numerous settlements during their travels around the indigenous territories. As Breton's notes in his 'Carnet de voyage chez les indiens Hopi' reveal, he and Elisa were fascinated by almost every aspect of these cultures: from local fabrics and hair styles to the complex ritual procedures of the Snake Dance, the Cow Dance, the Antelope Dance and Sand Painting ceremonies.[3] Throughout their travels in the region, they remained on the lookout for examples of Kachina dolls (material embodiments of the corresponding gods that reside in the San Francisco Peaks above Flagstaff) to admire, sketch or buy. Breton makes repeated references to his various attempts to purchase Kachinas in his 'Carnet de voyage', and some days are simply recalled by the specimens he encountered. The entry for their visit to the historic trading post of Keams Canyon, for example, simply reads: '*Keams Canyon* (night of Friday or Saturday 11th August)/Purple Doll'.[4] By the end of the trip, and despite several unsuccessful attempts at bartering with local craftsmen, they had managed to

accrue at least eleven Kachinas, some of which would subsequently join his existing collection on the walls of 42 rue Fontaine (Figure 4.1).[5]

Kachina dolls had long featured in Breton's collection of indigenous artefacts. In this light, his buying spree in August 1945 might seem altogether unremarkable beyond the fact he was purchasing them first-hand from the native communities. The vogue for so-called 'objets sauvages' was certainly nothing new within Surrealism. During the 1920s, such artefacts were not only collected to personal ends by the likes of Breton and Paul Éluard, but also featured prominently in the surrealists' public activities: in exhibitions such as *Tableaux de Man Ray et objets des îles* and *Yves Tanguy et objets d'Amérique* at the Galerie Surréaliste in 1926 and 1927 respectively; in periodicals such as *La Révolution Surréaliste*; and in Breton's 1928 book *Nadja*.[6] In his 1927 'Gloss on Surrealism' (now known as 'Dream Kitsch'), Walter Benjamin wrote that the surrealists 'seek the totemic tree of objects within the thicket of primal history': a metaphor which stands as tacit recognition of these pervasive ethnographic interests.[7] This trend continued into the 1930s. From 1931, the surrealists published in *Minotaure*, which upheld a loosely ethnographic agenda (as exemplified by the 1933 special issue dedicated to the Dakar-Djibouti ethnographic mission). By 1936, as the surrealist object emerged as the focus of critical discussion, the category of 'objets sauvages' was listed as one of its primary manifestations, and Breton proclaimed the surrealists' supreme admiration for the 'object-gods of certain regions and certain times'.[8]



Figure 4.1 Jacques Faujour, *Atelier d'André Breton* (Kachina dolls visible), 1994, photograph, Centre Pompidou, Paris. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Jacques Faujour.

Despite their prominence, such artefacts were left theoretically unsubstantiated in surrealist discourse throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Beyond testifying to the group's (not altogether flawless) anticolonial convictions, they remained largely outside of the spotlight of surrealist theory.[9] Indeed, throughout this period the presence of such artefacts in surrealist exhibitions and publications suffered from a certain obscurantism under the rudimentary and inherently denigratory rubric of the 'primitive' (and, equally, the 'savage'). James Clifford famously discussed Surrealism's early recourse to the 'primitive' in his 1981 article 'On Ethnographic Surrealism' (later forming a chapter in his 1988 book *The Predicament of Culture*), where he identified the surrealists' interest in ethnographic artefacts as being based around a desire to proliferate fissures in the fabric of Western culture (and logic) through the pure and simple aesthetic intervention of the 'primitive other' (wholly decontextualized): willingly placing 'the possibility of comparison […] in unmediated tension with incongruity'.[10] As characterized by Clifford, the surrealist attitude towards ethnographic artefacts during the 1920s and 1930s was overwhelmingly superficial, concerned merely with the unconsciously stimulating shock-value that these objects held for them (as uninitiated viewers) as conduits to the marvellous.

During and after the war, however, these artefacts began to break the bounds of their longstanding status as aesthetic curios, as they came to form key points of reference for the surrealists' renegotiation of the sphere of magic. In the writings of Breton and Péret, the ethnographic artefact was consistently presented as a special category of magical object whose carefully constructed symbolism demanded theoretical interpretation. For the most part, it was the enigmatic air of these objects, rather than the particular traditions they pertained to, which attracted the surrealists' theoretical analysis. Just as Brauner had become fascinated by the analogical mechanisms of talismans, Breton, Péret, Gérard Legrand (in collaboration with Breton) and others were simultaneously becoming interested in the miraculously rich analogical qualities of ethnographic artefacts.

In the years following the war, this growing concern with the interpretive phenomenology of the ethnographic artefact eventually found its proper critical expression within the conceptual framework of 'esotericism'. In accordance with its application within the surrealist literature covered here, I will be using the term 'esotericism' in its most prosaic sense of the 'esoteric': as an adjective to describe that which is cryptic, indirect and allusive; applicable to metaphor and analogy in poetry, and symbolism in art. As Guy Girard has observed, 'all esotericism remains dependent upon magic thought, even if it is diversified through practices such as astrology, alchemy, geomancy, theurgy or Kabbalah'.[11] Esotericism, he explains, corresponds to …

> [A] form of thought [that] privileges analogy, in so far as it allows the establishment of signifying correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm, between mankind and nature, between mortals and supernatural beings. It begins with the principle that everything in the universe is encrypted, that everything acts as a sign and is linked to other signs whose interpretation is accessible to the initiate, for whom language itself participates in this infinite play of signification that drives universal harmony.[12]

As Girard notes, there has always been a regenerative, if not revolutionary, aspect to esoteric thought, whereby 'the aim of this [esoteric] initiation is to approach, experience, and understand the harmony between being and the world […] and to make this understanding the agent of a transformation in the individual who can master it and interpret its signs'.[13] In these terms, Breton, in particular, seems to have been less concerned with such a notion of esotericism as a tradition or discourse than as a poetic system of transformation, based on models of analogy, metaphor and allusion.[14]

The proving ground of this surrealist discourse of esotericism was situated between a set of overlapping dichotomies, which will mark the fundamental coordinates of this chapter's discussion. Against the backdrop of the surrealists' ambition to establish magic as a philosophically and ideologically viable worldview in the post-war era, the debate can be reduced to the interrelated matters of: science against poetry, rationality against irrationality, discrete signification against analogy, structuralism against semiotic abandon, and empirical versus magical thinking. Ultimately, it was the group's navigation of these tensions that gave rise to their particular conception of magic in the post-war period.

Péret, Breton and the lessons of the Kachina Doll

Surrealism's full wartime turn towards magic was signalled by Péret's essay 'Magic: The Flesh and Blood of Poetry', which appeared in the American magazine *View* in June 1943. The essay was not in fact a new piece of writing but an English translation of an extract from *La Parole est à Péret*, written the previous year. What was new, however, was the title that emphatically placed 'magic' at the forefront of Péret's wartime thought. Indeed, the essay represented the first meaningful indication of the future theoretical discussion of magic within surrealist discourse. Parkinson summarizes Péret's discussion as follows:

> Composed in Mexico and meant as an introduction to a collection of myths, legends, and folktales from Latin America, the text presents an instance of Péret's own purported precognition alongside the claim that 'the common denominator of the sorcerer, the poet and the madman cannot be anything else but magic,' in which the sorcerer is both, as Péret would have termed it, the 'tribal shaman' and medieval magician.[15]

Within his essay, Péret identified the origins of both these figures in the primordial world of prehistoric, 'primitive' or 'savage' man.[16] He ultimately used the text to petition for the revival of 'primitive thought', where he mourned how the transformative powers of poetry had been maligned in modern civilization, arguing that poetry 'irrevocably loses its meaning' for the worker in post-industrial societies.[17] Meanwhile, he saw that in other corners of the world 'the savage remains a poet', predisposed to reimagining the world around them.[18] He conceived of the myths and legends of 'primitive' cultures as being founded upon the most ambitious estimations of semblance, analogy and

metaphor: exhibiting poetic patterns of thought that demonstrated a 'liberty of mind' that was far superior to scientific rationalism in its social horizons.[19] Péret's romantic assessment of the poetic faculties of primeval man was axiomatic of Surrealism's renewed investment in the 'primitive' paradigm of ethnographic cultures.

It is also possible to construe Péret's essay as a direct response to the current state of global politics. In the way in which he posited mythically oriented societies (that prioritized 'poetry') as being open to reinterpretation and change, set against a scientific civilization (comprising unequivocal principles and fixed moral codes) geared towards ideological intransigeance and political control, he established a clear dichotomy between the liberated existence of the 'primitive' and the oppression of the modern-industrial worker: a figure who, as Péret was writing, was being led from every corner of the globe into the genocide of the Second World War in the name of rational civilization.

The conceptual terminology of Péret's essay was ultimately somewhat limited in terms of its applicability to a fully fledged theory of magic. His discussion considered the 'marvellous' and its emanation through 'poetry': using terminology that had been the staple of surrealist discourse since Breton's first *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924). It would be the more specific concepts of 'esotericism' and 'analogy' that would eventually stimulate and advance the surrealist discussion of magic in the post-war era. And the origins of this new debate lie in Breton's proximate book *Arcanum 17*, which further developed the case for Surrealism's recourse to the ethnographic artefact.

Compared to Péret's short essay in *View*, *Arcanum 17* represents a far more deliberated reflection on the current state of the world in the context of the war. Breton's book delivered a protracted rumination on the moral and philosophical dilemmas of the conflict, all the while looking towards the future and life beyond the present crisis. In the midst of the war's chaos, in *Arcanum 17* Breton salvaged a message of love-triumphant from his dreams and from his natural surroundings on the Gaspé. What is striking about this (relatively unsurprising) message of peace is the path that Breton set out for its realization. In terms that are already familiar from Péret's essay, in *Arcanum 17* Breton called for Surrealism to admonish and abandon the prevailing *scientific worldview*, which had failed to prevent mankind from walking headlong to the brink of apocalypse, and replace it with an *esoteric worldview*.[20]

Towards the end of the text, as Breton flits between poetic reverie and critical judgement, he turns to contemplate how the role of myth has been stultified in modern, rational society, as exemplified by the near-global ubiquity of Christian doctrine. With reference to the potent mythological quality of one of his recent dreams, Breton reflects:

> How much richer, more ambitious and also more favorable for the mind it seems to me in that respect than Christianity! It's painful to observe how, under the latter's influence, the lofty interpretations that directed ancient beliefs have been systematically reduced to the *letter* of their contents: all that is retained is the poetic legend, generally agreed to be brilliant, and it was thought possible to ascribe no other reference to them than the enumeration of the material needs of the people who shaped them. Thus the Philistine is satisfied to learn that Hopi ceremonies, exceptionally varied and requiring the intervention of the maximum

> number of supernatural beings the imagination can furnish faces and distinct attributes for, are intended more or less to lure every possible protection for the crops these Indian tribes cultivate, first among which is corn […] Who will accept that such elaborate constructs can be resolved and more or less exhausted by the analysis of the need to deify rain and other fertilizing elements required by arid lands? More inspiring and dignifying to the mind is the viewpoint of the mythographers themselves which emphasizes that in order for a myth to be viable, it must satisfy a number of meanings at once, among which we can distinguish the poetic meaning, the historical meaning, the uranographic meaning, and the cosmological meaning.[21]

Here Breton makes plain his strong distrust of scholarly interpretations of 'primitive' belief systems, which tend to reduce these beliefs to a set of discrete signs pertaining to social or practical necessity, rather than grant them the enigmatic status that he felt they should be reserved in accordance with their sublime, dream-like qualities.[22]

As this passage develops, discussion swiftly moves on from this fairly predictable complaint of a lack of poetic sensitivity in scholarly works. By the very next page, Breton has become an outspoken advocate of esotericism, which he accredits as the founding principle of mythological belief systems:

> Esotericism, with all due reservations about its basic principle, at least has the immense advantage of maintaining in a dynamic state the system of comparison, boundless in scope, available to man, which allows him to make connections linking objects that appear to be the farthest apart and partially unveils to him the mechanism of universal symbolism.[23]

After first floating a vague criticism concerning its 'basic principle' – possibly to do with the (proto-scientific) fallacy of certitude that its adherents subscribe to – Breton nails his colours to the mast of esotericism. In a subsequent passage, he proceeds to list the 'esoteric' achievements of '[t]he great poets of the last century', who, for him, truly appreciated the 'boundless' scope of symbolic analogy and its application towards the transformation of the world.[24] What is of paramount interest here is the way in which Breton is directed towards the virtues of this esoteric worldview via none other than the Kachina pantheon of the Hopi. It is only upon consideration of the motives for the vast proliferation of Kachina gods and their individual symbolic repertoires – 'exceptionally varied and requiring the intervention of the maximum number of supernatural beings the imagination can furnish faces and distinct attributes for' – that Breton arrives at his conclusion that mythological belief systems are founded upon the principle of esotericism: deliberately conceived as ambiguous and cryptic in order to accommodate the symbolic slippage of the world, as a means of engendering transformation and renewal.[25]

Péret had also been inspired by the Hopi in his 'Magic' essay in *View*. In a similarly striking passage, he presented the Kachina as embodying a tangible gateway to the poetic marvellous. Indeed, he lapsed into fantastical reverie here, seemingly in order

to demonstrate – rather than define – the effects of this encounter; the whole scene apparently emanating from the crenellated head of one of the cottonwood dolls (Plate 7):

> Sometimes the dolls of the Hopi Indians of New Mexico have heads which represent, schematically, a medieval castle. I shall try to enter this castle. There are no doors; the ramparts have the thickness of a thousand centuries. It is not in ruins, as you might think […] Now that I butt my head against the ramparts […] They open like high grasses giving way to the passage of a wild beast. Then, by some phenomenon of osmosis, I find myself inside, emitting rays of the Aurora Borealis. Glittering armour, standing guard in the hall like a row of mountain peaks eternally covered with snow, salute me with raised fists whose fingers shed a continual flux of birds.[26]

And so the mutating imagery continues. Despite the absence of the term from Péret's essay, his oneiric eulogy to the Kachina anticipates Breton's recourse to 'esotericism'. In this passage, Péret effectively identifies the Kachina as an unfailing font of the marvellous, and implies, like Breton, that its mythological potency resides precisely in its propensity for symbolic shift. Whereas Breton heralded the Kachina pantheon as being indicative of the principle of esotericism in *Arcanum 17*, Péret's eulogy goes as far as to suggest that the Kachina doll embodied an immediate key or switch for activating *esoteric vision* in the eye of its beholder.

Breton alluded to a similar concept of esoteric vision elsewhere in 1945, where he wrote in an article on the Armenian painter Arshile Gorky that:

> The ultimate function of the eye is neither to compile inventories like that of a bailiff nor to enjoy illusions of false recognition like that of a maniac. It is made to cast an outline, to provide the *guiding thread* between things of the most dissimilar appearance.[27]

In 1928, Breton had famously begun *Surrealism and Painting* by declaring that '[t]he eye exists in its savage state'.[28] After the war, he seems to have been looking to furnish this statement with conceptual clarification. In the remainder of this chapter, I will go on to demonstrate how he eventually supplied this through his interrelated discussions of semblance, analogy and Symbolist art in the post-war period, which collectively underpinned his theory of 'magic art'.

In the years after Péret's and Breton's wartime statements on the Kachina, this theory was not reserved for the cultural creations of the Hopi, Zuni and Navajo alone. Their parallel writings of the 1940s and 1950s marked the threshold of a new period of surrealist discourse on magic that constituted a wholesale reappraisal of historical cultures from around the world.[29] Throughout the period 1942–59, Péret and Breton wrote about diverse ethnographic specimens from an idiosyncratic perspective that carved out a new mytho-magical facet in surrealist discourse. Eschewing the academic and institutional ethnographies of the university and the museum, their respective

writings discover such ethnographic artefacts as symbolic enigmas that stand as the physical analogues to their theoretical exploration of esotericism.

Surrealism in 1947: Esotericism and its detractors

The surrealists' interest in the parallel territories of myth and magic was confirmed in 1947 with the announcement of the occult-themed international exhibition, *Le Surréalisme en 1947*.[30] At the end of several months of planning, Breton summarized the group's ambitions for the project where he declared that 'the general structure of the exhibition will respond to the primordial concern to retrace the successive steps of an INITIATION, [where] the transition from one room to another will imply the graduation'.[31] When the exhibition opened, this initiatory experience culminated in a room filled with twelve 'altars' that were modelled 'on pagan cults (indian or vodou, for example)'.[32] Victor Brauner's contribution to the altar room typified its initiatory ambitions (Figure 4.2). As tasked by Breton, Brauner's altar was dedicated to the Secretary Bird of Sub-Saharan Africa, which Breton described as 'the most elegant of all the great birds', giving off 'the gravest impression of nervous power', and to which he assigned the mantra 'Unmoving and fearless before monsters'.[33] To give mythological

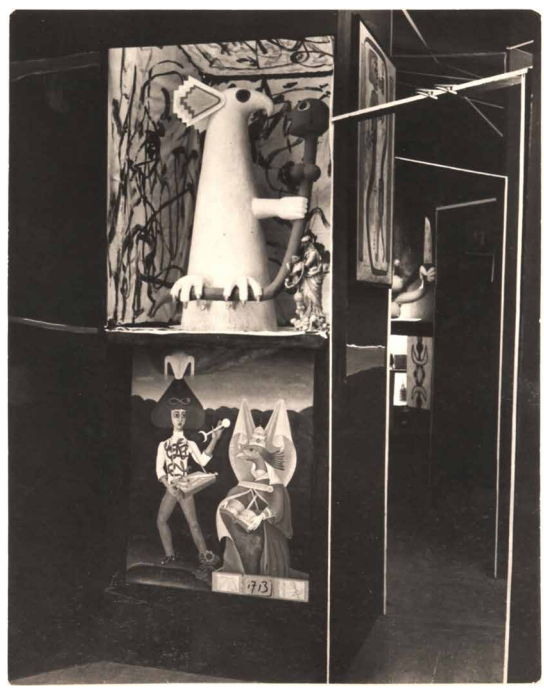


Figure 4.2 Willy Maywald, *Victor Brauner's altar at the exhibition 'Le Surréalisme en 1947',* 1947. © Association Willy Maywald / ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022.

life to this surrealist animal-deity, Brauner conceived of a two-tiered shrine that consisted of a large plaster sculpture of a bird clutching a greatly surprised snake (that also doubles as the bird's magical staff) positioned above his 1947 painting *Les Amoureux*, in which the bird and snake motifs are pushed into the symbolic orbits of alchemy and the Tarot; grafting the surrealists' idiosyncratic avian mythology onto the authentically arcane discourses of established occult traditions.[34]

The group conceived of the 'initiation' mounted by the 1947 exhibition as a means of giving fuller expression to Surrealism's 'New Myth'. As Bauduin has described, the exhibition was essentially 'designed as a manifestation of myth for the benefit of the public'.[35] Even at the point of the exhibition's conception, however – some five years after Breton proposed the dissemination of a 'New Myth' as a priority of surrealist activities in 'Prolégomènes à un troisième manifeste du surréalisme ou non' – the form that this myth should take was still not clear. In his plans towards the exhibition, Breton noted that the kind of myth that the group envisaged only presently existed in an 'embryonic or latent state'.[36] And when the doors of *Le Surréalisme en 1947* opened on 7 July at Galerie Maeght, Paris, the basis of the group's 'New Myth' was far from obvious.

In the wake of its opening, the exhibition was targeted by a breakaway group of surrealists in a satirical pamphlet that took the form of an alternative catalogue, or 'patalogue'. The pamphlet was entitled *Le Surréalisme en 947* [*sic*.], and included an introductory essay by one fictitious André Normand. These deliberate misnamings were apparently barbed puns upon 'Breton' and the '1947' exhibition, which relocated him and it in the unenlightened Dark Ages of the Norman era.[37] The writers behind the pamphlet were Noël Arnaud and Christian Dotremont, members of Le Groupe Surréalisme Révolutionnaire (abbreviated here to 'S. R.').[38] *Le Surréalisme en 1947* had fanned the flames of the S. R. group's grievances with the increasingly de-politicized position being adopted by Bretonian Surrealism since the end of the war. Indeed, opening just a couple of months after S. R. was founded in May 1947, the July exhibition represented a definite marker against which they could stake out their position.

As communicated in the pamphlet, their criticism of Bretonian Surrealism was that it had lost its revolutionary drive and succumbed to a frivolous obsession with myth. In their own activities, by contrast, S. R. upheld the political ideals of early Surrealism, and insisted that the movement should remain focused on the immediate possibility of realizing social revolution through an ideological commitment to Marxism and through direct political action. To this effect, in their satirical pamphlet they substituted the essay 'L'Architecture magique de la salle de superstition' by Frederick Kiesler from the original exhibition catalogue with a piece entitled 'L'Architecture raisonnée de la Révolution Sociale'. In terms that closely aligned with sociologist and Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's criticism of Surrealism from *The Critique of Everyday Life*, also published in 1947, S. R. perceived Breton's new interest in magic and the occult as a cowardly bowing out of the frame of everyday reality.[39] What is most striking about the *Surréalisme en 947* pamphlet in the context of this chapter's discussion is the satirical gloss given to the New Myth in particular. Playing off the official catalogue's self-aggrandizing list of 'Countries Represented' in its opening pages, the *Surréalisme en 947* pamphlet featured a table of 'Ancient Countries Represented', alluding to the

archaism of the exhibition's occult interests.[40] The exhibition's unrelenting emphasis on myth came under heavy fire here in this mock table of contents. Neatly parodying Georges Bataille's short essay from the original catalogue, 'The Absence of Myth', where he cryptically diagnosed that the absence of myth is also a myth, the editors had a field day in highlighting the vagueness and shapelessness shrouding Breton's New Myth, rendering it totally absurd.[41] The themes they list pertaining to myth read: 'Myth', 'Myth without Myth', 'Myth with Myth', 'Myth-Myth-with', 'without-Myth-Myth'.[42] And so the derision continues.

In their amusing explosion of Bataille's paradoxical musings, Arnaud and Dotrement were clearly also irritated by the exhibition's negligence to define Surrealism's New Myth. Their exhaustive repetition of the term 'myth' emphasized the way in which the frequency with which myth was mentioned in the *1947* catalogue was unrequited with any substance from which the coordinates of a new myth could be salvaged. Other themes that they listed in their table of contents were 'verbiage', 'confusion' and 'indifference' – more nails in the coffin of the New Myth, which they found dead in the waters of its own diffuseness.[43]

The increasingly anti-political position of Surrealism was addressed by the group surrounding Breton in the collective declaration 'Rupture inaugurale', which was approved and signed on 21 June 1947, just sixteen days before the opening of *Le Surréalisme en 1947* at Galerie Maeght. Given their proximity, it is clear that the S. R. group's attack on the present direction of Surrealism was as much addressed to the contents of 'Rupture inaugurale' as it was to the conception and curation of the July exhibition. The 'rupture' referred to in the tract's title was with Communism and the PCF. In this dense and challenging text, the signatories (including Breton) condemn the PCF in the general aspect of its manifestation as a collaborating component of the French political system ('its participation in the bourgeois state'), in its support of the French government's aggressive stance against the economic recovery of post-war Germany ('The German people did not produce Hitler, because no people can produce a tyrant for themselves'), and in its current fealty to Stalinism despite the mounting evidence of Stalin's ruthless disregard for 'moral meaning' (the Moscow Trials, and, imminently, the Soviet-backed communist coup in Czechoslovakia).[44] The text asserts that 'Surrealism […] will refuse to participate in any political action that would need to be immoral in order to appear effective', and insists that the movement will not 'disavow itself to the point of blindly orbiting around the world of the Communist Party'.[45] Bypassing and resisting these political pressures, the signatories reaffirm that Surrealism will first and foremost remain singularly and idiosyncratically committed to the direction of its historic and recent researches, including into 'myth'.[46] And indeed, anticipating the premise of the *Le Surréalisme en 1947* exhibition, they declare that '[t]he time has come to put forward a new myth able to carry mankind onwards into the next stage of its ultimate destination'.[47]

The final message of 'Rupture inaugurale' is that Surrealism will ever remain ideological, but will no longer entertain the possibility of acting Politically, and on this basis recognizes that it is likely to find 'more sympathy in anarchism than elsewhere'.[48] In the contrast that 'Rupture inaugurale' presented with the stridently political position

of Surrealism from the early 1930s, the S. R. group were entirely justified in accusing mainstream Surrealism of abandoning its historic commitment to political action, and in questioning the basis of the group's persistent claim to being torchbearers of social revolution. Indeed, the critique presented in *Le Surréalisme en 947* only made explicit what was surreptitiously announced in 'Rupture inaugurale', which was that the French surrealist group was now consciously devoting itself first and foremost to intellectual rather than political solutions to the societal problems facing Europe and the wider world in 1947.

The other main reason for criticizing the surrealists' post-war preoccupation with myth, beyond it being a distracting influence in the eyes of the movement's most ardently political followers, was the issue of myth's contemporary association with fascism. As Zamani remarks, the 'mythic call' of books such as *Arcanum 17* – and indeed exhibitions such as *Le Surréalisme en 1947* – 'cannot be adequately assessed in complete isolation from the contemporary use of myth in German fascism, in which nationalist ideals of heroism, hegemonic power and racial purity were frequently constructed [and employed]'.[49] In his reading of *Arcanum 17*, Zamani addresses the feminine and matriarchal mythological themes of the book as mobilizing a 'counter-cultural discourse of resistance' that sought to introduce an 'anti-fascist mythopoesis of the modern', by undoing the 'male/female hierarchy' of fascism's megalomaniacal mythology.[50] In similar terms, this chapter addresses the 'primordial myths' celebrated by Breton and Péret as further coordinates of the same 'anti-fascist mythopoesis', populated as they are with images of a marvellous nature and of universal processes of a scale that overwhelms any possibility of human heroism, in direct contrast to the mythological scaffolds of fascism.

The theoretical, intellectualized basis of the surrealists' pursuit of myth and magic was already well advanced by the time S. R. composed their pamphlet in the summer of 1947. We have seen how both Péret's and Breton's most influential publications of the 1940s concurrently sought to address myth and magic as systems of transformation. In 'Magic: the Flesh and Blood of Poetry', Péret gauged the Kachina's magical efficacy in terms of the imaginative travel that its symbolism facilitates. Similarly, in *Arcanum 17*, Breton's interest in myth was not so much to do with subscription to a definitive legend that would emblematize civilization's salvation, but instead to do with the voracious symbolic turnover of 'mythological' thought as a regenerative principle in itself. And in the post-war years, around the time of the S. R. group's critique, the case for the group's mythico-magical realignment was being further expanded.

Myth as 'motor of the world'

In 'Surrealist Comet', published in 1947, Breton returned to clarify Surrealism's investment in the idea of a New Myth in fresh detail. Here he described how he had intended for the New Myth to remain 'vague' in *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, having devised the exhibition 'without prejudging in the least what such a myth might turn out to be'.[51] And he went on to expand on his reasoning behind this:

> Surrealists, as far as they are concerned, have never ceased to adhere to *total freethinking*. While they deliberately concentrate their experiments on certain structures that are meant, in an entirely abstract way, to conjure up a ritual atmosphere, they certainly do not have the absurd and ridiculous ambition to try and promote a new myth on their own. They limit themselves to giving shape to a few *haloed beings or objects,* which […] have excited curiosity and exerted a growing attraction […] although their hieroglyphic interpretation remains, until now, quite arcane.[52]

It was ever Breton's intention, then, to leave space in the exhibition for mythological interpretation, but not to relay a coherent myth. This much remains familiar from *Arcanum 17*. However, the major difference with *Le surréalisme en 1947* had been that Breton's efforts to promote esoteric thought had found a tangible outlet in the form of the *'haloed beings or objects*' on display in its altar room. This transition towards an immersive physical experience of initiation seems to be consummate acknowledgement of the supreme prestige that ethnographic ceremony and material culture held for Breton as a channel for instigating magical thought. And presumably this transition had been deeply affected by his experiences among the Hopi, Zuni, Navajo and Vodou communities that he had visited during his travels around the Americas between August 1945 and February 1946.

Although Breton had declared Surrealism's commitment to esoteric *'total freethinking*' in 'Surrealist Comet', his intended meaning was not fully qualified until the publication of his related essay 'Ascendant Sign' at the beginning of 1948.[53] Here he introduced the critical terminology of 'analogy' into the frame of the wider discussion of myth and magic, concluding that '[t]he trigger of analogy is what fascinates us: nothing else will give us access to the motor of the world'.[54] Analogy is described in bold terms here as 'the spontaneous, clairvoyant, insolent connection established under certain conditions between two things whose conjunction would not be permitted by common sense'; a connection that Breton designates as 'the only *manifest truth* in the world'.[55] Jean-Pierre Cauvin addresses this notion of analogy and its application within surrealist discourse in his essay on 'The Poethics of André Breton'. Here he explains that:

> Whereas the logical mode [of thought] sets inflexible limits, the analogical mode allows access to the realm of 'absolute possibility'. The joy of analogical discovery presupposes a constant receptivity or *disponsibilité* to revelatory signs and events, but also an eagerness to invite the occurrence of such phenomena.[56]

In these terms, in producing a parade of esoteric metaphors and signs, analogy held the tantalizing possibility of yielding a 'revelatory' symbolic regeneration of the world.

In 'Ascendant Sign', Breton seems to have been building upon the semiotic analysis made by the Hungarian surrealist Arpad Mezei in the catalogue to

Le Surréalisme en 1947. In his essay 'Liberté du langage', Mezei had flagged up the arbitrary nature of the relationship between signifier and signified, and, ultimately, language's 'multi-dimensional' propensity for meaning; taking a theoretical position that anticipated the advent of French post-structuralist theory and Roland Barthes' 'Death of the Author' by some twenty years.[57] In this context of semiotic slippage, Mezei had declared Surrealism's interest in the 'chthonic' underworld of symbolic inflection, and it seems to have been this inherently imperfect anchorage of the sign that Breton saw to be exploited to productive, imaginatively expansive ends in phenomena of poetic and visual analogy.[58] Breton located the essence of this analogical 'motor of the world' in the shifting, esoteric fabric of mythological cultures, as he had encountered them in his researches and travels during and after the Second World War.

'Ascendant Sign' poses a comparison between the literary species of 'poetic analogy' and the mythological-religious species of 'mystical analogy':

> When we consider the impression it creates, it is true that poetic analogy seems, like mystical analogy, to argue for an idea of a world branching out toward infinity and entirely permeated with the same sap. However, it remains without any effort within the sensible (even the sensual) realm and its shows no propensity to lapse into the supernatural.[59]

Admitting close similarity with *religious* mysticism, whose particular patterns of analogical thought connected 'supernatural' events to the will of an omniscient god, was unsurprisingly a bridge too far for Breton, who had always been opposed to organized religion. However, we see him grappling here with an issue that underpinned his turn to magic: where he attempts to look beyond the literary frame of 'poetic analogy', which is only set in motion selectively when an author is at work, and seeks a model that exemplifies a totally immersive pattern of analogical thinking that represents a pervasive way of life; an all-subsuming mythological worldview.[60] Indeed, the radical statement of 'Ascendant Sign' comes with the way in which it posits such esoteric tendencies towards analogy as a way of living, with Breton all but stepping into the shoes of the seer, the alchemist, the sorcerer and shaman here, in order to participate in the symbolic transformation of the world.

The only legitimate examples of this pervasive analogical worldview that presented themselves to Breton were the modes of esoteric thought that he perceived in so-called 'primitive' cultures of ancient and non-Western civilizations. In 'Ascendant Sign', he noted that since 'early mankind' there has been 'an age-old conviction that nothing exists gratuitously, that quite to the contrary there is not a single being or natural phenomenon that does not carry a message to be deciphered by us'.[61] To his eyes, this fundamentally esoteric worldview clearly held the potential to restructure the prevailing symbolic order of the world, from every 'being' to every 'natural phenomenon', promising precisely the kind of ideological reorientation that he had deemed necessary for the post-war era.

Péret and the myths of the Americas

It was with the same desire to catalyse the world's symbolic evolution that Péret pursued his own research into myth over the course of the 1940s and 1950s. With the writing of *La Parole est à Péret* in 1942, Péret embarked upon an ambitious investigative project into the mythological cultures of the Americas that would occupy the rest of his life. By this point he already had some first-hand knowledge of the diverse cultures of South America, after having lived in Brazil in his early thirties, between 1929 and 1931 (eventually being expelled from the country on charges of being a communist agitator). From the moment of his arrival in Mexico in 1941, he became convinced of the sheer richness of the cosmologies, legends and folklore originating from the vast conjoined continents of South and North America, and in the value of collating them into a comprehensive survey. This was eventually achieved in the guise of his *Anthologie des mythes, légendes et contes populaires d'Amérique* (Figure 4.2), which was published in the year of his death, in 1959.

Although his *Anthologie* was some seventeen years in the making, it was not the magnum opus that it at first appears to be. Péret's own written contributions to the volume are of a light touch, and the many years of labour that were invested in the project were channelled primarily into reading, selecting, translating and organizing the tales for the anthology. Péret's commentary is for the most part confined to the introduction, which is composed of two texts merged together: his seminal text from *La Parole est à Péret* (the basis of his 1943 'Magic' essay), and a more recent text written in São Paulo in the summer of 1955. At the outset of this introduction, he stresses that his approach towards the presentation of myths in the volume was not scientific, but poetic in scope and aims:

> Every intention of encroaching upon the territory of ethnography is absent since only a poetic criterion has presided over the choice of texts that compose this work, and this mode of selection cannot be anything other than arbitrary from the point of view of any science. But it does not necessarily follow that such a venture does not present any interest on another plane. On the contrary, showing the first steps of man upon the path of knowledge, this anthology clearly indicates that poetic thought appeared from the dawn of humanity, first under the form — not considered here — of language, later under the aspect of the myth which prefigures science, philosophy, and constitutes at the same time the first state of poetry and the axis around which it continues to turn with a speed indefinitely accelerated.[62]

In terms that account for Péret's light-touch approach, he insists that his presentation of myths and legends here does not aspire to be an analysis but an authentic curation that allows them to be experienced by the reader with all the poetic force they carry as spaces of collective imagination.[63]

The *Anthologie* is not a mythographic project concerned with origins, influences and the dissemination of stories. To the contrary, there is an insistent plurality that underpins Péret's presentation of the myths, which are categorized thematically rather than geographically or chronologically (information pertaining to geography and chronology being relegated to the level of subsidiary detail). The resulting effect in

reading the volume, tracing the infinite echoes and shadows that the mythological motifs and lessons cast between one another, is one of seemingly exponential multiplication and growth; an expansive and shifting constellation of myths that seems oriented towards its own future embellishment and augmentation. Péret's sparse annotations that appear in italics above each legend purposefully withhold judgement upon the reality of the myths in question. Instead, his unwavering acceptance of the poetic value of each legend is tantamount to a unilateral belief in the many parallel mythological universes they conjure and inhabit. What emerges across the pages of the *Anthologie* is a space teeming with mythological potential, which ultimately exceeds the imaginative bounds of each of its individual legends through the (often surprising) resonances and dissonances it establishes with the other legends in the volume. In Péret's hands, the collective mythological landscape of 'the Americas' becomes one vast imaginative continent in the mind of each reader. In this configuration, the myths and legends of Péret's *Anthologie* live and breath in the moment of their consumption, each contributing to the marvellous air of imaginative possibility that the book as a whole perpetuates as an open warp for comparisons and analogies. In the spaces between samples from the volume, unique and ever-changing mythological worlds arise like waking dreams: be it a world in which there is no night and hummingbirds spread fire, or a world in which wolves laugh hysterically and snow burns in lamps.[64]

Illustrations play a prominent, if uncertain role in Péret's *Anthologie*. Rather than being meticulously matched, image to legend, the numerous photographs of artefacts that punctuate the book (Figures 4.3–4.5) pose the mythological characters they

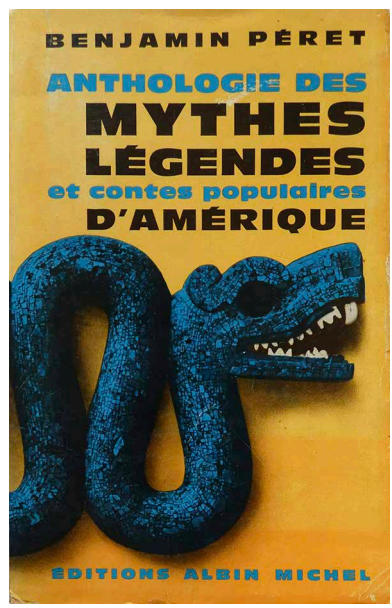


Figure 4.3 Cover to Benjamin Péret's *Anthologie des mythes, légendes et contes populaires d'Amérique* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1959).

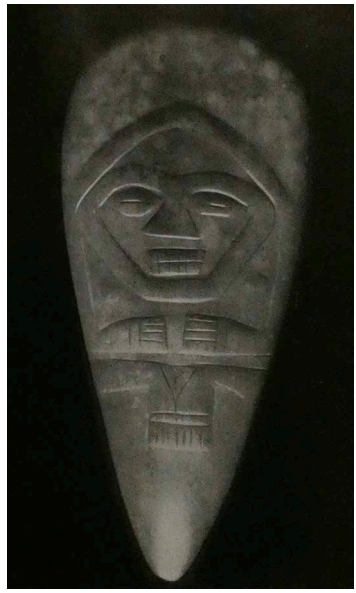


Figure 4.4 Adze-shaped Pre-Columbian carving, as pictured in *Anthologie des mythes, légendes et contes populaires d'Amérique* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1959). © Éditions Albin Michel. Photo: Author.

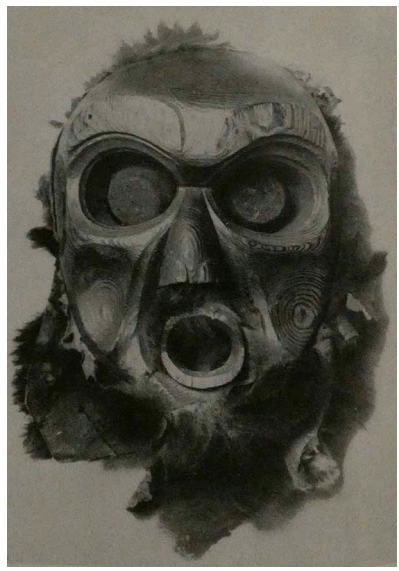


Figure 4.5 Mask from British Columbia, as pictured in *Anthologie des mythes, légendes et contes populaires d'Amérique* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1959). © Éditions Albin Michel. Photo: Author.

portray as an eclectic and jumbled cast of actors for the reader to pick and choose from in populating the imaginative realms conjured in their mind's eye. Whereas Péret stopped short of broaching any kind of analysis of these objects and proposing a model of esoteric vision that corresponded to the kind of analogical thinking that facilitated mythmaking, this was precisely what Breton and Gérard Legrand attempted in their proximate publication, *L'Art magique*. Here Breton effectively sought to project the theory of analogy he had begun to develop in 'Ascendant Sign' onto visual cultures from around the world in order to outline a global history of magical art.

'L'Art magique', defined

Breton collaborated with Legrand on *L'Art magique* through the mid-1950s, with the book eventually being published in 1957. Rather than arriving at the project independently, Breton had originally been commissioned to write the book by Club Français du Livre in 1953. The project (and title) of *L'Art magique* was proposed to Breton as a thematic study of magical art (without a working definition of the concept) to accompany other volumes in the same generously illustrated series, which included the thematic studies *L'Art religieux*, *L'Art baroque*, *L'Art classique* and *L'Art pour l'art*. After stalling on the project for several years, Breton invited Legrand to co-write significant portions of the book in order to help him meet the terms and deadlines of the commission.[65] While the titular terminology of the book clearly prioritized magic over myth, the enclosed discussion represented a direct extension of the twinned theorization of myth and magic that Breton and Péret had been developing since the early 1940s: concerning the potent, seemingly illimitable evocative force of certain traditions of visual and narrative symbolism.

Breton set out the theoretical framework for his and Legrand's discussion of magic in his introductory section. Upon first inspection, the bulk of Breton's introductory essay does not appear all that different from his copious other texts on the theoretical coordinates of Surrealism. Indeed, discussion takes a familiar turn towards nineteenth-century French poetry, praising the likes of Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Lautréamont – the usual suspects – for their recourse to a new poetic affectivity, poised at the brink of surrealist explorations of irrationality and the unconscious.[66] As Vincent Debaene notes, at one level in *L'Art magique* 'the opposition [to scientific rationalism] congeals into a false argument [not properly tenable within the bounds of an at least ostensibly academic study] that renders "discursive knowledge" null and void in favor of a "lyrical awareness based on the recognition of the powers of the Word"'.[67] In this respect, Breton seems to deliberately cast doubt over what he is going to be able to achieve within the bounds of the book's necessarily historical discussion. Despite this cautionary caveat about the book's intellectual value, there is an original and engaging theoretical discussion at the heart of Breton's introduction. Indeed, a measure of his earnest effort towards resolving the concept of 'magical art' can be found in the range of unfamiliar theoretical advisors that he called upon here. Though mentioned only briefly, Edward Burnett Tylor, James George Frazer, Émile Durkheim,

Marcel Mauss and Claude Lévi-Strauss all feature in Breton's introduction, and somewhere within this anthropological kernel lies the seed of the book's overarching conception of magic.

Mitchell has provided a helpful preliminary definition of Breton's notion of 'art magique', where she has written that it 'essentially describes the inexplicable nature of aesthetic experience, with a hint of disbelief in the existence of forces unknown to science'.[68] Mitchell's foregrounding of the book's preoccupation with the 'nature of aesthetic experience' locates the basic focus of Breton's argument, but its proper nuance remains to be drawn out of its finer detail. We gain our most insightful vantage point onto the new theoretical terrain of *L'Art magique* where Breton's introductory discussion is drawn to Marcel Mauss's formulation of the Austronesian concept of 'mana', when he cites Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* on this topic.[69] In its full breadth, Lévi-Strauss's *Marcel Mauss* provides a rich discussion of mana in terms that help to unravel Breton's notion of esoteric magic. Mana may tentatively be defined as spiritual power distributed amongst the physical world: something that is widely identified in people, things, natural events and in myriad elements of the symbolic superstructure of the universe on a distinctly changeable basis. Mana at once informs the mythological structures of many Austronesian cultures, as the principle that ratifies supernatural events, and also directs their social structures, where the perceived ability to wield mana produces privilege. The complex semiotic basis of mana was theorized by Mauss, and Lévi-Strauss after him, as the point of origin of so-called 'primitive' thought. Lévi-Strauss recounts Mauss's attempt, 'with the notion of mana, to reach a sort of "fourth dimension" of the mind', which was no longer familiar in the West.[70] Contrary to its perceived archaism, Lévi-Strauss suggested that in fact

> conceptions of the *mana* type are so frequent and so widespread that it is appropriate to wonder whether we are not dealing with a universal and permanent form of thought, which, far from characterising certain civilisations, or archaic or semi-archaic so-called 'stages' in the evolution of the human mind, might be a function of a certain way that the mind situates itself in the presence of things, which must therefore make an appearance whenever that mental situation is given.[71]

Even in developed post-industrial societies, Lévi-Strauss posits, there remains an enigmatic strata of the symbolic field in which 'those types of notions, somewhat like algebraic symbols, occur to represent an indeterminate value of signification', which demands a mode of interpretive thought on the plane of perceptions of mana.[72] This argument is developed in another crucial passage, which Breton cites in part in *L'Art magique*:[73]

> The notion of *mana* does not belong to the order of the real, but to the order of thinking, which, even when it thinks itself, only ever thinks an object. It is in that relational aspect of symbolic thinking that we can look for the answer to our problem. Whatever may have been the moment and the circumstances of

> its appearance in the ascent of animal life, language can only have arisen all at once. Things cannot have begun to signify gradually […] a shift occurred from a stage when nothing had a meaning to another stage when everything had meaning. Actually, that apparently banal remark is important, because that radical change has no counterpart in the field of knowledge, which develops slowly and progressively. In other words, at the moment when the entire universe all at once became *significant*, it was none the better *known* for being so, even if it is true that the emergence of language must have hastened the rhythm of the development of knowledge. So there is a fundamental opposition, in the history of the human mind, between symbolism, which is characteristically discontinuous, and knowledge, characterised by continuity.[74]

The kind of analogical thinking typical of conceptions of mana, which Lévi-Strauss reduces to a matter of 'symbolism', is hereby identified as the base point of interpretive (which is to say *human*) thought. There are strong echoes of Péret's writing in this passage. With the advent of symbolic thought, Péret had argued in *La Parole est à Péret*, the world became poetry, and humanity's perception and traversal of it were irrevocably and relentlessly changed by the analogies and metaphors that abounded and flowed incessantly from it.[75] In these terms, for Péret, as for Lévi-Strauss, the birth of language did not represent the beginning of knowledge so much as the beginning of poetic thought: an analogical mode of thought that long preceded rational tendencies towards empirical deduction and scientific postulation.

Appealing to his structuralist methodology, Lévi-Strauss goes on to explain that *mana* 'represent[s] nothing more or less than that *floating signifier* which is the disability of all finite thought (but also the surety of all art, all poetry, every mythic and aesthetic invention)'.[76] It was precisely this 'discontinuous', semiotic strand of symbolical interpretation that also seems to have captured Breton's imagination, on account of its innate capacity to redefine the meaning of the world with every new symbol encountered. In a preparatory manuscript for *L'Art magique*, he had made some telling notes on his interest in mana under the heading 'Marcel Mauss: sociologie et anthropologie'. Scrawled over his original jottings, in bold blue ink, he had written as a summative comment on mana: 'Floating Signifier'.[77] And a few lines below, at the foot of the page, he pondered the inherent 'inadequacy of the signifier and the signified'.[78] In Lévi-Strauss's analysis of the 'floating signifier', it appears Breton found vindication for his theory of the universal and fundamental presence of 'esoteric' thought, and its endurance in the psyche of the artist and the poet throughout human history. To this effect, Breton concluded in the final draft of his introduction:

> Here is without doubt the most consistent lesson and the most fertile between all those which we can attach to the idea of a 'tradition' conveying century upon century some 'original powers' common to sorcerers, to artists and to poets […] where 'an image is not an allegory, is not the symbol of an estranged thing, but is the symbol itself' (Novalis) beheld in some way at its birth, in its absolute originality

> and with an intact understanding of its resonances, in us as in connection with the rest of the universe.[79]

In these terms, via Lévi-Strauss's discussion of mana, Breton was able to connect so-called 'primitive' societies with esoteric thought, and art with magic, in *L'Art magique*.

The task of *L'Art magique* subsequently unfolds as a quest to identify the lost contours of esoteric thought throughout the world history of art, recovering 'magical art' from the brink of obscurity, and rescuing it from the shackles of scientific academicism (more specifically from traditions of art history and ethnography). The book goes on to chart a historical lineage of 'magical art' spanning from the painters of the Lascaux caves to various contemporary artists via the likes of Hieronymus Bosch, Leonardo da Vinci, Piero di Cosimo, Albrecht Dürer, Francisco de Goya and Henri Rousseau, and – as the separate volume of illustrations attests – seeking to absorb, at least notionally, the entire historical and geographical corpus of tribal material culture. In advance of bringing this lineage to completion with the historical advent of Surrealism, the book's theoretical discussion comes to a pre-emptory conclusion in the nineteenth century in a section entitled 'Deux grandes synthèses: Gustave Moreau et Paul Gauguin'. Despite initial appearances, the coordinates of this conclusion in these two giants of nineteenth-century French art are of great import for appreciating the significance of the 'primitive' in the theoretical trajectory of *L'Art magique*. By all accounts, Breton and Legrand turn to Moreau and Gauguin as exemplary *modern primitives*, who were only able to develop their distinctive brands of Symbolist painting through their recourse to the cultures of the Middle East and Polynesia, respectively (however excessively orientalized and exoticized). 'Between the embalmer of the rue de La Rochefoucauld and the painter of *Nevermore*', Breton and Legrand wrote, 'there is one common measure, that of Jarry's phrase: "Logically, research into the extremely distant, in exotic or abolished worlds, leads to the absolute"'.[80]

In a subsequent essay on Symbolism written in 1958, Breton would describe Moreau as a 'great visionary and magician'.[81] But within *L'Art magique* it was Gauguin in particular who was the focus of Breton's and Legrand's attentions:

> The oeuvre of Gauguin, and singularly his Polynesian oeuvre, testifies to a perpetual transcendence of 'plastic ends' […] entirely informed by the veritable end of artistic activity: Poetry. Gauguin is, before the immediate vicinity of surrealism, the only painter to have noticed that he carried a magician in him, and to have given a definition or barbaric approximation, more fertile than the splendid dreams of Gustave Moreau.[82]

For Breton and Legrand, '[m]agic is everywhere in the work of Gauguin, where the critic in general pins it under the name of *primitivism*'.[83]

The magic being alluded to here, though poorly signed in the book itself, is the magic of analogy that Breton had begun to theorize in his introduction. As Parkinson notes, 'the occult "theory of correspondences"' represents a recurring point of reference in *L'Art magique*.[84] This occult theory of correspondences had been the conceptual axis of late-nineteenth-century Symbolist art and poetry. In a literary context, Baudelaire was regarded as the early pioneer of the Symbolist style. One particular poem of

Baudelaire's, his 'Correspondances' from *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857), came to serve as a kind of directive for the entire Symbolist enterprise. It begins:

> Nature is a temple, in which living pillars sometimes utter a babel of words; mankind traverses it through forests of symbols that watch him with knowing eyes.
>
> Like prolonged echoes which merge far away in an opaque, deep oneness, as vast as darkness and as vast as light, the perfumes, sounds, and colours answer each to each.[85]

Baudelaire's vision of a world that manifests in vast 'forests of symbols' – where sights, sounds and smells fluidly coalesce and correspond to one another across material, sensory and intellectual registers 'like prolonged echoes' – spoke to the Symbolists' overarching ambition to capture the intractable mystery of universal process and meaning, and captured in epic form the Symbolist vision of the world taking shape out of analogies uncovered by the poet and artist.[86] The magical, seer-like quality of this poem resides in its account of perceiving and wielding an effervescent emotional language – a kind of tonal variation also comparable to musical keys – that is inherent in all nature. In the schema of Baudelaire's poem, 'words' and 'symbols' are not conceived or invented so much as impressed upon humanity by the sensory world that envelops them. Walking through the world's 'forests of symbols', the poet, artist and musician trace patterns and phrases that they weave into new symphonies: mapping fresh constellations of feeling, colour and sound that tweak, twist and bend the symbolic fabric of the universe. Via Baudelaire, this occult theory of correspondences was closely linked to the Symbolist works of Gauguin in particular, whose abrupt departure, in the mid-1880s, from the 'optical' effects of Impressionist brushwork for the 'cerebral' effects of symbolic analogy rendered him one of the trailblazers of Symbolist painting, establishing a precedent that would influence the likes of Émile Bernard, Paul Sérusier and Les Nabis.

Novalis and the 'magic wand of analogy'

The writings of Novalis also play a significant role in giving form to this occult theory of correspondence within the pages of *L'Art magique*. After having announced Novalis's authority on the matter of magic in the introduction, discussion circles back to Novalis's writings in the book's later stages, where Breton and Legrand invoke his concept of the 'great cipher' of nature. The passage in question comes from *The Novices of Sais* (1798–9), in which Novalis penned an elaborate set of reflections upon man's relationship to nature, staged through a series of conversations between the novice mystics and their teachers, and as proclamations from divine spirits. The extract from which the phrase derives reads as follows:

> Various are the roads of man. He who follows and compares them will see strange figures emerge, figures which seem to belong to that great cipher which we discern written everywhere, in wings, eggshells, clouds and snow, in crystals and in stone

> formations, on ice-covered waters, on the inside and outside of mountains, of plants, beasts and men, in the lights of heaven, on scored disks of pitch or glass or in iron filings round a magnet, and in strange conjunctures of chance. In them we suspect a key to the magic writing, even a grammar, but our surmise takes on no definite forms and seems unwilling to become a higher key. It is as though an alkahest had been poured over the senses of man. Only at moments do their desires and thoughts seem to solidify. Thus arise their presentiments, but after a short time everything swims again before their eyes.[87]

Here Novalis expresses how the phenomena of nature conspire to coalesce into shapes and patterns that can suggest familiar forms and intimate a potential for meaning, and yet fail 'to become a higher key'. So often in our day-to-day lives, he suggests, we find tantalizing traces of a symbolic script, but everything ultimately 'swims' again before the eyes.

In *L'Art magique*, this passage from Novalis was not in fact raised in the (readily relatable) context of Symbolism, but in relation to the sixteenth-century works of Giuseppe Arcimboldo and Joos de Momper the Younger (Figures 4.6 and 4.7).[88] The symbolic proclivity of nature is figured very literally in these works, in which vegetation and fruit take on the outline of facial features. The deeper significance of Novalis's statement towards his romantic philosophy is somewhat glossed over by these crude examples, where the range of nature's suggestive powers are reduced to a simple repertoire of clumsy faces. In the broader context of Novalis's writings, the matter of nature performing in a symbolic or linguistic capacity is far more complicated than it initially appears in these cursory comparisons. Given fuller expression, Novalis's conception of the 'great cipher' of the natural world goes a long way to explaining Breton's special recourse to certain central case studies in *L'Art magique*, including Gauguin's 'primitive' Symbolism and the ethnographic artefact.

William Arctander O'Brien has observed connections between Novalis's work and post-structuralist theory. In brief, O'Brien's detailed case boils down to the idea that Novalis recognized that '[t]here is a *necessary* deception in *all* language':[89]

> In Hardenberg's [Novalis'] semiotics, because the sign and signified always lack resemblance (they are in 'different spheres'), all signs are, in effect, arbitrary. […] Hardenberg's semiotic theory thus takes a decisive step away from the classical understanding of the sign and of language, and begins to point in the direction of a more modern notion of language as based entirely on unmotivated or arbitrary signs.[90]

The arbitrary, unmotivated condition of the sign is precisely what was being played upon in *The Novices of Saïs*, whereby, pushed to its logical conclusion, Novalis' (presciently deconstructionist) train of thought proceeds from the realization that nothing has a fixed meaning to the conclusion that *everything can become meaningful*, according to this arbitrary basis of symbolic adaptation. This argument comprises a double-bind for the case of nature as a 'great cipher': by simultaneously revealing how any element of nature can immediately become symbolic of something, yet cannot be



Figure 4.6 Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *Autumn*, 1572. Photo: Niday Picture Library / Alamy Stock Photo.

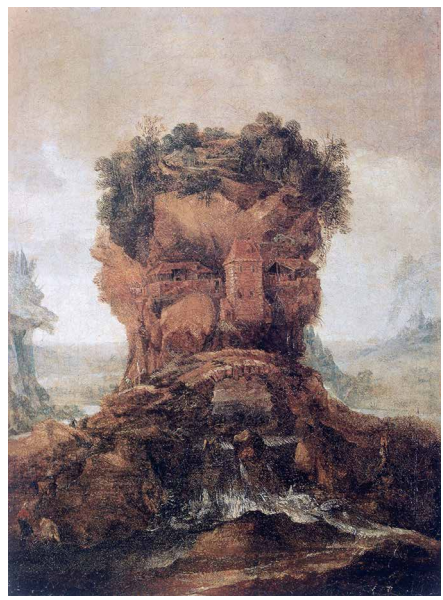


Figure 4.7 Joos de Momper II, *Anthropomorphic Landscape*, *c*. 1600–35. Photo: World History Archive / Alamy Stock Photo.

anchored in a discrete symbolic relationship with any one thing in particular. This is the fundamental basis of the variety of magical thought being chased in this chapter, which variously enables the most divergent analogies, metaphors and prophecies to be read within the same phenomenon or image. As O'Brien explains:

> In [*The Novices of*] *Saïs*, nature is composed, not simply of 'things' but of 'figures' (*Figuren*). The natural figures suggest a structure, a schema or 'grammar' (*Sprachlehre*) behind them, but this grammar of nature cannot be grasped 'in any set form' (*will sich in keine feste Formen fügen*). The grammar of natural figures cannot itself be expressed in a definite configuration: it cannot be presented or known as such. One may have a presentiment (*Ahndung*) of this 'key' to nature, but this presentiment resolves itself into 'no higher key' (*kein höhrerer schlüssel*). [… *The Novices of Saïs*] approaches nature as a mysterious language.[91]

Such an acceptance of the world's inexhaustible capacity to *speak*, without being able to be *read* definitively, presents the basis of Breton and Legrand's esoteric formulation of magic in *L'Art magique*, where symbols continuously quiver and hesitate on the brink of new beginnings, and every visual form finds itself ripe for ever evolving analogies. Indeed, their whole thesis finds shorthand expression in Novalis's notion of 'the magic wand of analogy', which credits analogy with such miraculous powers of transformation.[92]

The magic of ambiguity

Ultimately, Breton's recourse to ethnographic artefacts within the schema of his theory of magic art seems to have boiled down to their perceived proximity and sensitivity to this 'mysterious language' of nature, which tribal communities internalize as the root of all spells, charms and curses, the symbolic site of all omens, portents and prophecies, and as the font of all artistic inspiration. To Breton's mind, it seems to have been this close relationship with nature – nature, as we have seen, embodying a boundless field of semiotic slippage – that predisposed tribal peoples to more readily access the esoteric thought processes nurtured by magicians and artists alike. The beloved artefacts of his personal collection thereby represented so many fragments of, and points of access to, the fabled esoteric worldview that he was chasing in his writings of the 1940s and 1950s.

Among the numerous ethnographic specimens that flood *L'Art magique*, we might settle upon the seemingly inauspicious image of a Sepik mask from Papua New Guinea (Figure 4.8) in order to test and demonstrate Breton's and Legrand's theory of magic art. Here the natural forms of various shells are inset into clay, delineating a fairly obvious face between the inverted triangle of the three central spiral forms (suggesting two eyes and an open mouth). But the mask is immediately caught between several other contesting shapes and symbols. Turned upside down, the mask readily produces another face in a 180° rotation. In its original upright position, there is a cruciform

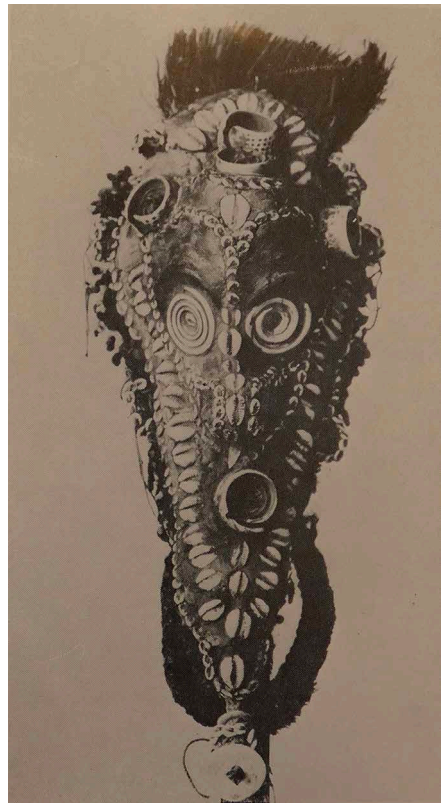


Figure 4.8 Mask from the Sépik River Region of Papua New Guinea, as pictured in *L'Art magique* (Paris: Club Français du Livre, 1957). Photo: Author.

pattern set out between the four largest shell forms. Within this, there is also a heart shape laid out by the dotted line of small shells. Taking this heart shape as a neat section of the mask encircling the two large 'eye' shells (excluding the 'mouth' outside of the heart shape), this becomes a separate face in itself; perhaps that of a dog or some other mammal. And, finally, within the perimeter border of medium-sized shells, the original tripartite 'face' settles into a tapered form that resembles the body of a flatfish or ray.

This effect of a cumulative symbolism can be observed in various other artefacts pictured in *L'Art magique*. Take, for example, the Malangan carving (Figure 4.9) whose chest and legs become windows onto shoals of fish, or perhaps falling leaves; whose loin cloth is also a cascade of water falling into the gaping mouth of a fish; a cascade being straddled by a nymph-like figure who also perhaps represents the carved prow of a canoe, and whose feet are simultaneously the heads of yet more fish. Or similarly, in the Tsimshian head ornament representing a bear (Figure 4.10) whose penis is also the timid head of its cub nestled between its legs; whose tongue morphs into a pearlescent



Figure 4.9 Malangan Carving from New Ireland, painted wood, as pictured in *L'Art magique* (Paris: Club Français du Livre, 1957). Photo: Author.



Figure 4.10 Tsimshian Head Ornament from British Columbia, *c.* 1880–1900, wood, mother-of-pearl, feathers and feather down, as pictured in *L'Art magique* (Paris: Club Français du Livre, 1957). Photo: Author.

drop of water dangling over the fish it holds in its paws; a fish whose fanned tail also represents the squawking head of a bird.

For Breton, Legrand and Péret, such artefacts embodied a shifting ground that proffered meaning esoterically, yielding patterns and motifs that generate symbolic constellations equivalent to the 'mysterious language' that Novalis saw being emitted in nature (these objects themselves being modelled on and built from the myriad patterns and forms of nature). It is via this subtle, sometimes only implied, conversation between text and image that this chapter has chased that the concept of magical art is set in motion in *L'Art magique*: in its presentation of traditions of visual polysemy that have the power to open thought, release imagination, alter minds.

There is the skeleton of a structuralist argument running through *L'Art magique*, as surrealist discourse teetered on the edge of the prevailing intellectual discourse on semiotics in the late 1940s and 1950s. Breton's recourse to Lévi-Strauss's structuralist interpretation of mana, in particular, is hard to overlook here. Indeed, it has already been raised how Breton contemplated the 'inadequacy of the signifier and the signified' in his working notes towards *L'Art magique*.[93] Yet the group's contemporaneous occult interests ultimately dictated that it should veer away from semiotics (whether in the vein of the positivistic structuralism of Lévi-Strauss or the paranoid post-structuralism of Barthes), and instead investigate the phenomenological sphere of esotericism and magic. By the time Breton and Legrand wrote *L'Art magique*, the semiotic dimension of surrealist discourse had been reduced to the phenomenological significance of the floating signifier. To Breton and Legrand, the signifier's floating *action* – its inherent ability to generate meaning through establishing new connections with alternative referents – represented an inscrutable feat of magic that stood in stark contrast to the systematizing efforts of structuralist discourse.

In 1958, the year after the publication of *L'Art magique*, Breton wrote the foreword to the catalogue of an exhibition by the French architect-turned-artist Yves Laloy at the Galerie de la Cour d'Ingres. Alongside the joyful humour on display in certain of Laloy's paintings (the wordplay of works such as *Les Petits pois sont verts, les petit poissons rouges*), Laloy's wider work struck a chord with Breton's and Legrand's recent hypotheses. Indeed, in his foreword, Breton folded Laloy's work into the overarching theory of esoteric vision expounded in *L'Art magique*, where he compared Laloy's work to the Navajo Sand Paintings he had seen in Arizona in August 1945 – bringing this chapter's discussion full circle. The text begins:

> *The human-headed rainbow* which encircles the marvellous sand-pictures of the Navajo Indians of Arizona seems to preside over the creation of Yves Laloy's work. But whereas such pictures are traced in a single day and are fated to be obliterated at sunset, we can rejoice that Laloy's own pictures can be brought together here today before their inevitable and prompt dispersal.
>
> […] no one has ever more effectively stimulated the eye to enjoy and to make us enjoy the ambiguity of its powers.[94]

It is this concept of visual 'ambiguity' specifically that connects Laloys work to the wider discussion in *L'Art magique*. Breton observes this effect most plainly

in the technicoloured celestial parade of *Le Grand casque* from 1951 to 1952 (Plate 8) – presumably also chosen on account of its resonance with the image of the '*human-headed rainbow*' that opens the text – which he characterizes as an 'explosion' of ambiguous imagery.[95] In this vast painting's amoebic stirrings of lightning, rivers, stars, faces, towers, dragons, waves and suns – which are at once all and none of these things – it is readily possible to see Breton's intended meaning.

Breton situates the development of Laloy's painting in relation to the recent history of modernist art, initially comparing it to tendencies of abstraction such as they emerged in the early part of the twentieth century, when 'physical perception was obliged to give precedence to mental representation'.[96] But he then proceeds to distinguish Laloy's work from the archetypal abstraction of painters like Wassily Kandinsky on the grounds that it also performs a magical function comparable to that of Navajo Sand Paintings:

> Whereas a composition by Kandinsky fulfils *symphonic* ambitions, a Navajo sand-picture derives essentially from cosmogonic preoccupations and is intended to influence the course of the universe in a propitiatory manner. The unique feature of Yves Laloy's work is that it combines these two entirely different approaches, describing an itinerary to which he alone holds the key, but which we have no difficulty in discovering transcends ordinary experience.[97]

Typically used in healing ceremonies, the role of the Sand Painting is essentially instructive: simultaneously directing the spirit-deities to the patient (the sand painting operating as a physical marker in space, or portal), and helping the patient resituate themselves in the world by opening the mythological schema of the universe via the symbolic images laid out before them. With intense focus, the suggestive mythological images of the Sand Painting spin out an expansive narrative that enables the patient to reconnect with the constellational energies of nature and the divine. The value of the sand painting is primarily cerebral rather than material (one of the reasons its impermanence is irrelevant), to do with recalibrating the recipient's perception of the symbolic order of the universe.[98] They are dynamic, living images that attach themselves to the recipient patient by adopting an intensely personal significance unique to the circumstances of the ceremony. It is in these terms of a revelatory, inherently subjective visual encounter that Breton ultimately accounts for Laloy's paintings, which he describes, alongside the Sand Paintings, as '*diagram[s]*' of 'the *inner* world', which reframe the relational structure of the universe through an authentic *art magique*.[99]

5

Ritual magic in the masks and fetishes of Mimi Parent and Jean Benoît, 1959–76

> *To possess a body is less to submit to the law of organic anonymity than to be in some way clothed with a great number of distinctions and magical qualities, which can be extended to the shadow cast by this body, to its image, to its footsteps and traces.*
>
> –Jean-Louis Bédouin, *Les Masques* (1961)

In 1958, Claude Lévi-Strauss published his seminal work, *Anthropologie structurale*. The book presented an impressive catalogue of essays demonstrating the application of his systematizing methodology of structural anthropology. A whole section was devoted to 'Magic and Religion', and in an essay entitled 'The Sorcerer and His Magic', Lévi-Strauss explained how magical thought was established in the arbitrary space in the semiotic equation between signifier and signified:

> [O]nly the history of the symbolic function can allow us to understand the intellectual condition of man, in which the universe is never charged with sufficient meaning and in which the mind always has more meanings available than there are objects to which to relate them. Torn between these two systems of reference – the signifying and the signified – man asks magical thinking to provide him with a new system of reference, within which the thus-far contradictory elements can be integrated.[1]

This argument effectively anticipated his more famous discussion from *La Pensée sauvage* (1962), written several years later, in which he characterized magical thought in terms of a process of 'bricolage'.[2] Through his analogy of the makeshift problem-solving of the 'bricoleur', Lévi-Strauss defined magical thought as a 'limited' system, which navigates a given set of facts in a distinctly idealistic manner in order to produce meaningful (but arbitrary) relationships between a sign and its supposed referent, and between cause and effect.[3] He qualifies this assessment by explaining that this species of magical thought does not represent 'a beginning, a rudiment, [or] a sketch' but 'a well-articulated system' in its own right, 'independent of that other system which constitutes science'.[4] He argued that the two systems represent 'parallel modes of acquiring knowledge', but stressed that they were operationally distinct: whereas

scientific thought proceeds empirically by trial and error to formulate a comprehensive explanation, magical thought tends to adapt a more limited set of evidence to a pre-existing repertoire of concepts, drawing out an explanation through a creative process of analogy.[5] 'The real question', he explained, 'is not whether the touch of a woodpecker's beak does in fact cure toothache. It is rather whether there is a point of view from which a woodpecker's beak and a man's tooth can be seen as "going together"'.[6]

Intriguingly, Lévi-Strauss suggested that the surrealists had already ascertained these theoretical coordinates of magical thought through their concept of objective chance. Following on from his discussion of the adaptive process of 'bricolage', he commented:

> [The] result […] will always be a compromise between the structure of the instrumental set and that of the project. Once it materializes the project will therefore inevitably be at a remove from the initial aim (which was moreover a mere sketch), a phenomenon which the surrealists have felicitously called 'objective [chance]'.[7]

In this passing comment, Lévi-Strauss seems to have been implying that surrealist 'objective chance' – a concept according to which unconscious thought colludes with objective reality to produce psychoanalytically significant events – was a modern manifestation of the kind of 'bricolage' typical of magical thought: producing a coherent explanation from a limited subset of concepts and facts.[8] Lévi-Strauss was almost certainly familiar with Breton's use of the term 'magical-circumstantial' in relation to 'objective chance' in 'La Beauté sera convulsive' in 1934, and later *Mad Love* in 1937. He restated this surrealist connection of his argument in a copy of *La Pensée sauvage* that he gifted to Breton in 1962, which contained the hand-written dedication:

> To André Breton, this book where the ethnologist, with flowers and birds, pays homage to objective chance, with the faithful admiration of Claude Lévi-Strauss.[9]

Clearly, Lévi-Strauss did not intend for this comparison to be in any way derogatory. Besides the fact that he reiterated it here in this sentimental note, the main aim of *La Pensée sauvage* was to prove the incredible sophistication of so-called 'primitive' reasoning. Rather, he seems to have been appraising 'objective chance' as a theoretical development that had been complicit in consolidating his concept of magical thought as 'bricolage'. And in doing so, he was implicating Surrealism in the work of twentieth-century anthropology.

This nod to the academic reach of Surrealism in 1962 echoed a previous remark that Lévi-Strauss had made during his inaugural address to the Collège de France as the Chair of Social Anthropology, on 6 January 1960. In discussing 'The Scope of Anthropology', he reflected on the manner in which the discipline was motivated by contemporary events and concerns from within the observer's society, first and foremost.[10] In these terms, he perceived that anthropological research creates a profile for its case study in the outline of the researcher's own native society, as built around a

familiar set of concepts (such as monetary exchange, social class, land rights, and so on). While he acknowledged that this invites the possibility of misconstruing indigenous customs, Lévi-Strauss concluded that this structural relativity serves an essential role of unification, by bringing diverse cultures towards a mutual understanding. Slightly later in the speech, he recalled a time when the discipline had all but lost sight of the value of this comparative project, citing Frazer's damning assessment of his own life's work as a 'tragic chronicle […] of human error and folly, of fruitless endeavour, wasted time, and blighted hopes'.[11] He then considered how the modern discipline had overcome this existential crisis that had confronted his predecessors, and expanded its horizons through an increased receptivity towards theoretical developments in wider European society:

> Of course, [since then] we have acquired direct knowledge of exotic forms of life and thought, which they lacked; but is it not also true that surrealism – that is to say, a development within our society – has transformed our sensitivity and that we owe it to having discovered or rediscovered at the heart of our studies some lyricism and some integrity?[12]

In making this remarkable claim that the Surrealist Movement had revitalized the anthropological project in the twentieth century (one infers, through its special interest in mythology, and its singular achievement of popularizing the concept of the unconscious), Lévi-Strauss had once again implicated Surrealism in the enterprise of academic research.

It seems little coincidence that these comments were made within a matter of years after Breton and Legrand's pseudo-academic venture of *L'Art magique*, which Lévi-Strauss has been loosely involved with.[13] Lévi-Strauss's reference to the surrealists' discovery of a certain 'lyricism' at the heart of the anthropological discipline could easily be an allusion to Breton and Legrand's account of the poetic mind of the so-called 'primitive' artist.[14] In the wake of their attempt to develop an evidentially sanctioned theory of magic, and, more specifically, in their citation of Lévi-Strauss and their invitation for him and other anthropologists to contribute to the *enquête*, his assessment of the movement as being complicit in the epistemological advances of anthropology may appear justified. However, from the surrealist point of view such a characterization was more problematic.

The matter effectively boils down to the question of whether the Surrealist Movement was grounded in the largely insular, self-serving project of academic theory, or in tangible action and the real, transformative *practice* of culture. And at this stage, thirty-five years down the line of a movement premised on the imminent instigation of an as yet unrealized social revolution, the question was a pertinent one. While *L'Art magique* was ostensibly an intellectual, purely theoretical exercise, the most authentically surrealist aspect of its discussion is the way in which Breton and Legrand entertained the possibility of actually practising esoteric thought. Although the group's practical commitment to revolutionary action had waned since the early 1930s, the notion of serving the abstract cause of expanding the intellectual field as a self-fulfilling end in itself remained anathema to them. Their motivation had always

been ideological, first and foremost, and the matter was no different in the early 1960s, even as Lévi-Strauss was cementing their position within the historical development of structural anthropology. These casual comments were of course speculative on Lévi-Strauss's part, rather than mutually agreed with Breton or anyone else. And although there was no public statement on the matter from within the ranks of the surrealist community at the time, it is plain to see from their contemporary activity that Lévi-Strauss had misjudged their proximity to the goals of anthropological research.

Within the frame of the surrealists' ethnographic interests, the implications of their practical, anti-academic convictions were such that the group positioned itself on the other side of the fence to Lévi-Strauss, with the indigenous peoples rather than the researchers. Where Lévi-Strauss had described the necessity for anthropologists to impose their own inherited conceptual frameworks onto so-called 'primitive' societies (in order to position them within a structuralist hypothesis that might yield essential truths about the human condition), the surrealists sought to achieve exactly the opposite result, by sowing the seed of non-Western thought in Western civilization. Within months of Lévi-Strauss's comments from his speech of 1960, Vincent Bounoure described this ambition in an essay entitled 'Surrealism and the Savage Heart', in the catalogue for the ninth international exhibition of Surrealism, *Surrealist Intrusion into the Enchanters' Domain*, which was held at the D'Arcy Galleries in New York in November that year:

> We know that painters and poets were among the first ones to jump over the fence on which the specialist had always kept close guard, intent as he was on preserving from sight the objects that belonged to the paraphernalia of ethnology, and that would henceforth pertain to the 'primitive arts'. […] We must admit, indeed, from the very moment they were considered as objects of art, these products of primitive cultures lost many of their magic powers. […] A vertiginous boldness is needed to carry the revolt against empirical existence [… and] the magical art of Surrealism may have periodically felt the need to put its strength to a test, to brace up its revolt by plunging into the spirit of the peoples who were immune from the usual compromises with hell.[15]

After briefly considering the recent history of primitivism in modern art, Bounoure described how 'Surrealism alone […] was destined to project deep into the night that it was exploring the fiery lights of a most cruel sun, reflected by the sculptures of the Americas and the Pacific Islands'.[16] He went on to explain that it was not so much the 'aesthetic criteria' of these artefacts that made them so attractive to Surrealism, but the 'ritual' practices that underpinned them.[17] Within the magical territory of the enchanter's domain, he reasoned, '[t]he only reality is that of the operation, the process', and he endorsed the recent performance of *L'Exécution du testament du marquis de Sade* by a young Canadian named Jean Benoît as the most 'optimistic' expression of Surrealism's adoption of this principle.[18]

Benoît had only recently joined the Surrealist Movement in March 1959, along with his wife and fellow artist, Mimi Parent. The couple had arrived in Paris over ten years prior to this surrealist initiation, in October 1948, having trained in Fine Art

in Montréal, and they had intended to establish themselves as professional artists in the French capital. Parent had received a grant from the French government on the merit of her work in Montréal under the stewardship of Alfred Pellan, figurehead of the Québécoise 'Automatist' school and *Prisme d'yeux* movement.[19] Pellan had met Breton and Elisa Bindhoff during their visit to Canada in 1944, and it was he who gave Parent and Benoît their first introductions to surrealist art. Pellan's friendship with surrealist figures like Maurice Henry would eventually afford Parent and Benoît their first contact with members of the French surrealist circle, leading to their introduction to Aube Elléouët, who in turn introduced them to her father. However, within months of their arrival in Paris in 1948 plans took an unexpected turn, when they both decided to enrol as students at the Musée de l'Homme, embarking upon a four-year course of anthropological studies, spanning 1949–53.

The couple quickly became immersed in the current trends of anthropological research, attending lectures by the likes of Pierre Métais and Marcel Griaule, and even assisting at a conference given by Lévi-Strauss.[20] The significance of this background is enormous in relation to their eventual admission into the surrealist group, and in the context of Bounoure's assessment of Benoît's central role in drawing Surrealism to the 'savage heart' of ritual magic. Indeed, Parent's and Benoît's joint careers effectively chart their migration in precisely the 'wrong' direction, from an institutional perspective: moving from an academic background in structural anthropology towards Surrealism. Nowhere is the Surrealist Movement's resistance to the academic protocols of anthropology more vividly expressed than in Parent's and Benoît's contributions to the movement from 1959 onwards, when they purposefully renounced this intellectual background and turned to practices of ritual magic. This is not to say that the ethnographic interests they developed at the Musée de l'Homme were suppressed under Surrealism – to the contrary, they were encouraged. But crucially, they abandoned the analytical perspective of anthropological research, and applied themselves wholeheartedly to emulating and proliferating the ritual magic of the ethnographic cultures they had studied.

Ritual magic

It was through her early ethnographic studies that Parent developed her lifelong preoccupation with the fetish object, which subsequently led to her famous *Crypte du fétichisme*: centrepiece of the erotically themed 8th International exhibition of Surrealism, '*EROS*', which opened at Galerie Daniel Cordier, Paris, in December 1959. The ambitious *Crypte* display consisted of a grotto-like room containing a reliquary wall filled with peculiar 'fetish' objects such as Adrien Dax's macabre *Reliquary*, which played upon religious votive sculpture, and Meret Oppenheim's carved wooden *Masque* (Figure 5.1), which was modelled upon African ceremonial masks. Where William Pietz has succinctly summarized the complicated 'problem-idea' bound up in the term 'fetish' as simultaneously concerning 'ethnography and the history of religion, Marxism and positivist sociology, psychoanalysis and the clinical psychiatry of sexual deviance', Parent's natural candidacy to invoke the multifaceted figure of the fetish

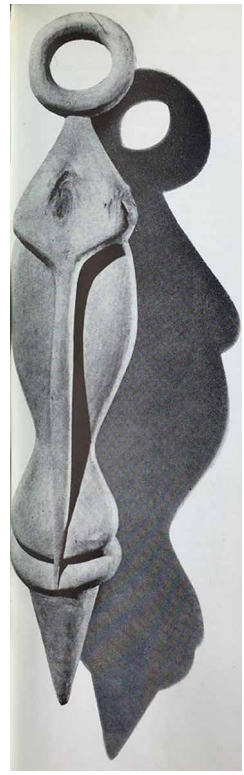


Figure 5.1 Meret Oppenheim, *Masque*, 1959, as pictured in the exhibition catalogue *EROS: Exposition Internationale du Surréaslisme* (Paris, 1959). © DACS 2022.

within the context of Surrealism immediately becomes apparent, where she was ideally positioned to draw the ethnographic-religious paradigm of fetishism into the fray of the movement's pre-existing rapport with Marxist and psychoanalytical theory.[21]

It was while studying at the Musée de l'Homme in 1949, a full ten years before he became involved in surrealist activities, that Benoît had begun working on the tribal-themed costume for *L'Exécution du testament du marquis de Sade*.[22] After sketching detailed diagrams, he finished making the costume itself in 1950 (Figure 5.2). Upon his entry into the surrealist group in 1959, plans were quickly made for the performance of Sade's last will and testament to be incorporated as the main event of the *EROS* show, for which it was conducted in private on 2 December that year (the 145th anniversary of Sade's death), with the costume subsequently put on display in the exhibition from its opening on 15 December.[23] The *Exécution* was devised as a symbolic fulfilment of the Marquis de Sade's unrealized directions for a non-religious interment, in which Benoît himself – donning elaborate regalia that included a wooden mask, body-length 'wings', and phallus-mounted grass skirt – sought to become possessed by Sade's spirit and lay it to rest. This was conducted through a shaman-inspired ritual, which more

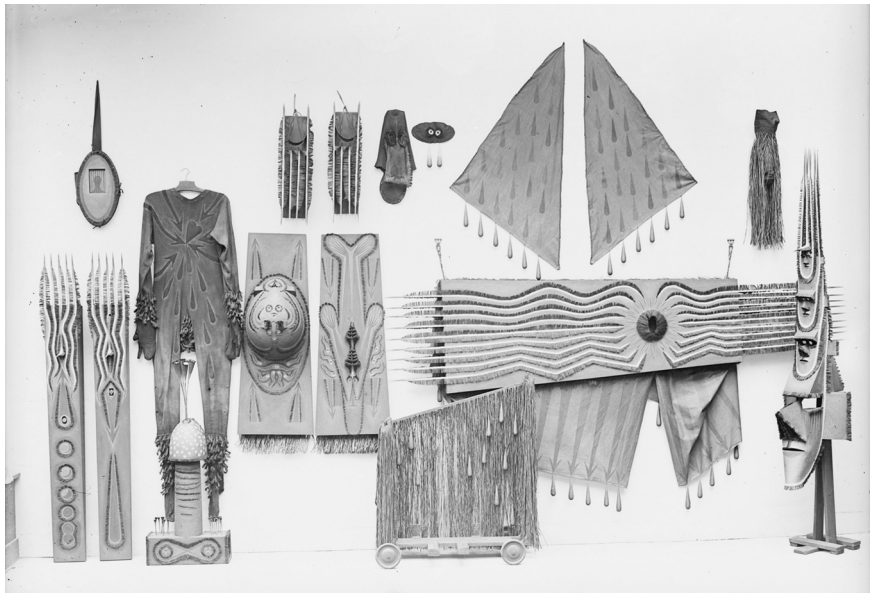


Figure 5.2 Jean Benoît, *Costume pour L'Exécution du testament du marquis de Sade*, *c*. 1959. © Paris, Centre Pompidou-MNAM/CCI-Bibliothèque Kandinsky. © Estate of Jean Benoît. Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Fonds Marc Vaux.

closely resembled a tribal rite of passage than a Napoleonic-era burial (Figure 5.3).[24] Speaking on this point, Alyce Mahon has likened Benoît's mask to the 'tribal headgear' of both the West-African Dogon and the Kwakiutl of British Columbia, arguing that 'the primitive nature of his performance was undoubtedly based on his ethnographic training'.[25]

Both Parent's and Benoît's contributions to *EROS* seamlessly dovetailed the integrated erotic-subversive-revolutionary themes of the 1959 exhibition with the group's prevailing interests in so-called 'primitive' cultures and 'objets sauvages'. Crucially, however, whereas Breton and Legrand had approached the theme of magic from a more aloof, theoretical perspective in *L'Art magique*, Parent and Benoît sought to engage directly with magic as a practice in their work. As their respective contributions to *EROS* demonstrate, their work immediately overstepped Breton and Legrand's limited art-historical definition of magic as a visual phenomenon, where instead both the *Crypte* and *Exécution* were orientated towards the sensory and emotional provocation of an audience, upon the model of magical ritual. Indeed Benoît's work was so arresting and immersive that it prompted one particularly dour and disapproving reviewer of *The Burlington Magazine* – who by her own admission had every intention to remain '*compos mentis*' in the face of such surrealist hocus pocus – to confess that she had almost mistaken the atmospheric 'inner shrine' in which Benoît's *Exécution* regalia was displayed for 'the hut of an African warrior', leading her to let her critical guard down briefly to state that his performance surely 'came very close to magic'.[26]



Figure 5.3 Jean Benoît, *Costume pour L'Exécution du testament du marquis de Sade*, *c*. 1959. © Paris, Centre Pompidou-MNAM/CCI-Bibliothèque Kandinsky. © Estate of Jean Benoît. Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Fonds Marc Vaux.

Clearly, this immersive model of ritualistic magic invoked by Parent and Benoît was of a different order to Breton and Legrand's conceptual model of esoteric thought, which had been rooted in the abstract, metaphorical terrains of art and myth. Whereas Breton was certainly receptive towards notions of ritual magic and spellcasting, Parent and Benoît were more directly concerned with testing and channelling the metaphysics of magical processes for themselves.

This chapter will attempt to map and consolidate the nuanced developments in Parent's and Benoît's practical researches into 'primitive' magic over their shared careers in the French Surrealist Movement, throughout which indigenous non-Western cultures remained a major inspiration behind their respective works. Building upon their early introduction to ethnographic material during their time at the Musée de l'Homme, this interest was piqued on various fronts during the 1960s and 1970s: through exposure to major ethnographic exhibitions in Paris; through access to the ethnographic collections of members of the surrealist group; and through their own extensive travels around Oceania and the United States.

Archaic fantasies of the mask, 1959–65

modern painting has moved away from the Impressionist candour and reconquered a new psychological authority, by recourse to hallucinatory figures which accentuate the element of strangeness. It was thereby granted freedom, and multiplied, with the

> *mannequin-men of Futurism and the hybrid-beings of Surrealism, variations on the theme of the hollow and artificial figure, which have reintroduced with a menacing element of surprise a certain number of archaic fantasies of the mask into the art of the twentieth century.*
>
> –André Chastel, 'Les Temps modernes: masque, mascarade, mascaron' (1959)

In her review of *EROS* in *The Burlington*, Kathleen Morand drew comparison between the surrealists' show and the contemporaneous exhibition *Le Masque* at the Musée Guimet in Paris (established in 1889 to showcase the predominantly Asian possessions of the colonial-era industrialist Émile Étienne Guimet), which brought together three hundred assorted masks from across the globe. Despite her opinions resembling those of a die-hard British colonialist in places – she expressed her fear that the exhibition might 'have the same effect upon contemporary art such as was produced by the impact of African art in the early part of the century' and scoffed at the 'very doubtful' aesthetic appeal of the masks – Morand also relayed the strange awe she had felt in the section of the exhibition devoted to 'the deeper and darker functions' of the mask; something which she could only manage to explain in relation to a 'surrealist' sensibility:[27]

> Most of these masks were produced by primitive races to achieve a magic purpose, and they range from characterless masks designed to protect the wearer from forces of evil to the highest type of transformation, that of man into God […] it is in this very section that one finds generous loans from the collections of André Breton and Robert Lebel […] and it is the surrealist temperament which would be most likely to be sensitive to the strange and terrifying emanation that can still be felt, even if not fully understood, in the presence of these objects.[28]

The fact that Morand was inclined to declare the connection between 'primitive' magic and Surrealism with such conviction in an otherwise dry and highly critical review says a great deal about the increasingly occulted reputation of Surrealism in the late 1950s. Her comments build upon a narrative which was already being institutionalized by the museum itself, where André Chastel, professor of art history at the Sorbonne, casually posed the connection between Surrealism and certain 'archaic fantasies of the mask' in his catalogue essay to the Musée Guimet exhibition.[29] It is of no small significance that Lévi-Strauss, who would subsequently make his own case for Surrealism, also had an essay in the catalogue.

Elsewhere, this parallel staging of the Musée Guimet and Galerie Daniel Cordier exhibitions – both opening in December 1959 – also attracted the attention of other, more sympathetic, reviewers. In a feature article on Benoît's *Exécution* in the late December 1959 issue of the French cultural magazine *Arts – Lettres, Spectacles*, the art critic and former surrealist Alain Jouffroy wrote:

> The entire thing [the *Exécution* performance] constitutes a veritable resurrection of mythical life. Everything there is absolutely faithful to a traditional language of signs: one has only to visit the present exhibition of masks, at the Musée Guimet,

> to appreciate the prodigious synthesis of rites and significations that Jean Benoît has realised with this costume.[30]

Here Jouffroy posed as an anthropologist of Surrealism, borrowing the recognizably structuralist terminology of a 'language of signs' to describe the costume. For Jouffroy as for Morand, such surrealist work was directly equivalent to the ancient and exotic items on display in the Musée Guimet. Meanwhile, within the exhibition itself, this association was made far more explicitly where Parent actually had a mask on display alongside the authentically 'magic' works that had so impressed Jouffroy and Morand – a fact that curiously escaped the attention of either critic.[31]

Along with one-time surrealist Leonor Fini (Figure 5.4), Parent contributed to a section of the exhibition that looked to display contemporary applications of the mask. Parent's mask was a piece that she had made for the surrealist poet, artist and film-maker Maurice Henry (Figures 5.5 and 5.6): comprising of two superposed theatrical masks which were devised so that the outer mask could be opened along a central vertical split through its face to reveal the inner mask. This hinge mechanism appears to play upon the 'transformation masks' of British Columbia (Figure 5.7) that were also on display in the Musée Guimet exhibition, which she possibly took as her model. Whereas Parent's inner mask was plain except for a large spherical target on its forehead, over the brain, the outer mask was decorated with a bold brick pattern that resembled the scene depicted on Benoît's invitation to his *Exécution* (Figure 5.8): in which the dense brick latticework of the Bastille prison shatters and crumbles under pressure from phallus and eagle emblems symbolizing the Marquis de Sade.

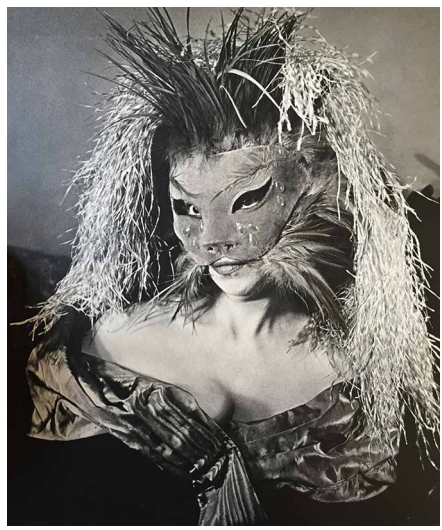


Figure 5.4 Leonor Fini, *Masque composé pour un bal à la piscine Deligny (Paris)*, 1950, as pictured in Masques (1965). © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. Photo: Author.

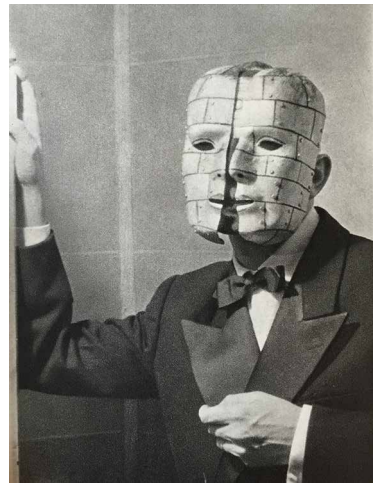


Figure 5.5 Mimi Parent, *Masque exécuté pour Maurice Henry* (closed view), photographed by George Pierre, *c*. 1959, as pictured in *Masques* (1965). © Estate of Mimi Parent. Photo: Author.

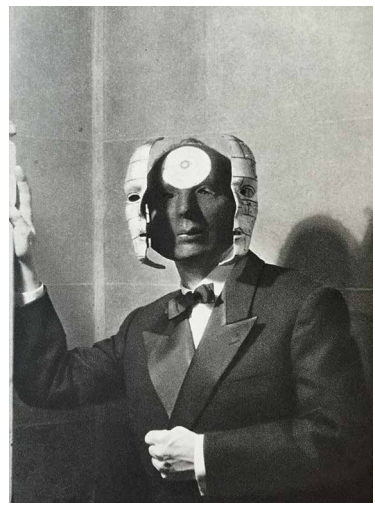


Figure 5.6 Mimi Parent, *Masque exécuté pour Maurice Henry* (open view), photographed by George Pierre, *c*. 1959, as pictured in *Masques* (1965). © Estate of Mimi Parent. Photo: Author.

Indeed, the opening action of Parent's mask, through which the brickwork patterning is burst open to reveal the mind under the scopes of a target, seems to tally with the overriding message of physical and mental *liberation* advocated by Benoît's project of the *Exécution* as a whole in its treatment of Sade.

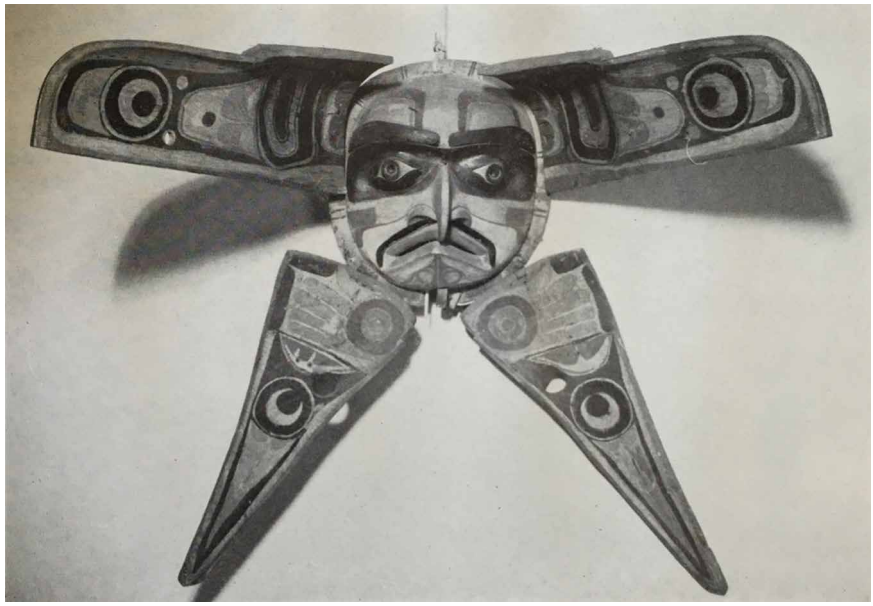


Figure 5.7 Jean Lavaud, *Kwakiutl Winter Ritual Mask known as 'Hamshamtses'*, *c*. 1959, from the former collection of Georges Duthuit, as pictured in *Le Masque* (1959).

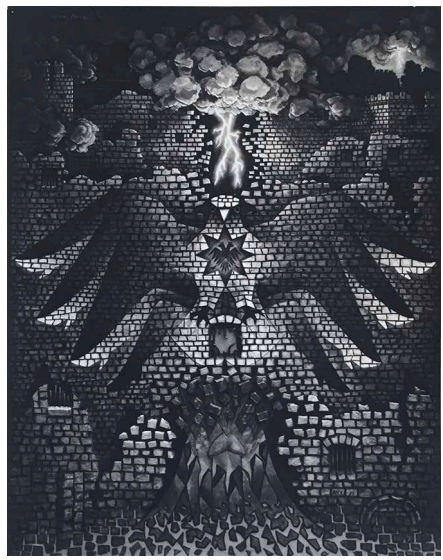


Figure 5.8 Jean Benoît, Invitation au *L'Exécution du testament du marquis de Sade* (addressed to E. L. T. Mesens), 1959, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive, Edinburgh (Ref: GMA A55/2/5/19). © Estate of Jean Benoît. Photo: Author.

In drawing together Benoît's *Exécution* and the masks of the Musée Guimet exhibition in this manner, Parent's mask is a further testimony to the close link being posed between surrealist practice and ritual magic at the turn of the 1960s, by surrealists, museum curators and critics alike.

The magic behind the mask

The only significant set of theoretical reflections on the magical dimensions of the Musée Guimet's masks at the time of the exhibition came in a review by the sociologist and former surrealist Roger Caillois, which was published on the cover of *Arts – Lettres, Spectacles* two weeks before Jouffroy's piece on Benoît, in mid-December 1959 (Figure 5.9). The text was influential enough for it to be re-used six years later, in a slightly edited form, as the preface to a more densely illustrated version of the 1959 Musée Guimet exhibition catalogue, published in 1965 under the new title *Masques* (superseding the original 1959 catalogue, *Le Masque*).[32] Significantly, Caillois acknowledged Parent's modern contribution to the exhibition at the close of the piece, if only indirectly as the mask 'worn […] by Maurice Henry'.[33] In these inclusive terms – spanning masks from the Alaskan tundra to the streets of Paris – Caillois attempted something like a universal theory of the mask, or, as the editor of *Arts – Lettres, Spectacles* introduced the article, a 'psychological and sociological point of view on the presence of the mask through history'.[34]



Figure 5.9 Cover to *Arts – Lettres, Spectacles* no. 752, 9–15 December 1959.

For Caillois, the mask was a ubiquitous accompaniment to human existence. 'It is a fact', he wrote, 'that all humanity wears or wore the mask': 'civilisations […] have prospered without having the idea of the wheel [… yet] the mask was familiar'.[35] He went on to suggest that the exhibition itself (marking the apparent novelty of the topic) was symptomatic of a momentous shift in attitude towards masks that had taken place in recent history. He perceived that in many parts of the world the mask had lost its 'central and institutional' status at the very moment when society had acceded to the episteme of historical progress, under which people came to operate according to an aspirational principle of development, which displaced the day-to-day push and pull of the social and religious orbits of the mask.[36] Thereafter, he explained, the mask's fabrication and utilization 'no longer pertain[ed] to magic, but to art', such that it became 'the theme and object of exhibition, of scientific study, of aesthetic estimation, of disinterested admiration'.[37] Motivated by this loss, it was precisely the former magical functions of the mask that Caillois looked to uncover, and reanimate in the minds of his readers.

At the opening of the article, he outlined what he deemed to be the primary functions of the mask:

> The mask has three essential functions: it dissimulates, metamorphoses and terrifies. They correspond to the three principal functions of mimicry in insects: camouflage, transvestism, and intimidation.[38]

Caillois's insect analogy followed on from his twenty-five-year-old preoccupation with the lives of insects as a psychoanalytical window onto the human mind: a line of inquiry which had begun with his essay analysing the sexual habits of Praying Mantises, published in 1934 as 'La Mante religieuse' in the fifth issue of *Minotaure*. This notion of 'metamorphosis' stands as the main strand of Caillois's argument for the magical role of the mask. Though limited, his comments on this point are nonetheless insightful. He introduces the case as follows:

> More often [than to ends of dissimulation or terror,] the mask is an instrument of metamorphosis. In societies called primitive, those who wear it incarnate the being of which the mask is the effigy. He is momentarily possessed by this being (or by this force). He is thus transformed in his eyes and the eyes of others […] the mask liberates in him some unknown energies, which seem to substitute his ordinary personality.[39]

This idea of the extreme liberation – verging on loss – of self is instantly relatable to Benoît's use of the mask in his *Exécution*. In the first place, this principle of liberation was inherent to the subject of Benoît's performance, in the life and teachings of Sade himself, where he had been a vociferous proponent of libertinism and the dissolution of the established social standards of normalcy and deviancy that got him imprisoned. And indeed, Sade's transgressive ambitions were acknowledged by Benoît in his 1959 essay 'Notes concernant l'exécution du testament de Sade', where he referred to the mask as the 'Totem of the free man': characterizing it as a tangible embodiment of the Sadean spirit of liberation.[40]

According to Caillois, the physical transformation produced by the mask brings about a near-total metamorphosis of its bearer's personality:

> the mask opens the door to boldness and libertine audacity, permits forbidden words and gestures, suddenly introduces a shady, feverish, worked up, ambiguous and brutal excitation which recalls, faded, disaffected, transposed in insolence, truculence, turbulence or licentiousness, the audacity and anguish of the great attacks of times gone by, the irruption of sacred figures rightfully leading a reversal of the rules which govern everyday relations.[41]

Here again Caillois links the crazed, euphoric loss of selfhood experienced under the mask's influence to a kind of spiritual or divine possession. This supernatural aspect of the mask's work of 'metamorphosis' clearly also goes beyond the Sadean principle of liberation, which looked to unravel taboos and unleash suppressed desires in order to transgress moral strictures. By contrast, it seems that Benoît was in implicit concurrence with Caillois that the real magic of the mask lay in its capacity to transgress the ontological limits of human experience by inducing the 'irruption of sacred figures', and temporary possession by a spirit or deity.[42] It seems to have been precisely this effect of ontological metamorphosis that Benoît was invoking through his 'totemic' costume.[43]

In 1961, the surrealist poet, artist and filmmaker Jean-Louis Bédouin published *Les Masques* (Figure 5.10): a theoretical introduction to historical forms and uses of the mask that seems to have been prompted by this recent surge of interest in the subject in the parallel spheres of the Surrealist Movement, French museums and the academic discipline of Anthropology. Indeed, the fact that the book was published with the academic Presses Universitaires de France is a clear testament to these overlaps. And it is little surprise to find the catalogue to the 1959 Musée Guimet exhibition *Le Masque* in the book's bibliography. Out of all the surrealists, Bédouin had particularly strong credentials for writing such a study. After joining the surrealist group in the late 1940s, Bédouin had made a name for himself through his collaboration with Michel Zimbacca on the mythologically themed films *L'Invention du monde* and *Quetzalcoatl, le serpent emplumé* in 1952. In the montaged images and pieces of footage that make up the films – an aesthetic effect that Kristoffer Noheden likens to an 'ever-swirling constellation of myths' – masks had an inescapable presence.[44] Compiling the films involved negotiating permissions from numerous private collections (including those of surrealist figures such as Breton, Péret and Man Ray) as well as museums around the world, from Paris to Portland, Oregon. These closely connected film projects from 1952 went a long way towards informing Bédouin's discussion in *Les Masques*. Early on in the text Bédouin acknowledges Caillois's writings on mimicry, and in its overarching theoretical treatment of the mask *Les Masques* upholds the same central conceptual case presented by Caillois, concerning its powers of magical metamorphosis towards a transgression and loss of self:[45]

> The man who masks himself is supposed to really lose his identity to allow the ancestor, the totemic animal, the mythical hero, to manifest themself *openly*. The mask exists by itself; it acts in accordance with its own nature; it fills the uninitiated with sacred fear, because it is not human.[46]

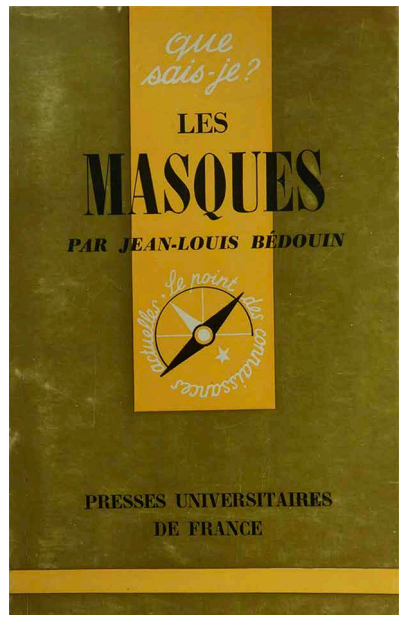


Figure 5.10 Cover to Jean-Louis Bédouin's *Les Masques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961). © Presses Universitaires de France. Photo: Author.

The most compelling examples of this feat that Bédouin cites in *Les Masques* are the masks of Hopi and Zuni Kachinas. Quoting from Jean Cazeneuve's 1957 volume *Les Dieux dansent à Cibola*, he explains:

> 'in the religion of the Pueblos […] the mask has a greater importance than elsewhere. […] The men who wear them are no longer simple men. They are themselves a link between the terrestrial world and the sacred'. From the beginning, there is a common identity between the masks and the masked gods, or *Kachina*.[47]

Of all the case studies considered in *Les Masques*, Bédouin's discussion of the Kachina ceremonies of the American Southwest would have been likely to catch the attention of his surrealist compatriots Parent and Benoît.

Homage to the Pueblos

In the original Musée Guimet catalogue of 1959, Lévi-Strauss's essay on the masks of North and South America had discussed the ritual dances of the Hopi Indians in familiar terms, and described the same feat of transformation: relaying how '[w]hen he puts on the mask, the bearer assumes the form of the divinity that he represents'.[48] Even in the most abstract terms of this dynamic of supernatural possession, the masks of the

American Southwest stand as a possible source of inspiration for Benoît's *Exécution*. On closer inspection, however, the striking masks of the Zuni and Hopi (Figure 5.11 & Figure 5.12) – represented in the exhibition by the 'generous loans' of Breton and Lebel that Morand had mentioned – seem to have been linked to Benoît's and Parent's works on several further fronts.[49]

There are various pieces of anecdotal evidence that support the case for the relevance of Hopi and Zuni cultures to Benoît and Parent's practice at this time. 1959 was the year in which Hopi chief Don C. Talayesva's autobiographical work *Sun Chief* (1942) was translated into French and published as *Soleil Hopi*.[50] The new translation found a niche audience among the surrealist group, who had a longstanding fascination with Hopi Kachina dolls, and who had heard first-hand tales of Hopi life from Breton following his travels through Arizona in August 1945. The book received an ecstatic review in the June 1959 issue of the surrealist journal *BIEF*, presented in the form of an open letter under the title 'Les surréalistes à Don C. Talayesva', which is worth quoting at length:

> Writers and artists that we are, we have long regarded the art of the Hopi, and what ethnological works have revealed to us of the thought that inspires it, with the highest esteem and honour. One of us [Breton] who had the good fortune to visit Oraibi, Hotavilla, Wolpi, Mishongovi, Shungopavi, Shipaulvi and to assist in some of your ceremonies, has endeavoured to imbue us with their climate, which we have found very helpful.



Figure 5.11 Jean Lavaud, *Zuni Ceremonial Kôkô Mask from New Mexico*, *c.* 1959, from the former collection of André Breton, as pictured in *Le Masque* (1959). Photo: Author.

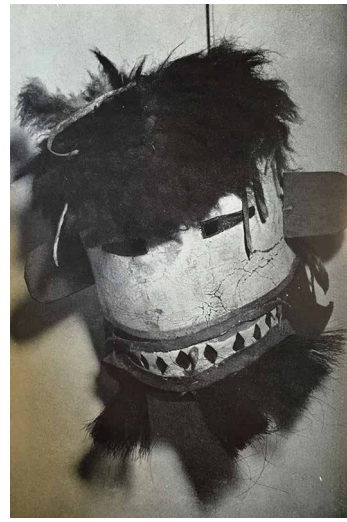


Figure 5.12 Jean Lavaud, *Hopi Ceremonial Kachina Mask from Arizona*, *c*. 1959, from the former collection of Robert Lebel, as pictured in *Le Masque* (1959). Photo: Author.

> These places, this thought, this art, thanks to you, are becoming infinitely closer to us. From the story of your life, all men are called on to draw a lesson of mental health and loftiness.
>
> Fervent homage to the immortal genius of the American Indian; prosperity to the admirable Hopi tribe in the respect and defence of its high traditions; happiness, long life and glory to Don C. Talayesva![51]

This eulogy was published within three months of Parent and Benoît having joined the group, at a time when they were both becoming increasingly involved with *BIEF*. Indeed, Parent's first illustration for any surrealist publication featured in the following issue in July 1959, and Benoît contributed an illustration to the journal in December that year (the month of the *EROS* exhibition's opening). Benoît, for his part, would later make a more barefaced point of his admiration for *Sun Chief*, when, during his travels around America, he visited Arizona to meet Don C. Talayesva in person in the autumn of 1968.[52]

Parent was also fascinated by the cultures of the American Southwest around this time. At some point during the early-mid-1960s (prior to Breton's death in September 1966), she produced an elaborately decorated emboîtage for a Zuni Kachina in Breton's collection (Figures 4.1, 5.13 and 5.14), at his request. The wooden box was decorated with straw and wire on its interior, and painted with oils and sand on its exterior to give the effect of the Navajo Sand Paintings also associated with the region.[53] The effort invested in making this emboîtage clearly went beyond the simple functional purpose of protecting the sculpture. Such Zuni figurines and masks, like those of the Hopi,

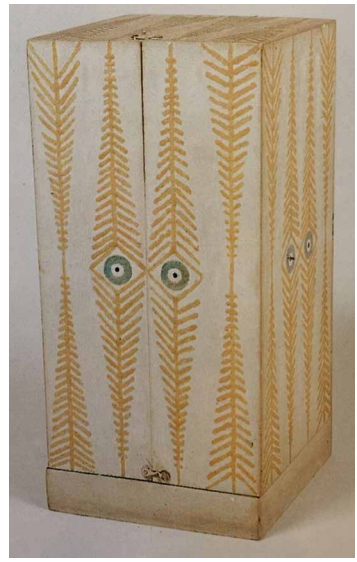


Figure 5.13 Mimi Parent, *Êmboitage pour une poupée Zuni* (closed view), *c.* 1960–6, wood, straw, sand, wire, pearls, oil paint, Private Collection. © Estate of Mimi Parent.



Figure 5.14 Mimi Parent, *Êmboitage pour une poupée Zuni* (open view), *c.* 1960–6, wood, straw, sand, wire, pearls, oil paint, Private Collection. © Estate of Mimi Parent.

are physical embodiments of divine spirits who preside over the local communities, and control the weather and seasonal cycles.[54] And in keeping with this sanctified reputation, Parent seems to have conceived of the emboîtage as a kind of reliquary for the Kachina, more suited to serving as a shrine to channel and harness its divine powers.

Throughout *Sun Chief* Talayesva provided a colourful account of the various Kachina ceremonies spread out over the Hopi calendar, and, in his reflections on his

childhood in particular, gave vivid descriptions of the masked dancers who presided as gods within his pueblo community.[55] He described, for example, how:

> My fathers and uncles showed me the ancestral masks and explained that long ago the real Katcinas had come regularly to Oraibi and had danced in the plaza. They explained that since the people had become so wicked […] the Katcinas had stopped coming in person and sent their spirits to enter the masks on dance days. They showed me how to feed the masks by placing food on their mouths and taught me to respect them and pray to them.[56]

The transformation of the masked dancers was clearly total. Recounting the scene after one particular ceremony, as the Kachina dancers 'marched away toward the San Francisco mountains', Talayesva recalled the feeling that '[e]verybody knew they were spirit gods'.[57]

Collectively, the tales of *Sun Chief*, the Hopi and Zuni masks of the Musée Guimet display on loan from Breton and Lebel, and the dolls to be found more readily in the personal collections of surrealists, including Breton and Matta (Figure 5.15), all had an important bearing upon both Parent's and Benoît's practice in the late 1950s and 1960s. In the context of Benoît's *Exécution*, the masks of the Hopi and Zuni appear to have provided a pure expression of the type of divine incarnation that Caillois had outlined in his *Arts – Lettres, Spectacles* essay, and which Lévi-Strauss had also described. Yet Benoît was more specifically interested in emulating rather



Figure 5.15 Hopi Kachina Doll from the former collection of Roberto Matta, as pictured in *Arts primitifs dans les ateliers d'artistes* (1967). Photo: Author.

than observing this feat. And his attempt to revive the metamorphosing magic of the mask was apparently effective. In his essay on the *Exécution* (derived from the oration he gave during its performance on 2 December 1959), Breton appeared to entreat with some kind of divine or supernatural being that had been conjured by Benoît's masked ritual, where he finished with a demand to the spiritual ether: 'LET PASS the Marquis de Sade "on his own terms" and reinvested with all his powers by Jean Benoît'.[58]

Several years later, Benoît – enthused by his performance of the *Exécution* – sought to repeat this feat of transformation. In 1965, for the opening of the next Parisian International Exhibition of Surrealism, *L'Écart absolu*, he devised another masked performance in which he posed as *Le Nécrophile*. Having designed a similar costume (Figure 5.16) in 1963 for the character of a necrophiliac in a short play entitled 'La Communion solennelle' by the Spanish dramatist Fernando Arrabal, published in *La Brèche*, he subsequently developed the concept of *Le Nécrophile* performance over 1964–5.[59] Benoît's *Nécrophile* of 1965 was specifically dedicated to the infamous nineteenth-century soldier, Sergent François Bertrand, otherwise known as 'le vampire du Montparnasse'. Bertrand was arrested and taken to court for the abuse and destruction of corpses in the Montparnasse cemetery in 1849. His trial was exceptional in that it took place before 'necrophilia' had entered legal vocabulary, and he was consequently tried for acts of 'vampirism' and 'erotomania'.[60] Among the surrealists he was revered as the archetype of the misunderstood deviant, shunned by society, whose forbidden passions perfectly captured the essence of the exhibition's theme of 'absolute deviation'. In a set of reflections on *L'Écart absolu* published in the surrealist journal

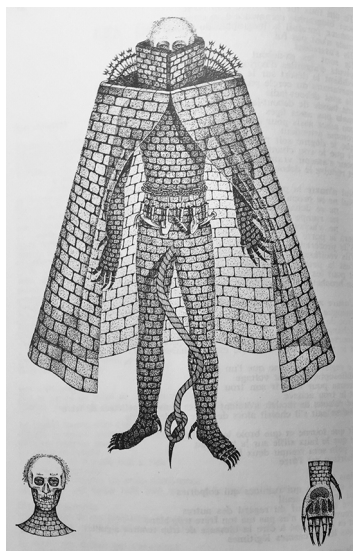


Figure 5.16 Jean Benoît, *Le Nécrophile: un costume en accord avec ses penchants*, 1963, as pictured in *La Brèche* no. 4 (February 1963). © Estate of Jean Benoît. Photo: Author.

L'Archibras in 1967, alongside atmospheric photographs of Benoît in costume taken by Suzy Embo, Joyce Mansour described the atmosphere of the performance with a combination of awe and horror:

> Gnawed at by his obscene hunger, pearly under his collar of tombstones, silent and milky like the oyster in its shell, the Necrophiliac will open his mouth and let spurt his prelunar language.[61]

As with the performance of the *Exécution*, *Le Nécrophile* was once again premised on the idea of incarnation. When he emerged in costume as *Le Nécrophile* at 10:15pm on the opening night of *L'Écart absolu* in December 1965, Benoît once again threw himself into a pact with the spirit world through the magical faculties of masquerade. Perhaps even more vividly than with the *Exécution*, with *Le Nécrophile* Benoît also appeared to be conspiring to annul death itself by reanimating the Sergent.

Funerary rites, 1965–76

Over the remainder of the 1960s and into the 1970s, both Benoît and Parent would continue to explore the supernatural eventuality of the afterlife through a series of works that followed the physical and conceptual formulae of the emboîtage. Parent's *Êmboitage pour une poupée Zuni* was possibly the first work by either artist in this vein. Benoît also created emboîtages for several books during this period, including for Breton's *Le La* and *Anthologie de l'humour noir*, in 1962, and for *Arcanum 17* and Alfred Jarry's *Ubu roi*, in 1965. All four objects were subsequently exhibited at *L'Écart absolu*.

One might identify a precedent for this emboîtage format in certain poème-objets made by Breton, the boxes of Joseph Cornell or, more compellingly, the object-boxes Victor Brauner created during the Second World War, which the Canadian couple may have become aware of after he had been reinstated within the surrealist circle in 1959, at the time of the *EROS* exhibition.[62] But whereas Brauner's *Objet de contre-envoûtement*, for example, had been devised as a protective, life-preserving talisman, Parent's and Benoît's emboîtages were based upon the model of a reliquary or tomb, and concerned instead with supporting a life beyond the grave.

Once again, it was so-called 'primitive' cultures that would provide the inspiration for Parent's and Benoît's interest in funerary rites. The trophy head had been one of the more notable genres of 'mask' on display at the Musée Guimet exhibition in 1959. In the 1965 version of the exhibition catalogue, the caption for this section described how in this case 'it is the man [rather than deity] that one immortalises by the medium of the mask', in order to guarantee that 'his spirit, fixed by the image, will no longer come to haunt the living'.[63] Among the examples on show in 1959 were a Mundurucu 'trophy head' from the Amazon basin (Figure 5.17), and a 'remodelled skull' from the Sepik River region of Papua New Guinea (Figure 5.18).[64] Each of these items would subsequently inform the major emboîtage projects of both Benoît and Parent respectively, in the late 1960s and 1970s.



Figure 5.17 Tête trophée, Population Mundurucu, *c*. 1800. Marseille, musée d'Arts africains, océaniens, amérindiens. © Ville de Marseille, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / David Giancatarina. This particular head was featured in *Masques* (1965).

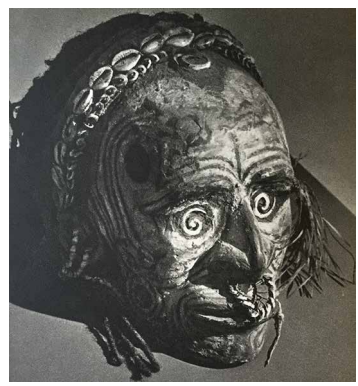


Figure 5.18 Georges Pierre, *Crâne surmodélé, région du fleuve Sépik*, photographed from the former collection of Henri Kamer, as pictured in *Masques* (1965).

After 1959, the very same Mundurucu trophy head was re-exhibited in Paris in 1965 in the Musée de l'Homme's major showcasing of its permanent collection, *Chefs-d'oeuvre du Musée de l'Homme*. It seems hard to imagine that the busy exhibition life of this particular object did not have a bearing upon Benoît's project for the *Emboîtage pour une tête trophée Mundurucu* (Figures 5.19–5.20 and Plate 9), which he completed three years later as a gift for his close friend Pierre Langlois, in 1968. The work apparently consisted of the remodelled remains of an actual child's head, set within a macabre casing rendered in wet-moulded black leather, and mounted by two enormous bats (one male, one female). Along the spine of the box, sculpted in relief, ran a rhyming couplet taken from the work of the nineteenth-century Breton poet Tristan Corbière (celebrated in Paul Verlaine's *Les Poètes maudits* of 1884):

> In your case, oh window-glass!
> Calm and pure, lie down perhaps.[65]

Whilst the architectural referents 'case' and 'window' perfectly fitted the physical trappings of the emboîtage (within the context of a poem entitled 'Roof'), the morbid



Figure 5.19 Jean Benoît, *Emboîtage pour une tête trophée Mundurucu* (front partially open), 1968, as pictured in *L'Archibras* No. 6 (December 1968). © Estate of Jean Benoît. Photo: Author.



Figure 5.20 Jean Benoît, *Emboîtage pour une tête trophée Mundurucu* (front open), 1968, Private Collection. © Estate of Jean Benoît.



Figure 5.21 Jean Benoît, *Projet tombe relief*, 1994–95, lithograph, Private Collection. © Estate of Jean Benoît. Photo: Michel Joly de Lotbinière.

allusions of that which 'lies' within (anticipating the closing line: 'An old deaf man!') directly appealed to the box's application as a makeshift tomb.

Despite its austere coffin-like aesthetic and gothic gargoyles, Bounoure described Benoît's *Emboîtage* in ennobling terms as a kind of 'cenotaph' in his feature article on the work published in *L'Archibras No.6* in December 1968.[66] He ascribed the piece a decidedly positive role of veneration, and went so far as to attribute it with notable powers of spiritual embodiment, designating it as a veritable 'reliquary'.[67] Referring to the head itself, he wrote:

> Since the enormous forests of the Amazon where she was born not far from the Rio Tapajos, the very beautiful infant, whose anxious mood is almost miraculously transmitted to us, had always travelled exposed to the gaze of dogs. But Langlois and Benoît have met her with an equal devotion, even jealous fervour. It is never too late to be loved.[68]

This assessment was made in flagrant disregard of actual Mundurucu tradition, in which preserved heads were primarily associated with the warrior tradition of headhunting. Traditionally, heads were violently 'captured' from rival clansmen on skirmishes lasting many weeks during the dry season, and returned as trophy heads that were prized as symbols of military strength and supernatural power. The 1965 *Masques* catalogue had defined the trophy head in precisely these terms, as a means of imprisoning the malevolent spirit of the deceased.[69] Whilst Benoît's Mundurucu head appears to have been preserved through a similar technique to the traditional trophy heads of the region, the afterlife that he attempted to guarantee for the little girl to whom it had once belonged was clearly of a very different nature.[70] In a direct subversion of trophy head tradition, Benoît ascribed his *Emboîtage* with the role of exposing the child to unbridled love in death (a notion that carries echoes of Sergent Bertrand's necrophilia). It is only within this context that the bared genitals of the flanking pair of bats yield to a meaningful symbolic message – one of deathly love, love in the shadows, love by twilight – where they might otherwise come across as unsuitable ornaments for a funerary vessel. Indeed, years later, Benoît designed a set of similarly sexual motifs for his own tomb, in the form of a *danse macabre*-inspired portrait of himself and Mimi flanked by vulval and phallic trees (Fig. 5.21). Clearly for Benoît, the sentimental trope of undying love did not preclude the oddly romantic notion of the physical love of soulmates' corpses.

Between 1967 and 1974, Benoît made no less than four visits to Oceania, with Parent joining him on one of these trips, along with Pierre and Denise Langlois, in 1972.[71] These Pacific travels appear to have been the source of inspiration for Parent's major emboîtage project of the 1970s: *Reliquaire pour un crâne surmodelé du Moyen-Sepik* (Plate 10), which she made in 1976. Clearly to her own mind, she conceived of it as serving a similar role of veneration to Benoît's work of eight years earlier, according to its designation as a 'reliquary'. The idea for the content of the piece may have originated with the 'crâne surmodelé' from the Sepik River exhibited alongside Parent's own mask at the Musée Guimet seventeen years previously, in 1959. Equally, Parent might have been inspired by the striking pair of Sepik heads in Breton's collection, which she could have seen on her visits to 42 rue Fontaine. The decision to construct the reliquary in 1976 might also have been influenced, more acutely, by the recent display concerned with the neighbouring High Sepik region of Papua New Guinea at the Musée de l'Homme over 1974–75, *Objets du Haut-Sepik, Nouvelle Guinée*, although any kind of trophy head was noticeably absent here.

The casing of the *Reliquaire* consisted of a rectangular box formed of stained wooden panelling. The box had a glass porthole at the front through which the face of the Sepik head could be glimpsed, and was surmounted by a golden sculpture of a galleon that appeared as though it were capsizing, prow-first, beneath the surface of the box lid. The image of this galleon, the porthole, and the stately panelling of the box all appear to be references to the colonial history of Melanesia, and the wider Pacific region.

Meanwhile, the concept of the reliquary itself may in fact have been inspired by the native culture of the New Guinea region. The notion of supplying a wooden container for the head may have been suggested to Parent by the skull caskets found among Korwar sculpture, which originated from the north-western end of New Guinea island, now part of Indonesia. Skulls were often cradled on the neck of these ancestry figures, or inserted into a purpose-built hollow in the back of the head. These Korwar reliquaries were conceived as physical containers for the spirit of the deceased. Once again, the 1959 Musée Guimet exhibition surfaces as a possible point of inspiration here, having showcased a fine Korwar specimen as one of its more tenuous categories of 'mask'.[72] In fact, the Korwar piece on show there was one of several owned by Breton himself, and as such it stands out as an object that could surely not have escaped the attention of his new protégé Parent in the year of her entry into the surrealist circle.[73] In 1948 Breton had dedicated a poem to a Korwar sculpture in his 'Xénophiles' series, which was published that year in the catalogue to the *Océanie* exhibition at Galerie Andrée Olive. Certain lines from Breton's poem resonate with the commemorative role of Parent's *Reliquaire*:

> You were caught as you came out of life
> To re-enter it
> […]
> The skull for a few more days
> In the dip of our features
> […]
> You are feeding us a line on existentialism
> There are no flies on you[74]

Breton's presentation of the Korwar sculpture here, caught between life and death, stands as a close precedent for Parent's project for a Sepik reliquary.

Magic and 'revolutionary anthropology'

From their point of entry into the surrealist group in 1959, Parent and Benoît developed a close friendship with Vincent Bounoure and his wife Micheline Bounoure. Archival material attests not only to this intimate friendship but also to a common acknowledgement of their closely aligned interests in magic: with Bounoure gifting the pair a specially dedicated copy of his 1958 volume *Préface à un traité des matrices* (Figures 5.22 and 5.23), his Hegelian-alchemical-cabalistical analysis of the operations of poetry and art. This friendship lasted many years, and survived the collapse of the Surrealist Movement in France that followed Breton's death in the late 1960s. When Bounoure revived collective activities in 1970 after the temporary dissolution of the French surrealist group in 1969, Benoît was one of the signatories to the first issue of his new surrealist journal, *Bulletin de liaison surréaliste*.[75]

It was Bounoure, of course, who had first written of a 'ritual' dimension to 'the magical art of surrealism' in 'Surrealism and the Savage Heart' back in 1960, and who had subsequently been captivated by the 'fetishistic tendencies' on display in Benoît's *Emboîtage* in 1968.[76] Under his stewardship, this preoccupation with the ritual magic

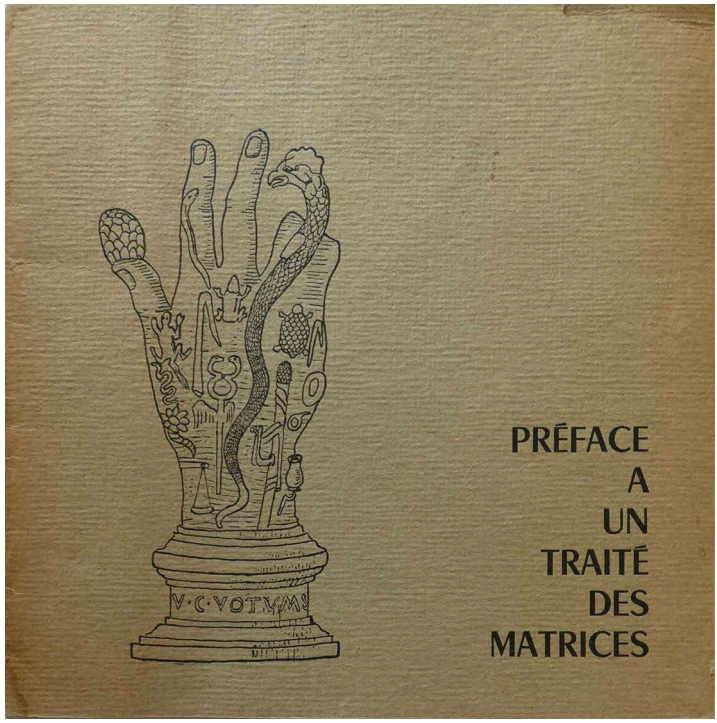


Figure 5.22 Cover to Vincent Bounoure's *Préface à un traité des matrices* (Paris, 1958). Collection of the Author. Photo: Author.

of the 'primitive' world remained the driving force of surrealist discourse far beyond 1969. In the collective volume *La Civilisation surréaliste* (1976), which Bounoure edited, it was precisely this historical subtext of 'primitive' magic that informed the pan-humanistic perspective of the various essays on the themes of myth, gift exchange and anti-colonialism.

In its title, specialized focus, and presentation, *La Civilisation surréaliste* closely resembled a volume of anthropological scholarship (Figure 5.24).[77] However, within the book's discussion itself the contributors were quick to distinguish their interests in this anthropological territory from that of anthropology itself. There was a lengthy section on 'langage et communication', for example, in which various authors looked to establish the surrealist position in contradistinction to that of structural anthropology. The consensus of these essays was that structuralism had portrayed modern civilization as a disenchanted space, in which societies are regimented, bound, even imprisoned, by discrete signifying systems that govern social existence worldwide. For the surrealists, the semiotic formulae identified in stucturalist analyses – in the contexts of language, commerce, art and architecture – presented oppressive systems of social control, which anthropology itself was guilty of perpetuating.

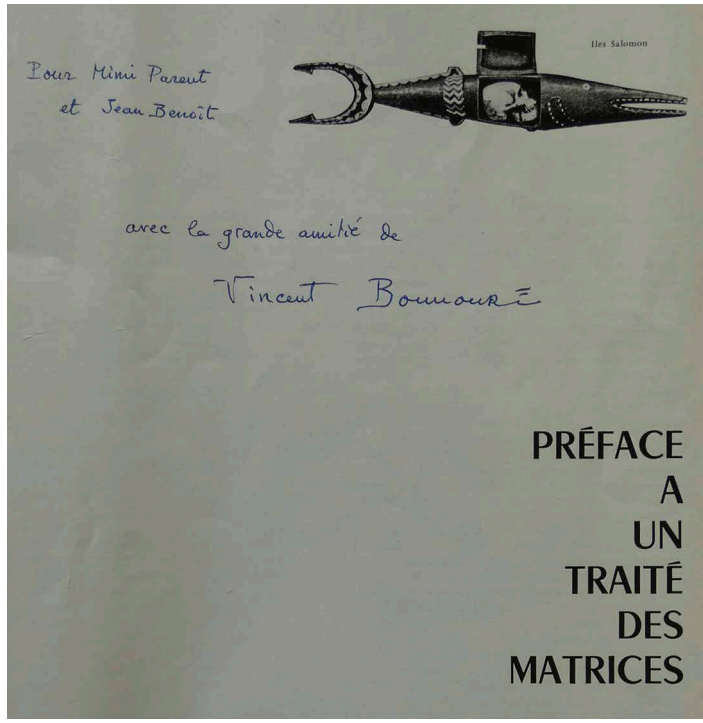


Figure 5.23 Vincent Bounoure's dedication to Mimi Parent and Jean Benoît in *Préface à un traité des matrices* (Paris, 1958). Collection of the Author. Photo: Author.

Bernard Caburet's essay 'Chaînes parlées et prisons linguistiques' was axiomatic of this argument. In the first instance, he drew attention to the diverse forms these 'prisons' might take, since linguistics had 'opened the way to the totalitarianism of the code'.[78] He then explained how it is man's duty to subvert the deductive logic of such linguistic systems, by seeking liberation in 'the superiority of speech over language, the signifier over the signified and, finally, in poetic lawfulness':

> The poet undertakes to join the vivid and primitive sources of meaning, because he knows – as one always has known – that 'language is that which, for us all, "dreams and creates" well before the individual himself is placed to dream and create'.[79]

Since the early days of Surrealism, it had ever been the free reign of automatic writing and its poetic, expressional value, which had been prized as a source of liberation. Whereas this had once been characterized in psychoanalytical terms, as an internal struggle against the fetters of the conscious mind, the unrelenting analytical gaze of structural anthropology had drawn this struggle more perceptibly into the frame of

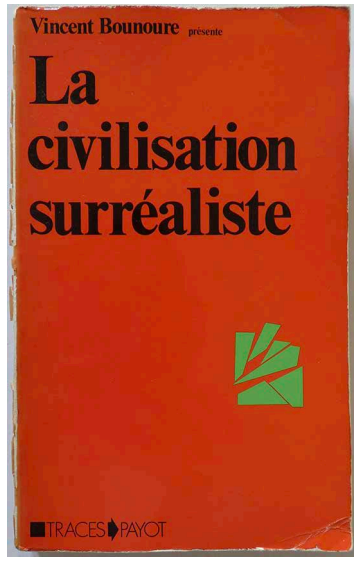


Figure 5.24 Cover to Vincent Bounoure's edited collection *La Civilisation surréaliste* (Paris: Payot, 1976). © Éditions Payot & Rivages. Photo: Author.

everyday life and society, pitting the poet against the various 'linguistic' systems that supposedly regulated their existence.

Across the essays in this section of *La Civilisation surréaliste*, there are diverse references to the individual legacy of Lévi-Strauss in promulgating structuralist discourse (an inadvertent response to Lévi-Strauss's comments on Surrealism from the 1960s). Upon reading Levi-Strauss's introduction to the volume *The Way of the Masks* (1975), published only a year earlier, the difference in approach is only too apparent:

> Looked upon from the semantic point of view, a myth acquires sense only after it is returned to its transformation set. Similarly, one type of mask, considered only from the plastic point of view, echoes other types whose lines and colours it transforms while it assumes its own individuality […] Each type of mask is linked to myths whose objective is to explain its legendary or supernatural origin and to lay the foundation for its role in ritual, in the economy, and in the society.[80]

In terms that blatantly clash with Parent's and Benoît's conception of the mask as a supernatural key to spiritual transgression, here Lévi-Strauss characterized the mask, in semiotic terms, as the symbolic residue of social structure.

In denying such a structuralist approach, Bounoure and Vratislav Effenberger sought to define an alternative manifestation of anthropology in terms that they could endorse. They gathered their thoughts on this point in an essay entitled 'L'Invention du monde', after Bédouin and Zimbacca's film of the same name:

> [T]he anthropological enterprise is yet developed following two contradictory directions; one aims at the descriptive inventory of a human world considered immovable allowing research of this common denominator where neopositivism, conventional rationalism and formalism of the academic type still endeavour to find the guarantee of their speculations. Those who advance in the other direction estimate to the contrary that any psychosocial phenomenon is not intelligible outside of the dynamic alignment of sequences, that the facts of history cannot be entirely explained by those which precede them, but much more by their future, and that historical analysis, in order to discover in every moment the orientation of the present, must urgently take into consideration that which has not happened, which envelops wills and desires.[81]

They describe this second, ahistorical approach, orientated towards an undisclosed future, as a 'revolutionary anthropology': a mode of anthropological inquiry pitted against the 'attractive Logos' of contemporary structural anthropology, which sought to circumscribe, stratify and systematize the world upon the model of 'natural history'.[82] This 'revolutionary' approach insisted on the necessity of dealing in possibilities rather than given facts, anticipating the future shape of civilization within the bounds of infinite possibility.[83] In these terms, and in light of the pervasive precedent of magic in historical global cultures, they explained that '[t]he anthropological aspect of Surrealism' is proactively committed to 'the recuperation and restoration of "lost powers" before the gradual narrowing of human possibility'.[84]

The implication of the discussion in *La Civilisation surréaliste* is that while surrealist literature can express the possibility of this recuperative anthropological project, its realization would be achieved concomitantly through a proactive effort to experiment with magical practices (which bore the potential to expand the horizons of 'human possibility' going into the future). This mission statement for this new era of French Surrealism seems to be heavily indebted to the careers of Parent and Benoît, whose masks, performances, emboîtages and reliquaries speak directly to such a faith in the revolutionary power of practical experimentation with magic.

In a somewhat understated essay entitled 'La relation cérémonielle', the comments of Czech surrealist Martin Stejskal implicitly corroborate the role that Parent's and Benoît's careers had played in shaping the 'revolutionary anthropology' of Bounoure's Surrealism. After defining the object as a 'magic mirror' that 'revivifies the will and imagination of the observer', Stejskal goes on to state:

> What we want is a ceremonial surrealist. We know his genealogy. We know his invariable destination: he is inseparable from the interpretation of the world and necessary for its transformation.[85]

Ever since their entry into the surrealist group in 1959, Benoît and Parent proved themselves to be such 'ceremonial surrealists'. The genealogy of which Stejskal spoke and the tradition of 'revolutionary anthropology' that Bounoure and Effenberger jointly outlined were theirs: as pioneers of an alternative anthropological perspective that fosters world-shaping, ritualised action. In 'La relation cérémonielle', Stejskal went

on to argue that '[t]he desire to transform the object of desire' is the basis of all magical ceremony.[86] In what is effectively a re-adaptation of Mauss's definition of magic as 'the art of changing', Stejskal anticipated how the object's practical application in the ceremonial *act* of magic could be conceived as a revolutionary process: by transforming the object into an event that represented a purposeful intervention in the social sphere; and by inducing a classificatory crisis that defied rational conception, in which 'the subject and object dissolve into a thousand glittering droplets'.[87]

Through a series of ambitious discursive twists, Bounoure and his fellow contributors attempted not only to reimagine the old scientific enemy of anthropology as a surrealist enterprise, but also to conflate the calculated and directed action of social revolution with the unspecified and mysterious action of magical ritual.

Conclusion: Surrealist lessons in the study of magic, as past and future craft

The trope of an 'ending in obscurity' is one that has received much service in historical accounts of the Surrealist Movement. Ever since the fierce post-war criticisms of the S. R. group and the Existentialists in the late 1940s, the movement's detractors have been all too keen to link its long-promised (and at that time recently accelerated) 'occultation' with its perceived or projected ending.[1] Such accounts overlook the surrealists' investment in *the occult* – properly defined, as etymologically derived from the Latin '*occultus*' – as prototype and model for its own discursive trajectory, social ecology and historical evolution: as based on the example of those *hidden* magical traditions, which are obscure but no less alive under the shade of their obscurity. And yet the trope has stuck.

In her 1995 study *Parcours politique des Surréalistes, 1919–1969*, for example, Reynaud-Paligot suggested that the surrealists' interest in magic was a major cause for the marginalization of the movement during the late 1960s.[2] In 2004, upon the occasion of the first major retrospective of Benoît and Parent's work, *Mimi Parent, Jean Benoît. Surréalistes* at the Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec, the critic Jean-Pierre Le Grand took this argument significantly further, by suggesting that Parent and Benoît had been leading figures within a nefarious trend of occultism that supposedly killed off the movement: 'Error and wandering are human, and seeing [in the works of Parent and Benoît] the cul-de-sac of tortured rituals where the movement was lost, we understand that its vitality quickly wilted.'[3] Such comments fall into a common habit of bungling the concept of magic with ideas of archaicism and regression, without seeking to historicise or properly acknowledge these magical traditions' clearly significant role in twentieth-century cultural discourse – however far that discourse may 'wander' from the positivist trappings of the century's prevailing scientific and intellectual currents. Over the course of this book we have examined a series of episodes that demonstrate, with corroboration from a growing pool of recent scholarship, that theories and practices of magic have been a driving force behind surrealist activities, as a territory of research that has been a vital ingredient in the movement's longevity. My discussion of these case studies has also contested the related charge, which posits that the surrealists' interest in magic and the occult was insincere, frivolous or strategically devised to ends of sensationalism. In each of the scenarios under analysis here, the invocation of magic and magical objects has responded to an urgent need or purpose, and its results were earnestly anticipated.

In Chapter 1, we considered alchemical conceptions of meteors, crystals and stones in the works of Breton, Dalí and Colquhoun, as conduits of psychological transformation that grew out of and complemented the group's researches into the unconscious. In Chapter 2, we examined how Luca channelled black magic as a means of exploding the oppressive ideological atmosphere of wartime Bucharest. In Chapter 3 we considered how Brauner researched and implemented systems of talismanic magic in order to protect himself while hiding from the Gestapo in Les Hautes-Alpes. In Chapter 4 we addressed how Péret and Breton approached myth and 'magical art' as a means of rejuvenating a bankrupt symbolic order in the post-war period leading up to the publications of *L'Art magique* (1957) and *Anthologie des mythes, légendes et contes populaires d'Amérique* (1959). And in Chapter 5 we saw how Parent and Benoît experimented with forms of ritual magic from non-Western societies in order to counter the increasingly one-dimensional and formulaic estimation of such cultures under the lens of academic anthropology.

These episodes correspond to various others from the history of the Surrealist Movement in which magic was similarly invoked in sincere anticipation of its effects. Other cases from this surrealist lineage and Surrealism-adjacent contexts that vouch for such belief in magic include Antonin Artaud's comments on magic in 'Man Against Destiny', *Artaud le Momo,* and *Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society*, Leonora Carrington's career-long self-identification with the figures of the witch and the enchantress, Jan Švankmajer's experiments with forms of magical fetishism, Maya Deren's participation in, and corresponding books and films on, Haitian Vodou ceremonies, and Jorge Camacho's extensive artistic exploration of alchemy and the Tarot, to name but a few examples.

Tangible magic: The artist as magician

The magician sculpts, models, paints, draws, embroiders, knits, weaves, engraves.
–Marcel Mauss & Henri Hubert, *A General Theory of Magic* (1902), trans. Robert Brain

Time and again in this study we have been confronted with the idea of the artist as magician. The connection was one that naturally manifested itself in the artistic personas of Colquhoun, Brauner, Parent and Benoît, for example, and the artist's dual identity as magician sat at the heart of Breton's and Legrand's discussion in *L'Art magique*. Theories of the artist's magical capabilities stretch back to the beginning of human history, and the reported magical faculties of artists and craftspeople throughout the world have long been acknowledged in the scholarship on magic. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Marcel Mauss's and Henri Hubert's description of the creative habits of the magician in their *General Theory of Magic*, quoted above, readily invites a reciprocal characterization of the activities of the artist, who duly enchants, bewitches, animates, curses, protects, beguiles and transforms.[4]

There have historically been diverging interpretations of how magic inheres in art. At its most fundamental level, the debate has revolved around vying estimations of magic as something that is readily contained and instrumentalised, on the one hand,

and as something that exists as an ineffable force, on the other. The first of these interpretations posits that magic is a technical practice that can be learned, mastered and controlled like a recipe. In this interpretation, the artist's unrivalled observational skills and finely tuned motor function render them supremely well-placed to enact such control. This is essentially the basis of the theory of mimetic or 'imitative' magic. As Frazer summarized in *The Golden Bough* (discussed in Chapters 2 and 3), belief in 'imitative' magic upholds that 'by imitating the desired effect you can produce it' (whether symbolically, in the guise of sigils, amulets and talismans, or viscerally via homunculi, such as in black magic).[5] The second of these interpretations, by contrast, posits that magic pertains to a special register of universal process that is ultimately beyond mastery. While its powers may be experienced, and its forces temporarily harnessed by those who have studied them most closely, magic – according to this interpretation – lies beyond comprehensive understanding. This is the basis of ideas of the supernatural: designating that which is truly and authentically beyond the mechanisms of the natural world and its reasoned, decipherable order.

The prehistoric era has been identified by various writers as the historical context that affords the most lucid and generous insights into the life of the artist-magician, and as such has become a test-case for examining the sociological significance of magic. In two analyses of prehistoric cave painting by writers from within the intellectual orbit of Surrealism, we rediscover these two contrasting interpretations of magic with fresh clarity.

In March 1912, the critic Jacques Rivière (who, as editor of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, later entered into a famous correspondence with Artaud in the early 1920s) published his essay 'Sur la tendance actuelle de la peinture' in the *Revue d'Europe et d'Amérique*, in which he used the example of prehistoric art to offset the aims – and, to his mind, errors – of Cubist painting. Rivière's discussion takes an archetypal example of prehistoric art as its point of departure: the parietal depiction of animals that were ubiquitous in the prehistoric world, from the stags and bison of Lascaux in France (Figure 6.1) to the pigs of Leang Tedongnge in Indonesia. In committing an animal that he had seen into paint, Rivière suggests, 'primitive man' sought 'to keep it before him in a certain way, he wanted to hold on to it across time, he wanted to establish continuity between its apparitions, to fill the intervals between them, to remedy their intermittence'.[6] However, this process of fixing the animal in an image was not merely an aide-mémoire, Rivière argues, but a means of 'bewitching' them:

> The scientists teach us that, in tracing the shapes of the animals, primitive man had the precise plan of 'bewitching' them. He had just lost them, he no longer had them at hand; thus he cast a spell over them and, however far they might go, they would not cease to belong to him. He would be their secret master. He contrived the cipher that gave him complete power over their disappearance. They could move about at their ease and believe themselves free in the immense forest; [yet] he, the clever sorcerer, governed them unbeknownst to themselves with the thing he had made and which did not move.[7]

In this equation, '[t]o draw is to seize hold of a prey'.[8] In the ensuing discussion, Rivière proceeds to suggest that, by capturing the spiritual-physiological '*essence*' of the animal



Figure 6.1 Photograph of the Replica of the Depiction of a Megaloceros in the Lascaux Caves at Lascaux II, after the original painting dated *c.* 17,000 years BP. Photo: Public domain.

(the animal 'as they are' in their general truth, rather than their particular appearance in the moment of a specific encounter), 'the primitive artisan sought to trace a figure that was the exact equivalent of its model[, …] faithful as the moving shadow'.[9] Not content to settle for a philosophical and technical critique of the latest tendencies in Cubist painting, Rivière's essay identifies the sorcerous origins of all art in this ancient impulse to assert possession or control over an aspect of the world via the pictorial conquest of reality.

In 1955, Georges Bataille published *La Peinture préhistorique: Lascaux ou la naissance de l'art*, his introduction to the art of the Lascaux caves. Published seven years after the caves' opening to the public in 1948 (news of their fortuitous discovery by eighteen-year-old Marcel Ravidat and his friends in 1940 was suppressed until after the end of the war), Bataille's study coincided with a wave of public interest in prehistoric culture, and was consequently eminently accessible in its tone and content, by Bataille's standards. Here again we encounter the figure of the cave dweller as artist-magician, but this time the artist's technical practice is inferior to, rather than in control of, the omnipotent magic that they perceive around them. Bataille reads in these prehistoric roots of magic a moment that stands for humanity's acknowledgement of its subordination to the 'sanctity' of a higher power.[10] He argues that the artistic

invocation of magic in the caves of Lascaux (as a means of influencing nature) was so fundamentally vague and hopeful that it does not properly qualify as a 'technique':

> When […] man has recourse to magic, he seeks a practical result; but this activity is practical only insofar as he admits his own powerlessness to get unaided what he is seeking. The magic-maker imputes omnipotence to the world in which technique is unavailing, useless, the world of inscrutable, indomitable forces that control chance.[11]

In the Lascaux artists' 'magic-makings', their arresting, often beautiful attempts to entreaty with the world around them, Bataille perceived a grasping and fumbling at influence that 'correspond[s] very poorly to our usual idea of means – of implements, tools'.[12] Instead, he detects an awe-filled, perhaps fearful, resignation to the caprice of a supreme power:

> Magic-making is part of the behaviour of a man who ascribes more might and truth to the realm of the divine end than to the drudging world of means: this man bows before a force which surpasses him infinitely, which is sovereign, so very foreign to work's human attitude that the animal may be used to express it.
>
> […] These figures expressed the moment during which man acknowledged the higher value of the *sanctity* belonging to the animal.[13]

And so in this text by Bataille there arises the notion that the magical influence attempted through art always, conversely, doubles as a sign of the artist's *lack* of influence in their own lives and bodies, and their subordination to forces that 'surpass' them 'infinitely'.

The manifestation and conception of magic in the art of the Surrealist Movement finds itself stretched between these two poles: of magic as a means of control, on the one hand, and of magic as a territory of 'inscrutable, indomitable forces', on the other. Owing to the group's particular recourse to automatism, in Surrealism there have similarly been vying interpretations of the artist that feed into this equation: the visionary, change-making artist of the romantic type (such as Breton envisaged where he wrote, '*Nothing can appear in artistic vision that does not elaborate itself and gradually become the phenomenon of the future*'), on the one hand, and the passive artist who receives inspiration and channels meaning from the beyond (the 'modest *recording instruments*' of Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism*), on the other.[14] On account of this dualistic definition of the role of the artist, we find both these hypotheses concerning the artist's connection to magic affirmed in the Surrealist Movement. In the context of this study, we have seen clear instances of the first type in discussions of the talismanic objects and images of Brauner, and in the rigorously researched and planned rituals of Benoît, in which the deliberated, calibrated invocation of magical rites designates them as conduits of control. Meanwhile, we have seen instances of the second type in the group's early negotiations of magic in the 1930s, when Breton posed the vague theoretical framework of the 'magical-circumstantial' as a catchall for the unnavigable, uncontrollable paradigms of 'chance' and 'supernatural' determinism.

A similar attitude persisted in the nihilistic black magic of Luca, and in the esoteric estimations of the object posed by Péret, Breton and Legrand, in which their conceptual reckonings of magic plainly conceded to the existence of a higher power pertaining to an 'inscrutable' logic.

On the subject of Lascaux, Breton and Legrand had their own piece to say in the pages of *L'Art magique*. After noting several hypotheses for the role and purpose of Palaeolithic art, including that at Lascaux, they remark:

> And here resurfaces the too simplistic idea that is held in common, about prehistoric or 'archaic' magic, by the proponents of otherwise diametrically opposed theses. Magic, for all these readers of palaeolithic documents or 'savage objects', is an activity of a utilitarian essence: to eat, to assure the continuity of the species, such would be the lone preoccupations of the 'primitive', who was conceived for greater security under the immutable aspect of a clan governed solely by the collective conscious (?) of Durkheim. This thick positivism, which predominates especially in France, scandalises not only the 'occultists' or non-scientific researchers: it discourages all those for whom poetry is not a vain distraction, nor philosophy an outdated method of understanding the 'mind' of human gestures and dreams.[15]

Diverging from both Rivière's theory of the originally 'utilitarian' basis of magic and Bataille's fatalistic prognosis of magic as recognition of human powerlessness, this restitution of poetry to the plane of magic recalls the fundamental premise of Breton's conception of 'poetic' analogy and its incantatory, spell-like work of *restructuring* the universe, as outlined in Chapter 4.

While the theoretical grounds for such 'poetic' magic were elaborated at length in that earlier chapter, further space should be made here to note the extent of its acceptance within and validation by the extended surrealist community, as a prevalent attitude towards the deterministic power of images. Within a certain pocket of the surrealist milieu, and a certain strand of the Surrealist Movement that spanned multiple generations, there was an unequivocal acceptance of the idea that artists and poets can become mages who, by (re)arranging the symbolic fabric of the universe, conjure new relationships, images and meanings that motivate, necessitate or condition the world's transformation. This inherent *magic of creation* was noted by Mauss and Hubert in their presentation of the magician as a *craftsperson*, who 'sculpts, models, paints, draws, embroiders, knits, weaves, engraves'.[16] And in the pseudo-art-historical pretensions of the surrealists, the concomitant idea of the tangible magic of images and objects was asserted time and again with an audacity that is striking when held against the backdrop of Art History's increasing entrenchment in the broadly positivistic methodology of Formalism in the early mid-twentieth century. It was such a belief in the magic of images that had led Bataille, in 1937 (and a distinct phase of his career), to see in Van Gogh's paintings of suns and sunflowers, as in his self-mutilation of 1888, the 'powerful magic' of a 'sorcerer', which caused plants to 'burst into flame' and the earth itself to 'ripple' under the influence of what Parkinson, paraphrasing Bataille, describes as a 'solar auto-sacrifice'.[17] It was such a belief in the magic of images that had led Artaud, a decade later in his post-scriptum to *Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society* (1947), to suggest that the recent exhibition of Van Gogh's works at the Musée

de l'Orangerie had caused, on certain evenings during its term, 'the air and the streets' to become 'as if liquid, gelatinous, unstable', like the paintings themselves; yielding a brief opening of the 'celestial vault' that somehow contained the future fate of the world within it.[18] And it was such a belief in the magic of images that had led Breton, just over a decade later still, to suggest in 1958 that the paintings of Yves Laloy were 'influenc[ing] the course of the universe' in the fashion of Navajo Sand Paintings, acting as 'propitiatory' cosmological compasses.[19]

In the final analysis, the objects, theories and practices of magic that are associated with the surrealists must be recognized in all their diversity: as projects that implicated and satisfied many different estimations of magical phenomena. The surrealist sorcery to which the book's title refers was ever various and inventive rather than singular and prescriptive. Yet while the essential character of surrealist sorcery is hard to pin down, the identity of the surrealist sorcerer/sorceress has been plain to see throughout the course of this study, wherein each of its case studies has attested to the surrealists' widely held belief that it was none other than the artist and the poet who bore the responsibilities of the magician, the alchemist and the shaman in the twentieth century: as the chief 'technician[s] of ecstasy', and veritable 'adventurer[s] of the beyond'.[20]

Beyond archaicism: Magic and ideation

The episodes examined here ultimately evince the surrealists' profound preoccupation with the past, and attest to the reality of the figure of the *surrealist historian*, operating with all the idiosyncrasy which that phrase implies. At every turn, this study has borne witness to these surrealist artists and writers fumbling at the edges of a precarious present and looking backwards – in the vein of what Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre identify as the fundamentally recuperative labour of Romanticism – in order to forge a future in the image of 'values and ideals drawn from [...] the precapitalist, premodern past'.[21] This romantic work of historical reclamation and reopening, according to my reading, does not signal 'regression', as some would have it, but rather Surrealism's eminently curious ease of reach into – its incredible fluency with, and inhabitation of – the past (a phenomenon that represents an authentic subject for further study in and of itself), and indeed, in more general terms, the intellectual and cultural vitality of the illusorily dead plane of the historical past.

As these figures' diverse invocations of alchemical, sorcerous, talismanic, mana-inspired and ceremonial forms of magic collectively attest, such authentic engagement with the ceaseless universal experiment of magic constituted an integral part of the surrealists' Rimbaldian-Marxist ambition to transform 'life' and the 'world' in the twentieth century.[22] Understanding magic's timeless, eternal, essential status and role in the course of human history in the terms that the surrealists did, and simultaneously acknowledging that their identification with that age-old discourse came not in spite of but precisely *because* of their own contemporary socio-historical circumstances, it is high time that characterisations of latter-day magic as an eccentric archaicism or siloed anachronism are updated and allowed to become anachronisms in themselves as magic's complex theoretical, ideological, philosophical and historiographical resonances continue to be identified and unravelled in cultural histories of the recent past.

Notes

Introduction

1 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 2001), 4.
2 Ibid., 13–16.
3 Ibid., 15.
4 André Breton, *Mad Love*, trans. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 16.
5 André Breton, 'Crisis of the Object', *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: Macdonald, 1972), 280.
6 Ibid., 275.
7 Connected to this, as Breton relayed in his concluding paragraph, there was also a 'crisis' in modern art in the form of a recent tendency towards 'abstractionism': a movement that he regarded as being totally disinterested in challenging the dominion of rationalism and the conditions of objective reality that he sought to combat through the object. Ibid., 280.
8 Ibid., 277–80.
9 Ibid., 277.
10 Ibid., 279.
11 Ibid., 279–80.
12 Ibid., 277.
13 Ibid., 280.
14 André Breton, 'Surrealist Manifesto', *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Helen R. Lane & Richard Seaver (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 3.
15 Krzysztof Fijalkowski, 'Photo Analysis C: Impossible Objects', *Surrealism and Photography in Czechoslovakia*, ed. Krzysztof Fijalkowski, Michael Richardson & Ian Walker (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 85.
16 Ironic in the sense of a frivolous insincerity: as objects that do not mean or do what they at first purport to; their apparent form or role, on closer inspection, being subtly undercut or distended.
17 Franklin Rosemont, for one, has described how the term 'surrealist' became 'a chic synonym for *bizarre*' in the late twentieth century, and he has directly linked this phenomenon to the public's erroneous association of Surrealism 'with the antics of one of its relatively minor practitioners, Salvador Dalí'. Franklin Rosemont, 'Foreword', *Max Ernst and Alchemy: A Magician in Search of Myth*, ed. M. E. Warlick (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), xiii–xiv.
18 Ingrid Pfeiffer, 'Surreal Objects Yesterday and Today', *Surreal Objects: Three-Dimensional Works from Dalí to Man Ray* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2011), 15.
19 Breton, 'Crisis of the Object', 279.
20 Wolfgang Paalen, untitled contribution to the *Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo* (Mexico City: Galeria de Arte Mexicano, 1940). It was in a similar

fashion that César Moro presented surrealist cultural resistance in his contribution to the same catalogue: 'Surrealism shows its awful weapons; words, a canvas, colors, smoke, glue.' César Moro, untitled contribution to the *Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo* (Mexico City: Galeria de Arte Mexicano, 1940).

21 Katherine Conley, 'Sleeping Gods in Surrealist Collections', *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures*, vol. 67 no. 1 (March 2013), 10.

22 Ibid., 10–11.

23 Ibid., 21, 6.

24 Louise Tythacott, *Surrealism and the Exotic* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 81–2; Gavin Parkinson, *Enchanted Ground: André Breton, Modernism and the Surrealist Appraisal of Fin-de-Siècle Painting* (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 59–70.

25 Mark Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of André Breton* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 595.

26 Ibid.

27 Susan Aberth, *Leonora Carrington: Surrealism, Alchemy and Art* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2004); Victoria Ferentinou, 'Ithell Colquhoun, Surrealism and the Occult', *Papers of Surrealism*, no. 9 (Summer 2011), 1–24; Victoria Clouston, *The Poetics of Hermeticism: André Breton's Shift towards the Occult in the War Years* (PhD diss., Oxford Brookes University, 2012); Victoria Clouston, *André Breton in Exile: The Poetics of 'Occultation', 1941–1947* (London: Routledge, 2017); Daniel Zamani, 'The Magician Triumphant: Occultism and Political Resistance in Victor Brauner's Le Surréaliste (1947)', *Abraxas*, Special Issue no. 1 (Summer 2013), 101–11.

28 Celia Rabinovitch, *Surrealism and the Sacred: Power, Eros, and the Occult in Modern Art* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002), xvii.

29 Tessel M. Bauduin, *Surrealism and the Occult: Occultism and Western Esotericism in the Work and Movement of André Breton* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 11–12.

30 Ibid., 191.

31 Ibid., 194.

32 Ibid., 193.

33 Susan Aberth, 'Modern Enchantress: Leonora Carrington, Surrealism, and Magic', *Surrealism and Magic: Enchanted Modernity* (Munich; London; New York: Prestel, 2022), 71–81; Victoria Ferentinou, 'Agents of Change: Women as Magical Beings', *Surrealism and Magic: Enchanted Modernity* (Munich; London; New York: Prestel, 2022), 165–9; Victoria Ferentinou, 'Sisters of the Moon: Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo', *Surrealism and Magic: Enchanted Modernity* (Munich; London; New York: Prestel, 2022), 215–19.

34 Gavin Parkinson, 'Toward L'Art magique: Surrealism and Magic in the 1950s', *Surrealism and Magic: Enchanted Modernity* (Munich; London; New York: Prestel, 2022), 83.

35 Clio Mitchell, *Secrets de l'art magique surréaliste: Magic and the Myth of the Artist-Magician in Surrealist Aesthetic Theory and Practice* (PhD diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, London, 1994), 32.

36 Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. James Strachey (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 92; Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Sorcerer and His Magic', *Structural Anthropology vol. 1*, trans. Claire Jacobson & Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (London: Penguin, 1977), 184.

37 Marcel Mauss & Henri Hubert, *A General Theory of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 23.
38 Ibid., 58.
39 Ibid., 112.
40 'Tout d'abord, peut-on parler d'*un* surréalisme?' Carole Reynaud-Paligot, *Parcours politique des Surréalistes, 1919–1969* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1995), 192.
41 Michael Richardson, *Surrealism and Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 5.
42 Ibid., 4–5.
43 Kenneth Cox, 'A Tower Struck by Lightning', *S* no. 5 (November 2022), 4–6.
44 Ibid., 3.
45 Ibid., 4.
46 Ibid., 7.
47 Ibid., 5.
48 Ibid., 8.
49 Novalis, 'Logological Fragments I', *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 59.
50 Alexander Nagel & Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2010), 12–13.
51 See chapter 3 page 100.
52 Jorge Luis Borges, 'A New Refutation of Time', in *Labyrinths*, ed. Donald A. Yates & James E. Irby (London: Penguin, 2000), 259.
53 Ibid., 257.
54 The section in question reads as follows: 'Let us consider a life in whose course there is an abundance of repetitions: mine, for example. I never pass in front of the Recoleta without remembering that my father, my grandparents and great-grandparents are buried there, just as I shall be some day; then I remember that I have remembered the same thing an untold number of times already; I cannot walk through the suburbs in the solitude of the night without thinking that the night pleases us because it suppresses idle details, just as our memory does; I cannot lament the loss of a love or a friendship without meditating that one loses only what one never really had […]. These tautologies (and others I leave in silence) make up my entire life. Of course, they are repeated imprecisely; there are differences of emphasis, temperature, light and general physiological condition. I suspect, however, that the number of circumstantial variants is not infinite: we can postulate, in the mind of an individual (or of two individuals who do not know each other but in whom the same process works), two identical moments. Once this identity is postulated, one may ask: Are not these identical moments the same? Is not one single repeated term sufficient to break down and confuse the series of time? Do not the fervent readers who surrender themselves to Shakespeare become, literally, Shakespeare?' Ibid., 258–9.

Chapter 1

1 André Breton, 'Second Manifesto of Surrealism', *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Helen R. Lane & Richard Seaver (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 178.
2 Ibid., 174.
3 Ibid., 173–5.
4 Ibid., 173. As summarized by Joseph Henderson and Dyane Sherwood, the *Emerald Tablet* is '[p]robaly the oldest and certainly one of the most famous alchemical

documents […] believed to have been written originally in Greek but to have come through Syria into the Arab world by about 800 CE. Its legendary author, Hermes Trismegistos, was often considered to be the father of alchemy. Many quotations in alchemical texts are attributed to him, although they undoubtedly were written much later than his alleged date of about 3400 BCE.' Joseph L. Henderson & Dyane N. Sherwood, *Transformation of the Psyche: The Symbolic Alchemy of the Splendor Solis* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), 10.

5 Bauduin, 104.
6 Ibid., 105.
7 Ibid., 102.
8 Will Atkin, 'Endless Metamorphosis: Surrealism and Alchemy', *Surrealism and Magic: Enchanted Modernity*, ed. Gražina Subelytė & Daniel Zamani (Munich; London; New York: Prestel, 2022), 137.
9 Michael Richardson, *Surrealism and Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 133.
10 Guy Girard, 'Hermeticism and the Magical Tradition', *Surrealism: Key Concepts*, ed. Krzysztof Fijalkowski & Michael Richardson (London: Routledge, 2016), 37–8.
11 André Breton, 'Gaspard de la Nuit by Aloysius Bertrand', *The Lost Steps*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 59.
12 Ibid.
13 Breton, 'Second Manifesto', 174–5.
14 Étienne-François Villain, *Histoire critique de Nicolas Flamel et de Pernelle sa femme* (Paris: Chez Desprez, 1761); T. Calderon, *Étude sur Nicolas Flamel* (Nîmes: F. Chastanier, 1888); Louis Menard, *Hermes Trismégiste* (Paris: Perrin, 1910). See Julien Gracq et al., *André Breton: 42 rue Fontaine, Livre II* (Paris: CalmelsCohen, 2003), 12, 209, 216.
15 Ibid., 206.
16 Bauduin, 108.
17 *André Breton: 42, rue Fontaine, Livre II*, 205.
18 Ibid., 211.
19 Michel Leiris, 'A propos du "Musée des sorciers"' (1929), *Documents* no. 2, in Georges Bataille ed., *Documents N° 1 à 7, 1929 et N° 1 à 8, 1930, en 2 volumes* (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1991), 112.
20 Bauduin, 106.
21 'Ces philosophes et ces savants modernes, si soucieux de certitude, si étrangers aux conjectures, si peu ambitieux, et ne cherchant à satisfaire qu'une si piètre curiosité, ont tout réduit à leur mesure. Ils feignent de ne voir dans l'alchimistes que de vulgaires *souffleurs*, guidés par une banale cupidité ou perdus dans de pauvres recherches qu'ils n'avaient ni l'intelligence, ni les moyens de réussir.' Michel Leiris, 'La Monade hieroglyphique', *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 9–10 (October 1927), 62.
22 '[…] la magie a toujours eu une influence sur la philosophie et […] il est possible, entre autres choses, de rattacher Hegel et les Philosophes de Nature allemands à Jacob Bœhme, à paracelse et aux mystiques alexandrins.' Ibid.
23 In his foreword to Patrick Lepetit's *The Esoteric Secrets of Surrealism*, Bernard Roger describes Breton meeting the 'disciple' of Fulcanelli, Eugène Canseliet, in the café La Promenade de Venus many years later. Bernard Roger, 'Foreword', in Patrick Lepetit, *The Esoteric Secrets of Surrealism: Origins, Magic, and Secret Societies*, trans. Jon E. Graham (Rochester, VT; Toronto: Inner Traditions, 2014), xi.
24 André Breton, 'Fronton-Virage' (1948), *Free Rein*, trans. Michel Parmentier & Jacqueline d'Amboise (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 191.
25 Bauduin, 186.

26 'Tel est le tableau légendaire de l'alchimiste et de son laboratoire. Vision fantastique, dépourvue de vérité, sortie de l'imagination populaire et reproduite sur les vieux almanachs, trésors du colportage. Souffleurs, magistes, sorciers, astrologues, nécromants? – Anathème et malédiction!' – Fulcanelli, *Les Demeures philosophales et le symbolisme hermétique dans ses rapports avec l'art sacré et l'ésotérisme du grand oeuvre, vol. I* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1965), 76–9.

27 In reference to Abraham the Jew, Breton wrote: 'Is the admirable fourteenth century any less great as regards human hope (and, of course, human despair) because a man of [Nicolas] Flamel's genius received from a mysterious power the manuscript, which already existed, of Abraham the Jew, or because the secrets of Hermes [Trismegistus] had not been completely lost? I do not believe so for one minute …' Breton, 'Second Manifesto', 173–4. He also makes a note here regarding a certain strange coincidence between his own interest in alchemy and that of Robert Desnos, who was publishing in *Documents* on 'Le Mystère d'Abraham Juif' that same year, where he insists that their respective interests were derived totally independently of one another. For Fulcanelli's discussion of 'Hermès Trismégiste' and the 'Table d'Emeraude' see Fulcanelli, *Les Demeures philosophales, vol. I*, 199, and Fulcanelli, *Les Demeures philosophales, vol. II*, 41. For his discussion of Flamel's 'Figures hieroglyphiques', see Fulcanelli, *Les Demeures philosophales, vol. I*, 174–5. For his references to 'Abraham le Juif', see Fulcanelli, *Les Demeures philosophales, vol. I*, 316, and Fulcanelli, *Les Demeures philosophales, vol. II*, 43.

28 Bauduin, 111.

29 E. L. T. Mesens, *Alphabet sourd aveugle* (Brussels: Éditions Nicolas Flamel, 1933).

30 Breton, 'Second Manifesto', 174–5.

31 Ibid., 175.

32 Ibid.

33 M. E. Warlick, 'Magic, Alchemy and Surrealist Objects', *Magical Objects: Things and Beyond*, ed. Elmar Schenkel & Stefan Welz (Berlin; Madison, WI: Galda & Wilch, Verlag, 2007), 2. Warlick's essay 'Magic, Alchemy and Surrealist Objects' poses the relationship between Surrealism and alchemy in somewhat limited terms, claiming surrealist representations of male-female union and egg motifs as direct proof of alchemy being in play. The pertinence of crystals to Surrealism's conception of alchemy – a point to be expanded on later in this chapter – is touched upon by Warlick here, but left unexplained.

34 Michel Carrouges, *André Breton and the Basic Concepts of Surrealism*, trans. Maura Prendergast (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1974), 58.

35 Carl Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 229–32. In some accounts these four stages are accompanied by another known as '*viriditas*', or '*cauda pavonis*' (literally 'peacock's tail', a name that alludes to its technicolour manifestation). Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy*, trans. Stephen Corrin (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 149.

36 Philip Carr-Gromm et al., *The Book of English Magic* (London: Hodder, 2014), 220–30.

37 Christian Rosenkreutz, *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1991), 83–96.

38 Elias Ashmole, 'Prolegomena', *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp, 1967), 324. With thanks to Amanda Karlsson for the Latin translation.

39 Alexander Roob, *Alchemy and Mysticism: The Hermetic Museum*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Köln: Taschen, 2015), 14.
40 Eliphas Lévi, *Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual*, trans. Arthur Edward Waite (London: Rider & Son Ltd., 1923), 205.
41 Ibid.
42 Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 267.
43 Gavin Parkinson, *The Duchamp Book* (London: Tate, 2008), 89–90.
44 Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 243.
45 Henderson & Sherwood, 4. Digging slightly deeper, a measure of the judgement of the early-twentieth-century scientific community on this matter can be found in Fulcanelli's *Les Demeures philsophales*, where he cites several responses to two surveys which featured in the September 1912 edition of *La Revue* and in the February 1922 edition of *Je sais tout*, respectively, which posed the following questions: 'Dans l'état actuel de la science, la transmutation métallique est-elle possible ou réalisable; peut-elle être considérée même comme réalisée du fait de nos connaissances?'; and 'La fabrication synthétique de l'or est-elle possible?'. With responses from the mathematician Henri Poincaré and the physicist Marie Curie, amongst various others, Fulcanelli found the responses to prove on balance that '[n]os savants acceptant la *possibilité théorique* de la transmutation; ils refusent de croire à sa *réalité matérielle*. Ils nient après avoir affirmé.' – Fulcanelli, *Les Demeures philsophales*, *vol. I*, 93–5. The respondents were largely accepting of the possibility for the transmutation of metals into gold at an atomic level, as being revealed by modern particle physics, but not in bulk form as alchemical tradition sometimes presented as being possible. Parkinson has demonstrated that by the end of the 1930s there was a popular stereotype of modern particle physics as the culmination of the alchemists' age-old ambition to transmute elements. Gavin Parkinson, *Surrealism, Art and Modern Science: Relativity, Quantum Mechanics, Epistemology* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 113, 241. Alexander Roob has noted the very real possibility of producing gold at the atomic level in the twenty-first century with a linear accelerator, such as that owned by the Society for Heavy Ion Research in Darmstadt: 'Here, electrically charged atomic nuclei, for example, of tin, with the atomic number 50, are accelerated to a speed ten per cent of the speed of light. Only then is the repulsive power of other atomic nuclei such as copper, with the atomic number 29, overcome, making fusion possible. The result would be a nucleus with 79 protons – gold.' Roob, 33.
46 Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 242.
47 Ibid., 228, 289.
48 Henderson & Sherwood, 1.
49 Theodore Ziolkowski writes that 'during the 1920s, alchemy was resurrected as a subject worthy of broad cultural consideration: one that lent itself to the interpretation of literature as well as architecture and art and one that could also be seen in connection with the most advanced ideas in psychology and science.' Theodore Ziolkowski, *The Alchemist in Literature: From Dante to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 154.
50 Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 283.
51 Ibid., 267.
52 Hutin's connection to the artistic case studies of this chapter is less tangential than it appears, as a figure who went on to become close friends with Colquhoun, and who discussed his personal conception of alchemy with her at great length. It was

Hutin who introduced Colquhoun to the occult scholar, writer and editor Robert Amadou – who is discussed in the Introduction and in various notes to this volume. Over the 1970s and 1980s, Colquhoun remained in correspondence with Amadou after he had contacted her seeking to obtain permissions to publish a translation of Colquhoun's cousin Edward John Langston Garstin's book, *Theurgy; or, the Hermetic Practice: A Treatise on Spiritual Alchemy*, having recognised Colquhoun as the 'familial and spiritual heir' to that project. Robert Amadou, 'Letter to Ithell Colquhoun dated 19th August 1973', The Ithell Colquhoun Collection, Tate Archive, File 929/1/18.

53 'C'est ainsi que l'étude des représentations picturales utilisées par les adeptes pour systématiser leurs intuitions ouvre de vastes perspectives sur la Surréalité […] "chaque artiste doit reprendre seul, a écrit André Breton, la poursuite de la Toison d'or". Et n'y a-t-il pas plus qu'une coïncidence dans le fait que le nom d' "artistes" ait été l'une des expressions désignant les alchimistes …?' Serge Hutin, 'L'Art et l'alchimie', *Revue Métapsychique,* no. 27 (January-February, 1954), 57–8. Here Hutin is citing Breton's comments from his 1942 'Prolégomènes à un troisième manifeste ou non'. See André Breton, 'Prolegomena to a Third Manifesto of Surrealism or Else', *André Breton: What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, ed. Franklin Rosemont, trans. John Ashbery et al. (London: Pluto Press, 1978), 213.

54 René Alleau, 'Psychanalyse et alchimie', *Médium: Communication Surréaliste*, no. 3 (May, 1954), 43.

55 'cette vie de relation ne représente qu'autant de limites de notre horizon et de notre condition'. Ibid., 44.

56 'De ce "lieu" rayonnant et non pas de "l'inconscient collectif" emanent les symboles des Adeptes et les enseignements des Maîtres, tout autant que les lumières de l'Art et les flames de la Nature'. Ibid.

57 Indeed, the selective points at which Freud's own work comes palpably close to a notion of collective unconscious – such as in his 1919 essay 'The Uncanny', where he obliquely implies that there have been certain standard triggers for the sensation of the uncanny harking back to the dawn of human existence – are left noticeably untouched by surrealist theory.

58 Sigmund Freud, 'Fetishism' (1927), *The Penguin Freud Library vol. 7: On Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1991), 352.

59 For discussion of this image from Dalí's childhood and his portrayal of this event in his writings, see: Margaret Iversen, *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 45. Dalí referenced this image of the glass of milk in his volume of poetry, *L'Amour et la mémoire* (1931).

60 Haim Finkelstein, *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing, 1927–1942: The Metamorphoses of Narcissus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 165.

61 Finkelstein has characterized this as the essential difference between Dalí's and Breton's early conceptions of the surrealist object, where he has explained: '[a]n object such as the speculative "objet-fantôme" would be constructed in Breton's mind in an automatic process, revealing its latent sexual content only after the fact. In opposition to dream and automatism, Dalí advocates the active soliciting of the mind to discharge the image hidden in the unconscious by means of a conscious incorporation of sexual content.' Haim Finkelstein, 'The Incarnation of Desire', *RES: Anthropolgy and Aesthetics,* no. 23 (Spring 1988), 122. Dawn Ades has summarized this difference in approach in similar terms, where she has

described how: 'Breton […] expressed doubts about the effectiveness of Dalí's type of symbolically functioning objects in *Les Vases communicants* in 1932; while, he says, he has no reservations about their explosive value and their "beauty", he finds them less effective, narrower in the possible range of interpretations, than objects less systematically determined. […] Breton is here voicing the same doubts Freud was later to express to Dalí himself, regarding the way in which Dalí does the interpretation himself of the latent content of his work and incorporates it.' Dawn Ades, *Dalí and Surrealism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1982), 154–6.

62 'Telle est la verité analogique que l'alchimie s'est efforcée de pratiquer, et telle est aussi l'idée hermétique qu'il nous a paru nécessaire de mettre tout d'abord en relief.' Fulcanelli, *Les Demeures philosophales, vol. I*, 100.

63 André Breton, *The Communicating Vessels*, trans. Mary Anne Caws (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 13.

64 Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 35.

65 Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 81.

66 Ibid., 81–2.

67 Ibid., 83.

68 Steven Harris, *Surrealist Art and Thought in the 1930s: Art, Politics, and the Psyche* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 16.

69 *André Breton: 42, rue Fontaine, Livre II*, 187–9.

70 Harris, 262.

71 Baugh considers how this text was central to the French reception of Hegel in the twentieth century. Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Post-modernism* (New York; London: Routledge, 2003), 2.

72 In *Nadja* Breton included a footnote directing the reader to Hegel. André Breton, *Nadja*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 159. Hegel is discussed in more detail in the 'Second Manifesto', where Breton's stance on the Hegelian dialectic is addressed in a passage that is analysed in the concluding section of this chapter. For a summary of Breton's 'Second Manifesto' references to Hegel, see Jean-Michel Rabaté, 'Breton's Post-Hegelian Modernism', *Extreme Beauty: Aesthetics, Politics, Death*, ed. James Swearing & Joanne Cutting-Grey (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2003), 25.

73 Breton, 'Second Manifesto', 123–4.

74 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2004), 274. Jean-Michel Rabaté has noted that Breton's discussion of the 'figure' in 'La Beauté sera convulsive' was derived from Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*. See Rabaté, 25. Many years later, in a 1947 essay on the Romanian surrealist painter Jacques Hérold, Breton also quoted Hegel's discussion of 'magnetism' from his *Philosophy of Nature*. See André Breton, 'Jacques Hérold', *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: Macdonald, 1972), 205; Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 160–78.

75 Paul F. Cowlan, *Tabula Smaragdina: The Words of the Secret Things of Hermes Trismegistus, An Introduction to the Emerald Tablet* (Kenton: Alembic, 2008), 4.

76 Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski conduct a rigorous analysis of this passage from the 'Second Manifesto' in their essay 'The Supreme Point'. Here they interpret Breton's notion of the 'point' in terms of an almost inaccessible state of mind – the 'supreme point' – that is occasionally revealed and opened up in the act of perceiving the inarticulable void between concepts, and which ultimately promises to allay such conceptual categories altogether and to collapse the fabric of reality into a liberating 'universal radiance'. Michael Richardson & Krzysztof Fijalkowski,

'The Supreme Point', *Surrealism: Key Concepts,* ed. Michael Richardson & Krzysztof Fijalkowski (London: Routledge, 2016), 248–54.

77 Baugh makes the insightful observation on this point that 'surrealist negation is not truly "dialectical"' on account of the fact that its 'refusal to place any limits on negation means that surrealist negation is not regulated by a totality that governs negations as component "moments" of a progressively developing whole'. He suggests instead that Surrealism gave rise to what Hegel would have called a 'spurious infinite'. Baugh, p. 55. Nevertheless, here I refer to the surrealists' pushing and pulling of concepts around this 'spurious infinite' as 'surrealist dialectics'. Hegel was ever-present in surrealist discourse during this period, as evidenced by the Hegel 'reader' offered by a certain N. Lénine in *Le Surréalisme au service de la revolution* in the same issue as Dalí's 'Objets psycho- atmosphériques-anamorphiques'. – N. Lénine, 'En lisant Hegel', *Le Surréalisme au service de la revolution*, no. 6 (May 1933).

78 Harris, 105.

79 Magee explains the thesis of his book as follows: 'Hegel was actively interested in Hermeticism, he was influenced by its exponents from boyhood on, and he allied himself with Hermetic movements and thinkers throughout his life. I do not argue merely that we *can* understand Hegel as a Hermetic thinker; just as we can understand him as a German or a Swabian or an idealist thinker. Instead, I argue that we *must* understand Hegel as a Hermetic thinker; if we are to truly understand him at all.' Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1–2.

80 Ibid., 191.

81 Ibid., 212.

82 Ibid., 200.

83 Steven Harris provided an unrivalled analysis of the surrealists' formulation of dialectical materialism in his book *Surrealist Art and Thought in the 1930s* (2004). Here, he considers how the theoretical framework of dialectical materialism was reconciled with the surrealist object in terms that would render the object a practical tool for revolutionary action. He pays close attention to the manner in which dialectical materialism is set forth in Breton's book *The Communicating Vessels* (1932), where: '[w]ithin that materialist framework, there is an attempt to understand the differential relations between material and mental life through the scientific metaphor of the communicating vessels, in which gas or liquid passes between two or more vessels joined by a tube'. He goes on to describe how: 'the surrealist object was also central to this project; as a material intervention into the real from the place of desire, as the embodiment of a perverse poetry, the object was a form of action that would also be a mode of thought, in this way incorporating the two spheres that the surrealists were attempting to keep in play'. In terms that Harris concedes were 'not necessarily *identical* to dialectical materialism … [but] nevertheless complementary to it', the surrealist object was characterized by Breton as an intercessor between action and thought, and between the material world and society. Harris, 85, 93, 89.

84 Magee, 206.

85 'Que celui de mes lecteurs à la tête lourde et marconisée qui n'est pas parvenu à concevoir intégralement "l'essentielle originalité" des objets surréalistes à fonctionnement symbolique (originalité faite de l'absence absolue des vertus familières "plastico-formelles") renounce, cette fois encore, à me suivre, dans l'itinéraire explicatif – trop incommode, trop déprimant pour lui – du "processus

dialectique" de l'"objet-surréaliste"'. Salvador Dalí, 'Objets psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques', *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, no. 5 (May 1933), 45.

86 'techniciens'. Ibid., 46.

87 'Ce morceau informe de fer fondu, d'un poids et d'un volume quelconque sera l'objet type *"psychoatmosphérique-anamorphique"*'. Ibid., 47. See Rosalind Krauss, 'Corpus delicti', *October*, vol. 33 (summer 1985), 32–3.

88 'l'informe' – Ibid., 46. Dalí's selective use of the term 'formless' here immediately evokes Bataille's Dictionary entry for that term in *Documents*, no. 7, from December 1929. Certainly, the conflated airs of inscrutability and baseness which Bataille projects for the term seem to have a bearing upon Dalí's application of it for his psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic object: as an entity which is at once formally amorphous, yet also technically immaterial, and ultimately intellectually unwieldy.

89 'L'humain connaisseur du phénomène spirituel et psychologique inclus dans l'informe morceau de fer type de l'"objet psycho-atmosphérique-anamorphique" ne pourra, j'en suis sûr, s'empêcher de ressentir violemment tout le réel lyrisme, toute la réelle "perversité objective" de ce réel et véritable météore de l'imagination.' Dalí, 'Objets psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques', 47.

90 Eliade, 19.

91 Haim Finkelstein, *Surrealism and the Crisis of the Object* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979), 89.

92 Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 288.

93 '[…] dont la vitesse psychique – comme nous allons le voir – dépasse les accélérations les plus einsteiniennes des nouvelles physiques imaginatives.' Dalí, 'Objets psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques', 45.

94 David Lomas has noted that such a comparison between Dalí's paintings and anamorphic images was made in *Documents*, no. 4, published in September 1929, where two of his paintings were presented next to an anamorphic image of St Anthony of Padua and the infant Jesus. Lomas also suggests that Dalí was acutely aware of the skull example from Holbein's *Ambassadors* portrait. David Lomas, *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2000), 161.

95 Eliade, 50–2.

96 Ibid., 51.

97 Henderson & Sherwood, 5.

98 Ziolkowski, 4–5. Both Ziolkowski's and Henderson & Sherwood's discussions of this theme follow Mircea Eliade's seminal publication *The Forge and the Crucible*, also cited here, which provides a denser analysis of this mineralogical dimension of alchemy.

99 Alexandra Lembert & Elmar Shenkel, 'Preface', *The Golden Egg: Alchemy in Art and Literature*, ed. Alexandra Lembert & Elmar Shenkel (Berlin; Cambridge, MA: Galda & Wilch Verlag, 2002), 3.

100 Jan Švankmajer, *Touching and Imagining*, trans. Stanley Dalby (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 2.

101 Ibid., 28.

102 Švankmajer quotes from Dalí's *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (1941): 'I have invented and worked out to the last details a tactile cinema, whereby a spectator could, via a completely simple mechanism, in a synchronised way, touch everything that he sees.' Ibid., 103.

103 Dalí, 'Objets psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques', 47.
104 Magee, 191.
105 '[…] l'architecture tout idéale du Modern Styles qui incarnerait la plus tangible et délirante aspiration d'hyper-matérialisme.' Salvador Dalí, 'De la beauté terrifiante et comestible de l'architecture modern style', *Minotaure*, no. 3–4 (1933), 72.
106 Dalí's essay ultimately suggested a relatively crude dialectical scaffold, configured as follows: (1) desire fixates upon elements of the material world, and there is an inherent obstacle to desire's trajectory in the form of the fundamental separation between thinking subject and material object; (2) Art Nouveau architecture resembles cakes and tarts in its plump and bulging forms, and becomes more desirous on account of the fact that it appears edible, offering a direct, visceral-sensual point of contact with the subject; (3) desire must therefore be naturally orientated towards the dissolution of the material threshold between subject and object through the act of eating.
107 In Dalí's mind, these theoretical models were perhaps not as distinct as they initially seem. Clio Mitchell has raised Dalí's vague comments on the topic of alchemy from 1976, where he equated alchemy to the art of cooking: 'moi je fais de l'alchimie sans savoir comment. C'est une question de cuisine.' Salvador Dalí, 'Le Délire alchimique de Dalí', *Galerie Jardin des Arts*, no. 164 (December 1976), 57–9; Mitchell, 232.
108 'J'ai lu, naturellement, votre article pour Minotaure et l'ai, comme d'ordinaire, jugé parfait (magnifiquement).' André Breton, 'Letter to Salvador Dalí dated "Paris le 22 avril 1934"', Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (Ref: GMA A42/1/GKA008).
109 'J'ai écrit pour Minotaure un long article intitulé: "la beauté sera convulsive" (ce n'est pas pour vous contredire, car j'accepte en outre de grand cœur qu'elle soit comestible aussi, vous en jugerez par mes cristaux et madrépores). Je suis assez satisfait de ce petit manifeste.' Ibid. The contradiction Breton refers to here has to do with the closing line of Dalí's essay, where he quoted from Breton's book *Nadja*: 'Breton has said: "beauty will be convulsive or it will not be". The new surrealist age of the "cannibalism of objects" equally justifies this conclusion: beauty will be edible or it will not be.' ('Breton a dit: "La beauté sera convulsive ou ne sera pas". Le nouvel âge surréaliste du "cannibalisme des objets" justifie également cette conclusion: La beauté sera comestible our ne sera pas.') Dalí, 'De la beauté terrifiante et comestible', 76. In the midst of this in-joke about the contested fate of beauty in Breton's letter to Dalí, it is surprising that Breton finds his model compatible with Dalí's all-consuming 'cannibalism'. Whilst the crystals and corals that Breton discusses in 'La Beauté sera convulsive' (subsequently published in *Minotaure*, no. 5, in 1934) may have shared some aesthetic characteristics with the 'nutritious' organic forms of Art Nouveau architecture, the idea of consumption has no place whatsoever in Breton's essay. The only common ground between this and Dali's writing, I would suggest, lies in their shared application of dialectical thought to rupture the objectivity of the material world.
110 This episode was later relayed in *Mad Love* (1937), where his encounters with the waitress are dated to the 10th and 20th of April, 1934. Breton, *Mad Love*, 16–19.
111 I have written on the material within this section in slightly different terms, taking a broader chronological overview, in an article from 2016. See Will Atkin, 'Crystalline Thought: Alchemy and "Visionary Mineralogy" in the Writings of André Breton', *Immediations: The Courtauld Institute of Art Journal of Postgraduate Research*, vol. 4 no. 1 (December 2016), 50–72.

112 I quote from the English version of 'La Beauté sera convulsive' provided in Mary Ann Caws's translation of *L'Amour fou*, where the essay was republished in 1937. Breton, *Mad Love*, 11.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 In her translation, Caws fluctuates between the terms 'magic-circumstantial' and 'circumstantial-magical' in place of the French 'magique-circonstancielle'. Here I opt for the term 'magical-circumstantial' as a compromise. Ibid., 19.
116 Ibid., 10.
117 André Breton, *Poems of André Breton: A Bilingual Anthology*, ed. Jean-Pierre Cauvin & Mary Ann Caws (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1982), xxii, 99.
118 Rabaté, 25.
119 Breton, *Mad Love*, 11.
120 Within 'La Beauté sera convulsive' Breton goes on to identify this spontaneous creative force in coral, upon 'the treasure bridge of the Australian "Great Barrier Reef"', but the crystal remains the central point of reference for the essay, and constitutes the originating point of Breton's case of subject-object homology.
121 Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature,* 176.
122 'If the magnet is chopped in two, each piece is again a whole magnet; the north pole immediately arises once more in the broken part. […] If anyone thinks that thought is not present in Nature, he can be shown it here in magnetism.' Ibid., 165. In 1947, in an essay on the Romanian surrealist painter Jacques Hérold, Breton would later quote from Hegel's discussion of the 'Physics of Total Individuality' in his *Philosophy of Nature*, where he had described how 'magnetism achieves its gratification in the crystal despite the fact that it is no longer contained within it as magnetism'. Breton, 'Hérold', 205; Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature,* 160–78.
123 Alluding to the collapsed subject-object duality of alchemy, Henderson & Sherwood write that '[historically] the art of alchemy was most often what today we might categorize as both external and internal, embodied and spiritual, practical and abstract. The language of alchemy is one that combines sensory observations of materials and processes with a language for the phenomenology of inner experience. The concrete and the symbolic are interfused, eluding clear distinction.' Henderson & Sherwood, 7.
124 Carrouges, 58.
125 Breton, 'Crisis of the Object', 279.
126 Eliade, 119.
127 Ibid., 160.
128 Mary Ann Caws, 'Introduction: Linkings and Reflections', in André Breton, *The Communicating Vessels*, trans. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), xi.
129 Breton, *Mad Love*, 24.
130 Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 77–119, 154–72.
131 André Breton, 'Marvellous versus Mystery', *Free Rein*, trans. Michel Parmentier & Jacqueline d'Amboise (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 1.
132 Ibid.
133 Richard Shillitoe, 'Foreword', *The Goose of Hermogenes* (London; Chicago: Peter Owen, 2018), 14.

134 Ibid., 15.
135 Ibid., 13–14.
136 Ibid., 19–20.
137 Ibid., 16.
138 Ithell Colquhoun, *The Goose of Hermogenes* (London; Chicago: Peter Owen, 2018), 49.
139 Ibid., 109.
140 Ibid., 87.
141 Ibid., 89.
142 Ithell Colquhoun, 'The Emerald Tablet of Thrice Great Hermes', The Ithell Colquhoun Collection, Tate Archive, File 929/5/35/3.
143 Colquhoun's relation to E. J. Langston Garstin is detailed in Ithell Colquhoun, 'Letter to Robert Amadou, dated 11th September 1973', The Ithell Colquhoun Collection, Tate Archive, File 929/1/20.
144 Ithell Colquhoun, 'The Mantic Stain', *Enquiry* issue 1 (1949).
145 Ibid.
146 Colquhoun, *Goose of Hermogenes*, 96.
147 Eliade, 160.

Chapter 2

1 Luca met Breton at the Gradiva Gallery in 1938. As Luca himself explained, their relationship was not particularly close, and rested upon 'an exchange of letters and our mutual friendship with Victor Brauner'. Ghérasim Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, trans. Krzysztof Fijalkowski (Prague: Twisted Spoon Press, 2008), 44.
2 Luca was arrested for being Jewish, and was only released on account of his status as a war orphan (his father had died during the First World War). Petre Răileanu, *Gherasim Luca* (Paris: Oxus, 2004), 96.
3 Incidentally, the Romanian historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, whose writings on alchemy were cited in Chapter 1, openly voiced his support for the Iron Guard around this time; statements that earned him significant criticism during his lifetime.
4 'le désespoir a mis mes nerfs dans un état insupportable.' Ghérasim Luca, in Camille Morando & Sylvie Patry eds., *Victor Brauner: écrits et correspondances 1938–1949* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2005), 217; 'Ton si long silence et les bruits qui courent ici concernant les déportations, les massacres au temps de l'occupation, m'ont mis dans un état de la plus noire inquiétude …'. Ibid., 216.
5 Allan Graubard has commented that '[a]s a Jew and a surrealist, the strikes against [Luca] were immanent. If caught, he would have faced execution or virtual enslavement in a work gang or a concentration camp.' Allan Graubard, 'Reading Luca, Reading Me', *Hyperion: On the Future of Aesthetics*, vol. VII no. 3 (Autumn, 2013), 46.
6 John Galbraith Simmons, 'Circumstances of Invention: Notes on Some Early Texts', *Hyperion: On the Future of Aesthetics*, vol. VII no. 3 (Autumn, 2013), 103.
7 Luca's wartime writings include: *The Passive Vampire / Le vampire passif* (written 1940–1, published 1945); *The Praying Mantis Appraised / Un Loup à travers une loupe / Un lup văzut printr'o lupă* (written 1942, published 1945); *To Oneiricize the World / Oniriser la vie* (cited elsewhere by Luca, written 1943, manuscript lost/

unpublished[?]); *The Magnetic Eye / Ochiul Magnetic* (cited elsewhere by Luca, written 1943, manuscript lost/unpublished[?]); *In the Middle of the Forehead / În Mijlocul Frunții* (cited elsewhere by Luca, written 1940–1944[?], manuscript lost/unpublished[?]); *Voluptuous Initiation / Initiation voluptueuse* (cited elsewhere by Luca, written 1940–44[?], manuscript lost/unpublished[?]); *Two Invisible Women Knock on My Door, a Dying Woman Offers Them an Envelope on My Behalf / Două Femei Invizible Bat la Ușă, o Muribunda le Oferă din Partea Mea un Plic* (cited elsewhere by Luca, written 1944, manuscript lost/unpublished[?]); *Quantatively Loved / Quantativement aimée* (written 1944, published 1944); *The Inventor of Love / L'inventeur de l'amour / Inventatorul iubirii* (written 1944, published 1945); *The Dead Death / La mort morte / Moartea moartă* (written 1944, published 1945); *I Roam the Impossible / Voyage à travers le possible / Parcurg imposibilul* (written 1944, published 1945); *Dialectics of the Dialectic / Dialectique de la dialectique* (written 1945 with Dolfi Trost, published 1945); *Presentation of Colourful Word Forms, Cubomanias and Objects / Présentation de graphies colorées, de cubomanies et d'objets* (written 1945 with Dolfi Trost, published 1945).

8 Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940–44* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 51–9, 86.

9 Krzysztof Fijalkowski, 'Ghérasim Luca: "Le désir désiré"', '*Infra-noir', un et multiple: Une groupe surréaliste entre Bucarest et Paris, 1945–1947*, ed. Monique Yaari (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), 47–99. All quotations from this essay are taken from the original English manuscript, courtesy of the author.

10 Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, 134; Krzysztof Fijalkowski, 'From Sorcery To Silence: The Objects of Ghérasim Luca', *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 88 pt. 3 (July 1993), 626.

11 'Rester connecté au surréalisme français et au mouvement international généré par celui-ci, par le biais de la langue française, était pour le groupe de Bucarest une condition nécessaire à son existence en tant qu'entité distincte.' Petre Răileanu, '*Le Vampire passif*, un nouvel ordre poétique du monde', *Le Vampire Passif / Vampirul pasiv* (Bucharest: Vinea, 2016), 393–437. Extract available here https://petre-raileanu.fr/le-vampire-passif-un-nouvel-ordre-poetique-du-monde/.

12 Fijalkowski, 'From Sorcery To Silence', 626.

13 Krzysztof Fijalkowski, 'La poésie sans langue: Ghérasim Luca, Visual Poet', *Hyperion: On the Future of Aesthetics*, vol. VII no. 3 (Autumn, 2013), 21.

14 Fijalkowski, 'From Sorcery to Silence', 627.

15 *The Passive Vampire* is divided into two sections: the first half of the text is wholly devoted to an exploration of the performance of the object under the heading 'The Objectively Offered Object'; and the object remains ever-present in the events of the second half of the book, which takes the main title 'The Passive Vampire'.

16 See the discussion in Chapter 1.

17 In such instances of correlation between personal thoughts / Dreams / recent memories and external events / encounters / experiences as might ordinarily be classified as coincidence, the surrealist theory of objective chance maintains that the correlation is a confluence of exterior and interior reality that has been subliminally engineered by the individual's unacknowledged unconscious desires. As a concept that upholds the idea that coincidences (ordinarily regarded as the freakish result of chance) can, under certain conditions, be the result of unconscious desires manifesting themselves in the world through mechanisms not recognized by

science, objective chance ultimately represents a distinctly occulted application of psychoanalytical theory.

18 Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, 41; Breton, *Mad Love*, 28–38. In *Mad Love*, Breton demonstrated the meaningful happenstance of objective chance through his encounter with a wooden spoon. In his extensive analysis of the encounter, he perceived that the spoon had subliminally appealed to his unconscious desire to have a glass ashtray made in the shape of Cinderella's lost slipper (an object that was evoked by a heeled shoe form on the handle of the wooden spoon); a link which had not only unconsciously affected his decision to buy the spoon but had actually led him to it.

19 Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, 56.

20 Ibid., 65–6.

21 Ibid., 65.

22 Ibid., 59–61.

23 Luca's longing for a catastrophe, for example. Once again, this appears to be based upon the model of the wooden spoon's manifestation in *Mad Love*, as the crystallization of Breton's repressed desire for the slipper-ashtray. Breton, *Mad Love*, 23.

24 Luca held Breton in the very highest esteem and longed for his approval. In a series of letters that Luca sent from Bucharest to Brauner in Paris after the Second World War, he repeatedly requested news of Breton and his feedback on certain pieces of theoretical writing that he had collaborated on with Trost. In a letter of November 1946, he characteristically expressed his great respect for Breton's judgement in declaring 'Seul Breton serait capable de donner une ampleur qualitative aux solutions (?) que nous envisageons'. Morando & Patry, 224.

25 Fijalkowski, 'From Sorcery to Silence', 634.

26 Breton, *Mad Love*, 32.

27 Although Giacometti's discovery of the mask in *Mad Love* was characterized overall as a fortuitous encounter in the sense that it enabled him to complete the face of his sculpture, *L'Objet invisible*, it also gained a more sinister aspect where Breton explained that he subsequently received a letter from Joë Bousquet 'recognizing this mask for one of those he had to hand out to his company in Argonne on a muddy evening in the [First World] war, just before the attack in which a great number of his men were to die and he was himself to get the bullet in his spine which immobilized him'. This ultimately led Breton to consider the mask as being symbolic of the Freudian 'death instinct'. This morbid and decidedly darker manifestation of objective chance is undoubtedly more closely connected to Luca's evocations of the phenomenon in *The Passive Vampire*. Breton, *Mad Love*, 37–8.

28 Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, 71. In this metaphor, as in so many others throughout *The Passive Vampire*, Luca appears to be alluding to the violence of the war. Meanwhile, he manages to evoke the madness of the conflict through his dizzying, exhaustive chain of analogy, which often strangles the narrative apparatus of the book and casts the reader into a helpless state of disorientation. This particular sentence continues for over two pages, comprising dozens of sub-clauses that bear little or no immediate relation (literal or metaphorical) to one another, forming one long torrent of imagery.

29 Ibid., 37–8.

30 Ibid., 37.

31 Ibid., 37–8.

32 Ibid., 38.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Luca interpreted the object as an orgiastic symbol of masturbation, comprising: seventy-five pen nibs on a red cushion that represented ‘75 exposed penises’; a celluloid hand attached nearby, which represented the means of their satisfaction; a pair of doll’s legs attached to the bottom of the cushion; and another hand dangling between these legs, which took on the ambiguous identity of a ‘hand/penis’ (conflated in the act of masturbation). Luca discovered that the object bore the ‘mortal poison’ of the number 22, inscribed on this dangling hand. Not only does the number 22 retain its macabre association with death from the previous offering to Naum, but it also takes on a potent new association whereby it embodies Brauner’s oedipal relationship to his father, as refracted through the object’s phallic symbolism. As these relationships settled around the poisonous number of 22, Luca perceives that *Dusk* ‘gained a power of enchantment capable of provoking or hastening the father’s death’, as it somehow induced his unacknowledged oedipal guilt to adopt an ‘active and determining role’ in his mind, with fatal consequences. Ibid., 49–54. There is also another, more ill-defined strand of magic at work in this account of *Dusk*. Luca explains that the act of sewing the pen nibs onto the cushion ‘produced such pain in the back and kidneys, dizziness, and partial blindness in the woman sewing them on that she had to interrupt her work and lie down. She had just learned that a doctor’s wife had been raped by thirty men during a pogrom and was taken to hospital with a severe haemorrhage. I did not count the pen nibs at the point she stopped working to lie down, but I am certain she stopped symptomatically at the thirtieth.’ Ibid., 49. The object *Dusk* appears to have been the ancestor of the pen nib strewn book-object *Quantativement aimée*, which Luca made in 1944. See Fijalkowski, ‘La poésie sans langue’, 22–4.
36 The prevalence of dolls, or doll-parts, in Luca’s objects of this period may have been inspired by the mannequin-themed *Exposition internationale du surréalisme* of 1938, which was held in Paris between January and February that year, during the winter that Luca arrived in the city.
37 In a note to the main body of the text, Luca adds that ‘The little girl died two months after I made the object’. Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, 43.
38 Luca’s wife had herself apparently gone to stay with the little girl’s family after having had an argument with Luca that was caused by the object *The Letter L*. Ibid.
39 Ibid., 41.
40 He attributes this phenomenon to the incidental consequences of details such as the ‘Breton’ hairstyle of the two dolls’ heads, and its title’s resonances with a passage from *Nadja*, in which Breton discusses Nadja’s fascination with ‘the calligraphy of the L’s’. Ibid., 47–8.
41 Ibid., 47.
42 This passage conflates Luca’s own activities, in the first person, with those of the ‘lyric-magician’, in the third person. However, Luca’s setting of the lyric-magician’s activities in his own room, in an episode that directly follows on from an account of his own collecting habits, appears to implicate him as the lyric-magician.
43 Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, 103.
44 Ibid., 103–4.
45 Ibid., 104.
46 James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: Aftermath* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1913), 48.

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., 1.
49 Ibid., 3.
50 Ibid., 4–10.
51 Ibid., 1.
52 This is how Frazer defines black magic after Dr Wallis Budge, quoting him speaking on the art of black magic in Egypt. Ibid., 6.
53 'Dans un déploiment frénétique d'associations et analogies le texte est à la fois récit épique, traité de magie noire qui obscurcit plus qu'il n'éclaire, laissent ouvertes toutes les portes du possible, hymne nocturne à l'amour.' Răileanu, *Gherasim Luca*, 128.
54 Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, 104.
55 Ibid., 132.
56 Ibid., 133.
57 Ibid., 73.
58 Ibid., 81–2, 47.
59 Ibid., 93.
60 Ibid., 94.
61 Ibid., 95.
62 Ibid., 87–8.
63 Belated fears of legal repercussions, owing to the scandalous nature of the text, caused the book's Belgian publishers to halt distribution of the already printed text. The printed copies of the completed book would not be distributed until 1874, after Ducasse's death, when another publisher acquired the stock.
64 Le Comte de Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems*, trans. Paul Knight (London: Penguin, 1978), 52, 64.
65 Such as his compulsion 'to vivisect a child'. Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, p. 88. Here Luca is almost certainly deliberately echoing Lautréamont once again, who similarly discusses the vivisection of a child in *Les Chants de Maldoror*.
66 Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, 82, 130.
67 André Breton, 'Anthology of Black Humour (excerpts)', *André Breton: What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, ed. Franklin Rosemont (London: Pluto Press, 1978), 194.
68 Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, 90.
69 Krzysztof Fijalkowski, 'Luca the Absolute', *The Passive Vampire*, trans. Krzysztof Fijalkowski (Prague: Twisted Spoon Press, 2008), 17.
70 Fijalkowski, 'Ghérasim Luca: "Le désir désiré"'.
71 Breton, *The Communicating Vessels*, 25, 37–42.
72 Luca's transformation into a vampire seems to revolve around a similar idea of somnambulism: 'I close my eyes, as active as a vampire, I open them within myself, as passive as a vampire, and between the blood that arrives, the blood that leaves, and the blood already inside me there occurs an exchange of images like an engagement of daggers.' Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, 83.
73 Ibid., 90.
74 As Fijalkowski has commented: 'Bucharest is curiously present in *The Passive Vampire*. But the Bucharest of late 1941 has a very particular status for its author. Most obviously, it is a city under effective occupation, controlled by the Iron Guard whose rise to power in autumn 1940 […] signaled a definitive end to the distinctive avant-garde activity of the already repressive 1930s.' Fijalkowski, 'Ghérasim Luca: "Le désir désiré"'.

75 Simmons, 109.
76 Ghérasim Luca, 'I Roam the Impossible', *The Inventor of Love & Other Writings*, trans. Julian & Laura Semilian (Boston: Black Widow Press, 2009), 34.
77 Ibid., 35.
78 See the discussion in Chapter 1.
79 Breton, 'Second Manifesto', 123.
80 Ibid., 140.
81 Jonathan P. Eburne, 'Heraclitus, Hegel, and Dialectical Understanding', *Surrealism: Key Concepts*, ed. Krzysztof Fijalkowski & Michael Richardson (London: Routledge, 2016), 21–2.
82 Fijalkowski, 'Ghérasim Luca: "Le désir désiré"'.
83 Ghérasim Luca & Dolfi Trost, 'Dialectics of the Dialectic: A Message Addressed to the International Surrealist Movement', *Surrealism Against the Current: Tracts and Declarations*, ed. Michael Richardson & Krzysztof Fijalkowski, trans. Michael Richardson & Krzysztof Fijalkowski (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 35.
84 Ibid., 36.
85 Ibid., 36–7.
86 Luca, 'I Roam the Impossible', 34.
87 There is an interesting parallel here between Luca's conception of Satan, and Breton's recourse to the figure of Lucifer. As Anna Balakian explains: 'the concept of Lucifer in occult philosophy is dissociated from evil and instead becomes a force for adventure and audacity […] It is not possible to understand the notion of "black" in Breton's writings without reference to Eliphas Lévi's definition of Lucifer […] Lucifer, the rebel, according to Eliphas Lévi's interpretation of hermeticism, is not evil; he is the angel who enlightens, who regenerates […] In other words Lucifer is a source of hope, darkness is a facet of light, rebellion is an agent of salvation.' Anna Balakian, *André Breton: Magus of Surrealism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 39. This rationale underpinned Breton's 'sympathetic vision of Lucifer' in *Arcanum 17* (1945). Anna Balakian, 'Introduction', *Arcanum 17*, trans. Zack Rogow (Copenhagen; Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2004), 18. Given that Breton's writing on this topic was almost exactly contemporary with Luca's whilst they were continents apart during the early mid-1940s, it appears as though this overlap was entirely spontaneous. It should also be noted that Luca's writing was not specifically bound to Lucifer, as Breton's was, but more generally to Satan in all his guises.
88 Roger Caillois, 'Interview with Gilles Lapouge' (1970), trans. Camille Naish, *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader*, ed. Claudine Frank (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2003), 144.
89 Ibid.
90 Fijalkowski, 'From Sorcery to Silence', 634.
91 'La dialectique acquiert une dimension carnavalesque'; 'Luca aperçoit dans la mort la limite imposée à la projection sur les processus naturels de la méthode dialectique.' Dominique Carlat, *Gherasim Luca l'intempestif* (Paris: José Corti, 1998), 101, 109.
92 Ghérasim Luca, 'The Dead Death', *The Inventor of Love & Other Writings*, trans. Julian & Laura Semilian (Boston: Black Widow Press, 2009), 50.
93 Fijalkowski, 'Ghérasim Luca: "Le désir désiré"'.
94 'l'arbre "retourné" dont les branches se font racines et dont les racines se font branches portant feuilles et fruits, nécessite un intervention humain qui "court-circuite" le processus natural et face l'économie de la mort.' Carlat, 109. This comment

was made in reference to the epigraph to 'The Orgies of Quanta' (1946), where Luca quoted Hegel stating that 'It is well known, for example, that if a tree is turned upside down, with its roots in the air and its boughs and branches planted in the ground, the former will sprout leaves, [and] the latter will become roots.' Ghérasim Luca, 'The Orgies of Quanta', trans. Sasha Vlad, *Hyperion: On the Future of Aesthetics*, vol. VII no. 3 (Autumn, 2013), 126.

95 Luca & Trost, 'Dialectics of the Dialectic', 40.

96 'Nous espérons voir se rapprocher, d'une manière concrètement active, ces recherches scientifiques, assurément trop particulières pour être complètement justes, et nous tentons de trouver les moyens délirants necessaires à un pareil rapprochement, dans le matérialisme foudroyant et maléfique de la magie noire.' Ghérasim Luca & Dolfi Trost, *Dialectique de la dialectique* (Bucharest: Éditions S / Surréalisme, 1945), 29.

97 'Nous sommes d'accord avec les inventions délirantes, les larmes, le somnambulisme, le foncionnement réel de la pensée, l'elixir de longue vie, la transformation de la quantité en qualité, le concret, l'absurde, la négation de la négation, le désir, l'hystérie, les fourrures, la magie noire, le délire d'interprétation, la dialectique de la dialectique, la quatrième dimension, le simulacra, les flammes, le vice, le hasard objectif, les manies, le mystère, l'humour noir, la cryptesthésie, le matérialisme scientifique et les taches de sang.' Ghérasim Luca and Dolfi Trost, *Presentation de Graphies Colorées, de Cubomanies et d'Objets* (Bucharest, 1945), unpaginated.

98 Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism: the Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia', *One Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott & Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), 229.

99 Ibid., 227–9.

100 Luca, 'I Roam the Impossible', 34.

101 Fijalkowski, 'La poèsie sans langue', 29.

102 Luca & Trost, 'Dialectics of the Dialectic', 36.

103 Fijalkowski, 'La poésie sans langue', 30.

104 Luca, 'I Roam the Impossible', 34.

105 Ibid., 39.

106 'la démonologie de l'objet'. Răileanu, *Gherasim Luca,* 108.

107 Ibid.

108 'En effet, la persistance hallucinante de l'agressivité de l'objet, le caractère avidement succube des gants, des chapeaux, des chaises, des verres […] la lycanthropie vampirique d'une tire-lire en forme d'animal ou la lycanthropie simple d'un candelabra-chouette-serpent […] le larvaire parasitaire des mouchoirs ou des bateaux qui se prennent dans les eaux comme le gui, les doigts des mains, les cheminées sur les maisons révèlent profusément, avec une superbe ténacité démonstrative cet aspect démoniaque de l'objet, à la lumière duquel le rapport le plus innocent se trouve teinté des vastes coleurs du mal.' Gellu Naum, quoted in Răileanu, *Gherasim Luca*, 109.

109 'Le vampirisme des objets réside en leur capacité, désigné par Naum comme "lycanthropie", de se métamorphoser en n'importe quel animal suivant l'agressivité analogique contenue.' Răileanu, *Gherasim Luca*, 108.

110 'Nous sommes dans la proximité du "vampire passif", et le plus important n'est pas d'établir la primauté chronologique mais de noter le fluide qui circule entre les textes des deux surréalistes roumains.' Ibid., 109.

111 Luca, 'I Roam the Impossible', 40–1.

112 'Leçon pratique de cubomanie dans la vie courante'. Ghérasim Luca, 'Cubomanies et Objets', *Presentation de Graphies Colorées, de Cubomanies et d'Objets* (Bucharest, 1945), unpaginated.
113 'choisissez trois chaises, deux chapeaux, quelques pierres et parapluies, plusieurs arbres, trois femmes nues et cinq très bien habillés, soixante hommes, quelques maisons, des voitures de toutes les époques, des gants, des télescopes, etc. / Coupez tout en petit morceaux (par exemple 6/6 cm.) et mélangez-les bien dans une grande place de la ville. Reconstituez d'après les lois du hasard ou de votre caprice et vous obtiendrez un paysage, un objet ou une très belle femme inconnus ou reconnus, la femme et le paysage de vos désirs. / […] Le fragment et le tout se trouvent dans un rapport de contenu-contanent, mais uniquement dans le sens antithétique.' Ibid.
114 'Dans l'architecture: [comme] la maison du facteur Cheval, un château au murs en miroirs cassés, une rue pendant un tremblement de terre. […] Dans la magie: [comme] les envoûtements'. Ibid.
115 Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, 89; Luca, 'The Inventor of Love', 20.

Chapter 3

1 Breton had arrived at the Villa Air-Bel in October 1940, and he left in March 1941 when he travelled to America on the ship the *Capitaine Paul-Lemerle*.
2 Camille Morando & Sylvie Patry eds., *Victor Brauner: écrits et correspondances 1938–1949* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2005), 375–6. Camille Morando, 'Biographie illustrée et textes de Victor Brauner', *Victor Brauner: Je suis le rêve. Je suis l'inspiration* (Paris: Flammarion, 2020), 21–2.
3 Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 378.
4 Michèle Cone, *Artists under Vichy: A Case of Prejudice and Persecution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 124. Brauner lived with Jacqueline Abraham and the sculptor Michel Herz during this period in les Hautes-Alpes.
5 Didier Semin, 'Victor Brauner and the Surrealist Movement', *Victor Brauner: Surrealist Hieroglyphs* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2001), 38.
6 Elsewhere, Semin has described how Brauner 'a […] réinventé sa peinture avec les matériaux de fortune qu'il avait sous la main: paraffine, cire d'abeilles, brou de noix, planches de bois, encre d'écolier […]' Didier Semin, 'Le rêve d'un alchimiste en Océanie: Victor Brauner et The Savage Mind', *Dialogue des mondes: Victor Brauner et les arts primitifs* (Paris: Galerie Schoffel-Valluet & Galerie Samy Kinge, 2010), 21. Brauner himself wrote about his use of wax in an article entitled 'Dessin à la bougie', written in June 1943. Here he explained how he found inspiration for the technique in the semi-translucent, layered stones that lined the banks of the Durance River. Victor Brauner, 'Dessin à la bougie', *Cahiers d'Art* (1945–1946), 314.
7 Didier Ottinger, 'Les Onomatomanies de Victor Brauner', *Les Victor Brauner de la Collection de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix* (Paris: Spadem, 1991), 33.
8 Daniel Zamani, 'The Magician Triumphant: Occultism and Political Resistance in Victor Brauner's Le Surréaliste (1947)', *Abraxas*, Special Issue no. 1 (Summer 2013), 102.
9 Cone, *Artists under Vichy,* 104.
10 Semin, 'Brauner and the Surrealist Movement', 38, 33. See also Verena Kuni et al., *Victor Brauner dans les Collections du MNAM-CCI* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1996).

11 'S'enfonçant de plus en plus loin dans l'étude de la magie noire, l'apprenti-sorcier fabriqua des talismans et des pentacles, des objets d'envoûtement et d'exorcisme; c'était pendant la guerre, alors que, fuyant les persecutions nazies, il s'était réfugié dans un village des Hautes-Alpes, où il subissait les pires conditions matérielles.' Sarane Alexandrian, *Les Dessins magiques de Victor Brauner* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1965), 15.
12 This reputation was consolidated after the Second World War by Brauner's famous tarot-inspired painting *Le Surréaliste* (1947), produced for the occult-themed international exhibition of Surrealism, *Le Surréalisme en 1947*. Zamani has given a rich analysis of this painting, and Brauner's reputation as a magician. Zamani, 'The Magician Triumphant', 103–9.
13 Susan Davidson, 'Introduction: "Vivifying Presence"', *Victor Brauner: Surrealist Hieroglyphs* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2001), 10.
14 Camelia Darie, *Victor Brauner and the Surrealist Interest in the Occult* (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2012).
15 By this point, Brauner had already lived in Paris between 1925 and 1927, and then once again from 1930 onwards. From this point he would remain in Paris until 1935 when he returned to Romania, before moving back to the French capital in 1938.
16 Didier Semin, *Victor Brauner* (Paris: Éditions Filipacchi, 1990), 82.
17 'La thèse officielle du jeu du hasard exigerait pour être adoptée que rien auparvant n'ait pu faire prévoir l'accident. Or nous allons constater que toute la vie de Brauner convergeait vers cette mutilation.' Pierre Mabille, 'L'Œil du peintre', *Minotaure*, no. 12–13 (1939), 53.
18 Ibid., 54.
19 'Il a vécu son enfance au voisinage d'un père qui s'adonnait aux experiences de spiritisme et aux essais empiriques de magie.' Ibid., 55.
20 'Les faits s'expliquent-ils par une prémonition persistante ou le peintre n'a-t-il pas été victime d'une sorte d'envoûtement. Les formes mutilées n'ont-elles pas mis en œuvre des forces magiques, créé un climat psychique dont l'accident devait être le terme inéluctable?' Ibid., 54.
21 Semin, 'Brauner and the Surrealist Movement', 31.
22 Alexandrian, *Les Dessins magiques de Victor Brauner*, 43. Semin has also discussed similar legends of '*mutilation qualifiante*' in relation to Brauner's eye-loss. Semin, 'Brauner and the Surrealist Movement', 31.
23 Mabille, 'L'Œil du peintre', 54.
24 'Avec un precision photographique j'ai peint un autoportrait d'un accident fondamental de ma vie … Qu'il y a deux solutions: ou l'envoûtement (inconscient) ou prédiction. Cela est sans une grande importance car c'est irrémédiable. On ne connaît pour le moment des explications satisfaisantes.' Brauner, in Morando & Patry, 37.
25 Frazer, *The Golden Bough: Aftermath*, 1.
26 Kuni et al., *Victor Brauner dans les Collections du MNAM-CCI*, 127.
27 Brauner, in Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 37.
28 Breton, *Mad Love*, 16.
29 *Promenade* was never published during Brauner's lifetime, and was only published in its full, disjointed sequence – spread across several notebooks – in the Centre Pompidou catalogue, *Victor Brauner, écrits et correspondances: les archives de Victor Brauner au Musée national d'art moderne* (2005). Brauner continued to develop the piece over the summer and autumn of 1941, writing his last contributions in

October that year (the entries under the headings 'anneaux de 23. cadenas' and 'Térapeutique de démoralisation ou contre inspiration' in the *Cahier bleu* seem to represent the latest additions to the text). Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 60–1. This period of activity in which Brauner began formulating his reflections on the object has a direct overlap with Luca's work on *The Passive Vampire*. The exact circumstances of this correlation between Luca's and Brauner's theoretical interests in the object are unclear. Their close proximity in Bucharest 1935–8, writing alongside each other in journals such as *Lumea Romaneasca* and *Le Monde Roumain*, would have provided ample opportunity for the pair to have deliberated the theoretical dimensions of the surrealist object together. After they both moved to Paris in 1938 there was further opportunity for them to have developed their ideas of the object before the outbreak of war. Given that all correspondence between the pair was cut off during the war, the contemporaneity of *The Passive Vampire* and *Promenade* appears upon first sight to be entirely coincidental. However, the fact that Brauner makes explicit use of Luca's term '*vampire passive*' within *Promenade* suggests that their common turn to the object in 1941 had originated from some sort of previous exchange on this topic. Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 52. This theory is supported by the fact that Luca included a section in *The Passive Vampire* on an object 'objectively offered' to Brauner, which must have been produced during their time together before the war. Ghérasim Luca, *The Passive Vampire*, trans. Krzysztof Fijalkowski (Prague: Twisted Spoon Press, 2009), 49. The role of Brauner's brother Théodore as Luca's photographer for *The Passive Vampire* (most likely recommended by Brauner) seems also to attest to the pair's shared familiarity with their respective projects with the object going into the 1940s.

30 The narrative seems to purport to trace the night-wanderings of either Brauner himself or a close alter-ego named 'Vittorio'. Camille Morando, 'Victor Brauner's Writing in/at Work: Dada and Surrealist Inventions of a Picto-poet', *Dada/Surrealism*, vol. 20 (2015), 26.

31 In diary notes from November 1941 (the month of Laurette's departure) Brauner described the event of their separation, declaring that 'Laurette est ma première pensée en chaque circonstance dès que je prends conscience', and admitting that 'en grande partie ce journal est une espèce d'hommage à Laura la Belle [Laurette]'. Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 68.

32 Morando, 'Victor Brauner's Writing', 25–6.

33 Ibid., 25.

34 'Cette nuit encore je me suis réveillé à mon heure habituelle et je suis sorti aux bruits multiples du silence nocturne et mes amis de nuit et déjà les crapauds m'attendaient et approchaient et m'accompagnaient à la recherché de ce chemin que j'avais, enfin, trouvé à la fin de la nuit dernière après des années de recherches minutieuses.' Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 50.

35 'Dans tout mes études et séances préliminaires j'étais prevenu que les dangers devaient être plus grands que jamais cette nuit et que les armées d'envoûters étaient au complet, qu'ils me guetteaient à tout tournant et qu'ils efforçaient de me préparer des embuscades qui auraient pu être mortelles.' Ibid.

36 Morando, 'Victor Brauner's Writing', 25.

37 Although it appears as though Brauner is referring to himself carrying the objects themselves here, slightly later in the text he refers to his independent discovery of the objects that were indicated on the 'la célèbre carte' that he kept with him. Therefore,

we should assume that his 'collection' is only actually manifest as an image until this discovery.

38 Camille Morando has suggested that the objects of *Promenade* provide an accurate reflection of the material 'misery' in which Brauner was living at the time (including, for example, 'a small piece of wood' and 'a shoelace' among his most prized possessions). Morando, 'Victor Brauner's Writing', 26. The peculiar collection is listed as consisting of the following: '1. Un petit bout de bois; 2. Encore un petit bout de bois (provenant certainement d'une ancienne allumette); 3. Un bout de chiffon blanc (reste d'un pansement); 4. Une fleur desséchée (ça devait être un pavot); 5. Un fil de fer noir et qui à l'intérieur était couleur cuivre; 6. Un caillou de rivière; 7. Un doigt de gant (probablement gant de femme); 8. Une allumette à moitié brûlée; 9. Un mégot de cigare; 10. Un petit morceau de biscuit (dans le genre biscuit militaire); 11. Un lacet de chaussure; 12. Une moitié de coquille d'œuf; 13. Un pépin de cerise; 14. Une feuille de fleur de Magnolia desséchée; 15. Une brosse à dents; 16. Un crayon de couleur verte; 17. Une plume à écrire genre plume pour l'écriture ronde; 18. Un flacon d'eau de cologne sans eau de cologne; 19. Une enveloppe vide qui portait un timbre mexicain; 20. Une petite gravure sans cadre représentant une belle femme en train de peigner sa chevelure très abondante; 21. Une vielle phot[o] de jeune homme habillé en marin; 22. Un biberon; 23. Un anneau de cadenas; 24. Une petite clef de valise; 25. Un morceau de tableau qui est peint sur bois, un fragment sur lequel on peut distinguer un visage de femme endormi de profil, sa chevelure finissant par une tête d'animal. Le toute donne [l']impression d'avoir subi le feu, car très patiné et brûlé au bord et très fumé.' Brauner, in Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 51.

39 'Tout en bon ordre les objets étaient arrangés en demi-circle et chacun était encadré d'un ornament de sable et porait en haut une étiquette.' Ibid.

40 Ibid., 52.

41 'Je m'arrêtai un instant je regardai autour, et de nouveau le petit mur je m'aperçus qu'il était en sang caillé ou quelque chose de semblable il donnait l'impression de respirer.' Ibid., 51.

42 'Naturellement je tenais à la main, mon "talisman géométrique", celui [que] j'avais hérité de mon venerable maître, X …' Ibid.

43 'Après un petit ronronnement, le fragment de tableau se mit à lancer des jets de lumière si violente, que je pouvais dorénavant voir tout le reste de mon parcours.' Ibid., 52.

44 'J'ai, naturellement emporté avec moi, ma célèbre collection d'objets bénéfiques et qui était indiscutablement efficace.' Ibid., 51.

45 'Tout d'un coup je me trouvai exalté et l'on [aurait] dit que le contact de ces objets amplfi[ait] ma force et plein d'enthousiasme je me lançai avant à le poursuite de ce chemin. Tout mon être reflétait une joie immense car j'approchais au but et alors je trouverais la Clef du grand Mystère, je posséderais tour à tour tous les échelons de l'inoubliable secret de la "Noce Chimique" car indiscutablement j'ai franchi le mur du domaine du "Château des Mages"'. Ibid., 52. Brauner's use of the phrase 'la Clef du grand Mystère' may be a reference to Eliphas Levi's *La Clef des Grands Mystères* (1861).

46 As Morando notes, *Promenade* was directly inspired by the alchemical narrative *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz, anno 1459* (published 1617), which Brauner probably came to know via its presence in his friend Pierre Mabille's highly influential anthology *Le Miroir du merveilleux* (1940). Morando, 'Victor Brauner's Writing', 26. *The Chemical Wedding* acquired cult status within surrealist circles

during the 1940s, later featuring in the book-spine staircase at the entrance to the 1947 international exhibition of surrealism, *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, at Galerie Maeght. *The Chemical Wedding* narrative has clear overlaps with *Promenade*. In the first place, Rosenkreutz's adventure begins, like Brauner's, with a vivid description of him setting out down a path towards a castle (Rosenkreutz having to choose between four paths, initially, before starting his adventure). Both texts are structured around a central journey or quest, which sees their protagonist continuously advancing in search of some undetermined goal. As in *Promenade*, the events of *The Chemical Wedding* are jarring, marvellous and fantastical in aspect, including, for example: a mass weighing of the wedding guests, a mermaid serenade, and the painting and subsequent execution of a giant bird hatched from an egg grown from the residues of seven dissolved human corpses. Further to this, both texts are inherently alchemical in their staple symbolism. Most blatantly, both texts culminate in a series of bizarre and miraculous transformations involving eggs: the most widespread and enduring symbol of the alchemical enterprise.

47 'Dans le ciel apparaissaient en énormes proportions, comme des étoiles gigantesques et de la manière des réclames lumineuses tous les objets de la collection que je venais de prendre, en suivant leur ordre et leur étiquette, et à côté de chaque objet un phrase, en lettres de feu […]' Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 52.

48 'J'ai encore devant mes yeux ce text-poëme d'une beauté profonde et qui encore une fois prouve que seul le lyrisme est la science vraie, car c'est par lui que j'ai touché au but de mes recherches essentielles.' Ibid.

49 Ibid., 55.

50 'la grande parade céleste' Ibid., 54.

51 'La nuit devenait de plus en plus profondément noire si noire que toute notion d'espace-profondeur, hauteur etc. disparaissait.' Ibid., 52.

52 'Le chemin que je suivais maintenant changeait de tout ce que l'on connaît dans ce domaine, il avait ça de particulier qu'il [avait] complètement disparu, c'était un chemin sans chemin. Je me trouvais marchant en l'air en-dessous de mes pieds une énorme crevasse noire […]' Ibid., 54.

53 In a footnote, Marquès-Rivière contests the alternative spelling of this term as '*pentacle*', since he upholds that the word derives from the Greek '*pan*' rather than from '*pentagramme*' as is often supposed. Jean Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales* (Paris: Payot, 1938), 10–11.

54 'L'amulette et la technique de sa fabrication offrent un curieux exemple de ces complexes mentaux qui, issus des civilisations primitives, des époques lointaines où le phénomène magique jouait un rôle primordial, sont demeurés intacts et vivants dans les subconscients pour réapparaître brusquement chez des êtres appartenant à des civilisations très évoluées. Il suffit d'un fait important: guerre, danger de mort en auto ou en avion, compétition sportive, risques de loterie et du jeu pour que le vieux fond magique s'impose d'autant plus brutalement qu'on ne le surveille plus.' Ibid., 7.

55 'Le talisman est donc un objet "scientifique": il est sujet à des lois, à des correspondances, à une fabrication.' Ibid., 10.

56 Although I focus here on Brauner's interpretation of Marquès-Rivière's *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles*, the reader should note that he was by this point well versed in a much wider body of occult literature. Fabrice Flahutez has noted Brauner's close familiarity with a wide range of titles of this genre, including the aforementioned volumes *Les Musée des sorciers* (1929) by Grillot de Givry, and *Les Demeures philosophales* (1930) by Fulcanelli, which had been so admired by Breton. Fabrice

Flahutez, 'Les Magies de Victor Brauner', *Victor Brauner: Je suis le rêve. Je suis l'inspiration* (Paris: Flammarion, 2020), 170.

57 'La magie sympathique joue son rôle parfois; le plus souvent, il s'agit de la loi des correspondances.' Ibid., 235.

58 '[…] l'influence qui lui est attribuée est fonction d'un raisonnement, parfois logique, toujours symbolique et analogique; le tournesol sera une plante du Soleil parce qu'elle se vers lui; le rubis sera une pierre de Mars parce qu'il est rouge comme le feu et le sang. L'analogie est peut-être puérile, ridicule, peu importe; elle provient de sources profondes […]' Ibid., 10.

59 One particular poem of Baudelaire's had come to stand as the expression par excellence of the transformational possibilities of poetic analogy: his 'Correspondances' from *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857). Charles Baudelaire, 'Correspondances', *Baudelaire: the Complete Verse*, ed. and trans. Francis Scarfe (London: Anvil Press, 2012), 67. For a more detailed discussion of this poem see Chapter 4.

60 'il se persuada alors qu'il était moins un Peintre qu'un Voyant, et que sa peinture avait une valeur magique. Il voulut explorer les arcanes du monde hermétique, ouvrit des grimoires, des traités comme *La Philosophie occulte et la magie* de Corneille Agrippa ou *Les Sept livres de l'archidoxe magique* de Paracelse.' Alexandrian, *Les Dessins magiques de Victor Brauner*, 14. At the time of his death in 1966, Brauner's book collection included Pierre d'Aban's *Les Oeuvres magique de Henri-Corneille Agrippa: avec des secrets occultes* (190?). Kuni et al., *Victor Brauner dans les Collections du MNAM-CCI*, 124.

61 Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy or Magic – Book One: Natural Magic*, trans. Willis F. Whitehead (London: The Aquarian Press, 1971), 71.

62 Ibid., 74.

63 Ibid., 73.

64 Kurt Seligmann, *The Mirror of Magic: A History of Magic in the Western World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948), 317.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., 321.

67 Theophrastus Paracelsus, 'De Natura Rerum' (1537), *Paracelsus: Essential Readings*, trans. Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (Wellingborough: Crucible, 1990), 185.

68 '[…] dans tous les règnes de la Nature, chaque chose contient une marque spéciale indiquant quelle est sa valeur dans l'univers et son utilité pour l'homme.' Alexandrian, *Les Dessins magiques de Victor Brauner*, 85.

69 'Le talisman touche en cela au *pantacle*, forme la plus évoluée du talisman, véritable "oeuvre d'art" qu'a créée la science talismanique ou pantaculaire.'; 'Il intervient en effet un élément perceptible deja dans la talisman, qui est astrologie ou science des influences célestes.' Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales,* 10–11.

70 'Le pantacle agit en accord avec les puissances des Cosmos […] en accord avec les vibrations mystérieuses de l'Univers.' Ibid., 11.

71 Morando, 'Victor Brauner's Writing', 19.

72 'Les Talismans de défense et Contre-Attaque'; 'Les planètes sont utilisées dans les talismans de défense.' Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales,* 347, 354.

73 Kuni, *Victor Brauner dans les Collections du MNAM-CCI*, 12–17.

74 Agrippa, 97. Kuni also notes that lead was advocated by Paracelsus for use in talismans devised to fight illness or grant protection. Kuni, *Victor Brauner dans les Collections du MNAM-CCI*, 16.
75 Kuni, *Victor Brauner dans les Collections du MNAM-CCI*, 16; Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales,* 319.
76 Ibid.
77 Kuni, *Victor Brauner dans les Collections du MNAM-CCI*, 16; Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales,* 321.
78 'dieu protecteur'. Kuni, *Victor Brauner dans les Collections du MNAM-CCI*, 16.
79 Kuni, *Victor Brauner dans les Collections du MNAM-CCI*, 14; Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales,* 285–6, 318–19.
80 Agrippa, 100.
81 Camille Morando, '"De l'autre côté des frontières noires": la guerre de Victor Brauner', *Victor Brauner: Je suis le rêve. Je suis l'inspiration* (Paris: Flammarion, 2020), 157–60. Flahutez, 'Les Magies de Victor Brauner', 172.
82 Morando, 'Victor Brauner's Writing', 21.
83 'On rencontre très fréquemment en effet cette écriture bouletée. Les amulettes hébraïques médiévale que nous donnons ici en sont un exemple.' Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales,* 310.
84 'C. Agrippa donne quelques alphabets à lettres ainsi bouletées et il les appelle "Écriture celeste", "Écriture de Malachim", "Écriture d'au delà du Fleuve"'. Ibid.
85 Paracelsus, 'De Natura Rerum', 185.
86 Kuni, *Victor Brauner dans les Collections du MNAM-CCI*, 12; Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales,* 284.
87 Novalis, *Hymns to the Night*, trans. George MacDonald (London: Temple Lodge, 1992), 10.
88 Alexandrian, *Les Dessins magiques de Victor Brauner*, 15.
89 Camille Morando, 'Objets conjuratoires', *Victor Brauner: Je suis le rêve. Je suis l'inspiration* (Paris: Flammarion, 2020), 216.
90 Ibid.
91 Kuni, *Victor Brauner dans les Collections du MNAM-CCI*, 17; 'Le signe de vie, ânkh […]'. Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales,* 68, 76.
92 'Il influence les alchimistes, peut changer en pierres les êtres vivants.' Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales,* 283.
93 'Lune, diamant coupant le silence de joie. / Tu es dans ma main, le rouge de ma mélancolie […]'. Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 64.
94 André Breton, 'Entre chien et loup', *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: Macdonald, 1972), 127.
95 Semin, 'Brauner and the Surrealist Movement', 33. Clio Mitchell notes that Breton was reading Novalis from as early as the 1910s. Mitchell, 72.
96 'Dans cette nuite chimique / Rencontre de Lautrémont Novalis et / André Breton / Libéra l'homme'. Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 69.
97 'Novalis, Clemens Brentano, Hölderlin, André Breton, Bettina et tous mes amis, des pays divers, des contrées lointaines ceux qui ont le goût de l'inexplicable et de l'extraordinaire, [venez] me voir, me demander de [vous] raconter en détail, de regarder mes tableaux dessins et d'essayer de lire en eux les destinées poëtiques.' Ibid., 40.

98 Kuni et al., *Victor Brauner dans les Collections du MNAM-CCI*, 130.
99 Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 63.
100 In *The Novices of Saïs* Novalis repeatedly emphasizes the visionary abilities of the poet in perceiving and channelling the creative and transformative energies of nature.
101 Examples of preparatory sketches are held in the collections of Le Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Étienne Métropole.
102 Brauner's drawn portrait of Novalis subsequently featured as frontispiece to Pierre Mabille's *Le Merveilleux* (1946), published with Henri Parisot's surrealist-affiliated Les Éditions des quatre vents.
103 Novalis, *The Novices of Sais*, 47.
104 Brauner takes the term 'pantacle' from *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles* (1938). For explanation of Marquès-Rivière's use of the term, see endnote 53.
105 Seligmann, *Mirror of Magic*, 98–103.
106 Semin, *Victor Brauner*, 89; and quoted in English in Morando, 'Victor Brauner's Writing', 21.
107 Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 65.
108 'La flamme solidifie le rêve'. Morando & Patry, *Victor Brauner,* 69.
109 Novalis, *Notes*, 160.
110 Carl Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 243.
111 Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia*, trans. and ed. David W. Wood (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 23. The other facet of Novalis's conception of magic had to do with the ineffable and 'indissoluble' charms of love: 'Every spiritual touch is like the touch of a magic wand. Everything can become the tool of magic. But whoever thinks the effects of such touch are so fabulous, whoever finds the effects of a magic spell so marvelous, need only remind himself of the first touch of his beloved's hand, her first meaningful glance, where the magic wand is the detached beam of light, the first kiss, the first word of love, and ask himself whether the spell and magic of these moments is not also fabulous and wondrous, indissoluble and eternal?' Novalis, 'Logological Fragments II', *Novalis: Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Margaret Mahony Stoljar (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 68.
112 'La matière du support, on le devine, n'est pas indifférente au résultat exigé […] elle appartient à la théorie de la propitiation, quand les forces magiques sont conçues au stade de la personnification magico-sacrée. Le grande texte philosophique qui peut servir de base à cette loi est la fameuse "Table d'Émeraude" d'Hermes […] ce texte a inspiré continuellement les spéculations magiques médiévales et a joué un rôle important dans l'édification de la science pantaculaire. Une phrase établit cette loi des correspondances: "Ce qui est en bas est comme ce qui est en haut et ce qui est en haut est comme ce qui est en bas, pour faire les miracles d'une même chose." […] Ce principe de l'analogie se lié à une métaphysique des essences et de la qualité […]'. Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales,* 235–6.
113 Novalis, *Notes*, 23.
114 Ibid.
115 'On doit retrouver le macrocosme dans le microcosme et les influences cosmiques sur la création. Ce sera la grande loi dite "des signatures". Le Zôhar a developpé particulièrement cette idée; voici un passage de ce livre essentiel de la Kabbale: "De même que le firmament est marqué d'étoiles et d'autres signes lisibles aux sages, de

même le peau qui est l'enveloppé extérieure de l'homme est marquée de rides et de lignes lisibles aux sages […]" […] toute la nature participe à ces mystérieuses correspondances; l'alchimie et la médecine spagyrique médiévales rejoignent ici une tradition universelle. Toute matière […] porte la signature du macrocosme et du microcosme'. Marquès-Rivière, *Amulettes, Talismans et Pantacles dans les traditions orientales et occidentales,* 237.

116 Breton, 'Entre chien et loup', 127.

117 Tessel M. Bauduin, *Surrealism and the Occult: Occultism and Western Esotericism in the Work and Movement of André Breton* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 176. From 1948, Brauner's achievements would gradually slip out of view after he was officially excluded from the surrealist group in November that year. In October 1948 Roberto Matta was excluded from the group on account of being held culpable for Arshile Gorky's suicide (after having had an affair with Gorky's wife). In the midst of this coup against Matta, Brauner objected to signing the petition for his exclusion, and was consequently excluded himself.

118 André Breton, 'On Magic Art', *What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings of André Breton*, ed. Franklin Rosemont, trans. John Ashbery et al. (London: Pluto Press, 1978), 292.

119 *The Novices of Saïs* had been circulating in French translation for some time, and Breton's interest in it was possibly revived by the 1939 translation that Brauner acquired. By the time he was writing *L'Art magique*, the text had also been discussed more recently in Robert Kanters' & Robert Amadou's *Anthologie littéraire de l'Occultisme* (1950). Robert Kanters & Robert Amadou, *Anthologie littéraire de l'Occultisme* (Paris: Editions René Julliard, 1950), 166–70. Breton owned a copy of the earlier translation: Novalis, *Les disciples à Saïs et les fragments de Novalis*, trans. Maurice Maeterlinck (Bruxelles: Éditions Paul Lacomblez, 1909). See http://www.andrebreton.fr/work/56600100111170.

120 Novalis, *The Novices of Sais*, 7–9.

Chapter 4

1 For detailed analyses of *Arcanum 17*, see: Suzanne Lamy, *André Breton: hermétisme et poésie dans Arcane 17* (Montréal: Presses de L'Université de Montréal, 1977); Anna Balakian, 'Introduction', *Arcanum 17*, trans. Zack Rogow (Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2004); Tessel Bauduin, 'Magic in Exile', *Surrealism and the Occult: Occultism and Western Esotericism in the Work and Movement of André Breton* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2014), 133–58. Zamani has examined the role of European and, to a lesser extent, Egyptian mythology in *Arcanum 17*, and the role of the medieval legend of Melusina, in particular. Daniel Zamani, 'Melusina Triumphant: Matriarchy and the Politics of Anti-Fascist Mythmaking in André Breton's Arcane 17 (1945)', in *Surrealism, Occultism and Politics: In Search of the Marvellous*, eds. Tessel M. Bauduin, Victoria Ferentinou & Daniel Zamani (London; New York: Routledge, 2018), 95–117. In its primary focus on American material culture, this chapter considers Breton's recourse to myth in a distinct context.

2 As documented in his 'Carnet de voyage chez les indiens Hopi' (1945), Breton and Elisa set out North from Flagstaff, Arizona, into the Navajo territories around Tuba City, then drove West to East through Hotevilla, Oraibi, Shongopovi, Mishongnovi, Walpi and Keams Canyon in the Hopi Reservation, continuing on

into the Zuni Reservation in New Mexico, before eventually returning West to the Hopi Reservation. André Breton, 'Carnet de voyage chez les indiens Hopi', *Oeuvres Complètes vol.* III (Paris: Gallimard, *c.*1988).

3 Of these ceremonial dances, the Snake Dance is by far the most famous on account of the inherent risks involved in hunting, capturing and performing with (embracing and biting) live snakes.

4 '*Keams Canyon* (nuit de vendredi ou samedi 11 août) / Poupée violette.' Breton, 'Carnet de voyage', 190.

5 '*Mardi*. Achat quatre poupées + un plume et un ruban [à] Hotevilla'; 'Impossible d'acheter les trois très belles katchinas à crénelures presque accordées la vielle au soir'; '*Jeudi*. Shungopovi … Meilleur accueil qu'à Oraibi. Achetons sept poupées assez modernes de facture.' Ibid., 185–8.

6 For more detail on the contents of these publications, see: William Rubin ed., *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 546; Gérard Durozoi, *History of the Surrealist Movement*, trans. Alison Anderson (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 121–2.

7 Walter Benjamin, 'Dream Kitsch: Gloss on Surrealism', *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings vol. 2, 1927–1934*, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Cambridge, MA; London: Belknap Press, 1999), 4.

8 André Breton, 'Crise de l'objet', *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 279; '[Such are] the object-gods of certain regions and certain times, distinguished among all others because of the dazzling check they impose on our laws of plastic representation, of whose evocative power we are jealous and whom we feel to be the guardians of the very grace that we want to reconquer!' André Breton, 'Surrealist Exhibition of Objects' (1936). This particular translation of the closing line of Breton's 'Surrealist Exhibition of Objects' was made by Roland Penrose, and is held in the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (Ref: GMA A35/1/1/ RPA65/2). Philippe Dagen has noted that the surrealists' predisposition towards Oceanian and American artefacts as the most impressive regional classes of 'objets sauvages' was already manifestly apparent by 1936, as exemplified by the selection of artefacts for the *Exposition surréaliste d'objets* held at Galerie Charles Ratton that year. Philippe Dagen, 'Ratton, objets sauvages', *Charles Ratton: L'Invention des arts 'Primitifs'*, ed. Philippe Dagen & Maureen Murphy (Paris: Skira Flammarion, 2013), 130.

9 The only notable acknowledgement of the inherently unethical nature of the trade in ethnographic artefacts came in 1931, when the surrealists protested the *Exposition coloniale* being held in Paris between May and November that year. After the pavilion of the Dutch East Indies burnt down on 27 June, destroying hundreds of artefacts, the group wrote a tract entitled *Premier bilan de l'exposition coloniale*, in which they condemned the loss of 'the most valuable manifestations of the intellectual life of Malaysia and Melanesia, […] objects which had been violently torn from those who made them [… in] an act of piracy'. Collective, 'First Appraisal of the Colonial Exhibition', trans. Michael Richardson & Krzysztof Fijalkowski, in *Surrealism Against the Current: Tracts and Declarations*, ed. Richardson and Fijalkowski (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 186. Despite this recognition that the indigenous artists were generally denied the benefits of this lucrative trade, the surrealists' fascination with these objects seems to have outstripped their moral obligation to boycott the market, since they continued to collect throughout this period.

10 Clifford ultimately found this model of 'Ethnographic Surrealism' to represent a kind of neurosis of contemporary ethnography, which was in denial of the fragile basis of its broadly structuralist quest towards a coherent picture of human civilization through 'the reduction of incongruities'. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature and Art* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 146–7.
11 Guy Girard, 'Hermeticism and the Magical Tradition', *Surrealism: Key Concepts*, ed. Krzysztof Fijalkowski & Michael Richardson (London: Routledge, 2016), 36.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Victoria Clouston's study of Breton's literary sources during the Second World War has identified three major sources of inspiration for Breton's new recourse to esotericism by the end of 1945: his revelation of nineteenth-century French literature's investment in the occult, as presented in Auguste Viatte's *Victor Hugo et les illuminés de son temps* (1942); his wartime discovery of Charles Fourier and his principle of 'universal analogy', which aspired to restructure the order of the world along the lines of impulsive emotional connections between nature and society; and, finally, his growing interest in 'primitive mentality'. Where the first two elements of this equation are given excellent coverage in Clouston's study, here I will focus on 'primitive mentality' as the driving force behind surrealist esotericism. Victoria Clouston, *André Breton in Exile: The Poetics of "Occultation", 1941–1947* (London: Routledge, 2017), 149–59, 244.
15 Parkinson, 'Towards *L'Art magique*', 83–4.
16 Benjamin Péret, 'Magic: The Flesh and Blood of Poetry', *View* (June 1943), 44.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 63.
20 'We will not be able to count on science again until it forms its own clear picture of how to remedy the strange curse that has fallen on it and which seems to doom it to accumulate so many more mistakes and calamities than benefits.' André Breton, *Arcanum 17*, trans. Zack Rogow (Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2004), 55.
21 Ibid., 115–16.
22 We are reminded here, in Breton's criticism of ethnography, of Marcel Mauss's notion of the 'total social fact', by which he attempted to encapsulate a particular societal belief system within a single activity or behavioural trait that represented the whole system by synecdoche. Claude Lévi-Strauss described this practice as an attempt 'to apprehend the total fact through any one aspect of society exclusively [… in order to produce] a system of interpretation accounting for the aspects of all modes of behaviour simultaneously, physical, physiological, psychical, sociological […]' Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 26.
23 Breton, *Arcanum 17*, 117.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., 116. Bauduin has explained how *Arcanum 17* sits at the threshold of Breton's quest for a 'New Myth' for Surrealism: as conceived of as an urgent reprieve from the false myths of pre-war Europe that had almost led to its near-total destruction. Bauduin, *Surrealism and the Occult*, 160–2. Writing at the end of the war in 1945, the space that so-called 'primitive' mythological systems permitted for symbolic evolution and renewal clearly held great appeal for Breton in his quest for Surrealism's 'New Myth'.

26 Péret, 'Magic', 44.
27 André Breton, 'Arshile Gorky', *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: Macdonald, 1972), 199.
28 André Breton, 'Surrealism and Painting', *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: Macdonald, 1972), 1.
29 Breton's encounters with non-Western cultures during the Second World War spanned his stop off in Martinique in 1941 on the voyage to New York, his exposure to artefacts from Oceania and British Columbia at Julius Carlebach's antiques dealership in New York, his encounters with artefacts in American ethnographic collections, and his trips to the Navajo, Hopi and Zuni territories of the American Southwest and the Vodou communities of Haiti in the summer of 1945 and the winter of 1945–6, respectively. Clio Mitchell points out that in both these latter instances, Breton was 'visiting societies in which magic was still a part of everyday life, a living reality, for the majority of society's members.' Mitchell, 356.
30 For a more detailed picture of the planning and curation of *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, see: Bauduin, *Surrealism and the Occult*; Fabrice Flahutez, Nouveau monde et nouveau mythe: mutations du surréalisme, de l'exil américain à l'"Écart absolu', 1941–1965 (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2007); Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros: 1938–1968* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005).
31 'La structure générale de l'exposition répondra au souci primordial de retracer les étapes successives d'une INITIATION, dont le passage d'une pièce dans l'autre sous-entendra la graduation.' André Breton, 'Projet Initial', *Le Surréalisme en 1947* (Paris: Éditions Pierre à Feu, 1947), 135.
32 'Chacune des douze alvéoles octogonales (délimitée par un support de maçonnerie haut 3 mètres) sera consacrée à un être, un catégorie d'êtres ou un objet SUSCEPTIBLE D'ÊTRE DOUÉ DE VIE MYTHIQUE et auquel on aura élevé un "autel" sur le modèle des cultes païens (indiens ou voudou, par exemple).' Ibid., 136.
33 'Stupidemment nommé secrétaire sous prétexte que les longues plumes de sa nuque ont rappelé celle, fichée sur l'oreille, des secrétaires de autrefois, il est de tous les grands oiseaux sans doute la plus élégant et celui qui donne la plus grave impression de puissance nerveux. Max Ernst s'identifié symboliquement à lui.' André Breton, 'Composition des salles: notices descriptives d'André Breton [1947]', Fonds André Breton, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Paris, BRET 1.5. 'Immobile et sans crainte devant les monstres.' André Breton, 'Composition des salles: notices descriptives d'André Breton [1947]', Fonds André Breton, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Paris, BRET 1.5.
34 In Brauner's 1947 painting *Les Amoureux* a coiled snake adopts the form of the alchemical symbol of the ouroboros on the forehead of the left-hand figure, who is also the figure of The Magician from the Major Arcana of the Tarot, and whose volcanic head manifests as a crucible reminiscent of the athanor, the fabled oven of the alchemists. Meanwhile, the imperious head of the Secretary Bird merges with the portentous figure of The Papess, also from the Major Arcana of the Tarot, over a background punctuated by the portentous words 'Destiny', 'Magic', 'Liberty', 'Past', 'Present', 'Future'. The invitation to read the symbols in tandem and interchangeably is posed by the forked shroud above the avian head of The Papess, which constitutes an inverted coupling to the protruding volcano of The Magician, thus suggesting a neat fold in the symbolic seam of the painting.
35 Bauduin, *Surrealism and the Occult*, 162.
36 'Les aspirations surréalistes, aussi bien poétiques que plastiques, doivent, dans l'exposition de 1947, pouvoir s'exprimer simultanément, leur commune mesure

étant cherchée du côte d'un MYTHE NOUVEAU à traduire, dont on peu d'ailleurs considérer qu'il existe aujourd'hui à l'état embryonnaire ou latent.' Breton, 'Projet Initial', 135.

37 Noël Arnaud & Christian Dotremont, *Le Surréalisme en 947: Patalogue officiel de l'Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* (Brussels: Pierre & Paul, 1947).

38 Le Groupe Surréalisme Révolutionnaire was founded by Christian Dotremont and Jean Seeger in 1947. The movement had a short-lived existence, collapsing in 1948 (succeeded by the CoBrA movement), but oversaw several indignant publications attacking Bretonian Surrealism.

39 Lefebvre's 'Brief Notes on some Well-Trodden Ground' in *The Critique of Everyday Life* was partly responsible for the ideological disrepute that Surrealism fell into during the late 1940s. Here he had suggested that Surrealism was the most recent manifestation of a literary tradition emanating from the nineteenth century, and the works of Charles Baudelaire in particular, which had turned everyday life 'upside down' through the injection of the marvellous. Out of a stultifying boredom with the everyday – tired of drinking from the 'bitter chalice of everyday life' – writers such as Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud and now Breton had all sought to give reality a novel new '*lining*'. For Lefebvre, writers of this tradition had sustained a persistent assault upon everyday life, whereby the everyday was always the poor cousin to its marvellous literary presentation, rose-tinted with the spiritual and the fantastic. In order to progress into a 'new era', and finally leave the distracting line of the nineteenth-century imagination, Lefebvre posited that literature needed to reorient itself towards the hard face of the everyday so that man can properly 'begin the conquest of his own life'. Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life vol. I*, trans. John Moore (London; New York: Verso, 1991), 103–29.

40 'Anciens pays représentés'. Arnaud & Dotremont, *Le Surréalisme en 947*.

41 Georges Bataille, 'L'Absence de mythe', *Le Surréalisme en 1947* (Paris: Éditions Pierre à Feu, 1947).

42 'Le Mythe', 'Le Mythe sans mythe', 'Le Mythe avec mythe', 'Mythe-mythe-avec', 'Sans-mythe-mythe'. Arnaud & Dotremont, *Le Surréalisme en 947*.

43 'verbiage', 'confusion', 'indifférence'. Arnaud & Dotremont, *Le Surréalisme en 947*.

44 Collective, 'Inaugural Rupture', trans. Michael Richardson & Krzysztof Fijalkowski, in *Surrealism Against the Current: Tracts and Declarations*, ed. Richardson and Fijalkowski (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 43–36.

45 Ibid., 46–7.

46 Ibid., 48.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 46.

49 Zamani, 'Melusina Triumphant', 97.

50 Ibid., 98.

51 André Breton, 'Surrealist Comet', *Free Rein*, trans. Michel Parmentier & Jacqueline d'Amboise (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 95.

52 Ibid., 95.

53 'Ascendant Sign' was completed on 30 December 1947 and published as a kind of manifesto on the cover of the new surrealist periodical *Néon* in January 1948.

54 André Breton, 'Ascendant Sign', *Free Rein*, trans. Michel Parmentier & Jacqueline d'Amboise (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 106.

55 Ibid., 104.

56 Jean-Pierre Cauvin, 'Introduction: The Poethics of André Breton', *Poems of André Breton: A Bilingual Anthology*, ed. and trans. Jean-Pierre Cauvin & Mary Ann Caws (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), xxi.

57 'Comme les pièces de monnaie, les mots possèdent deux faces: ils sont à la fois signe et signification. Ce sont les philologues qui posent en principe que, dans les langues, le choix des sons composant les mots absolument arbitraires, et que le langage n'est qu'un ensemble de "signes" conventionnels. […] nous arrivons à poser ce premier principe de la logique dialectique: *si une chose possède un certain group d'attributs, elle doit posséder aussi le group des attributs contradictoires!* Nous pouvons appeler cette loi la loi d'équivalence. La dialectique entire est une doctrine d'équivalence. … La démarche surréaliste démontre que le mot est une construction multi-dimensionnelle.' Arpad Mezei, 'Liberté du langage', *Le surréalisme en 1947* (Paris: Éditions pierre à feu, 1947), 59–61.

58 'Ce rapport organique des significations au-delà du rapport conventionnel des signes, fait du langage une représentation homogène exprimant l'existence d'une communauté cohérente, celle du monde chthonique: le monde du dragon.' Ibid., 59.

59 Breton, 'Ascendant Sign', 105.

60 As Jean-Pierre Cauvin notes, surrealist discourse was always motivated by its application in life. For Breton, he explains, 'Poetry is not art, but life itself, life as a constant adventure shepherded by chance, love, and liberty. Life is poetry in practice […]' Cauvin, xvii.

61 Breton, 'Ascendant Sign', 104.

62 'Toute intention d'empiéter sur le domaine de l'ethnographie en est absente puisque seul un critère poétique a présidé aux choix des textes qui composent cet ouvrage, et ce mode de sélection ne peut être qu'arbitraire du point de vue de toute science. Il ne s'ensuit pas forcément qu'une telle entreprise ne présente aucun intérêt sur un autre plan. Au contraire, montrant les premiers pas de l'homme sur le chemin de la connaissance, cette anthologie indique clairement que la pensée poétique apparaît dès l'aurore de l'humanité, d'abord sous la forme – non considérée ici – du langage, plus tard sous l'aspect du mythe qui préfigure la science, la philosophie et constitue à la fois le premier état de la poésie et l'axe autour duquel elle continue de tourner à une vitesse indéfiniment accélérée.' Benjamin Péret, *Anthologie des mythes, légendes et contes populaires d'Amérique* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1960), 9.

63 In his paper 'Dernières nouvelles du merveilleux' delivered in the panel '1942: Benjamin Péret, les Amériques et le mythe' at the 2022 annual conference of the International Society for the Study of Surrealism (ISSS), Jérôme Duwa compared Péret's presentation of myths in his *Anthologie des mythes* to Mabille's presentation of texts in *Le Miroir du merveilleux*, which he conceived of as a kind of poetic toolkit. Duwa noted Mabille's conception of the texts as 'cartes' ('maps'), and suggested that there is a similar approach taken in Péret's *Anthologie*. See Pierre Mabille, *Le Miroir du merveilleux* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1962), 17–18.

64 Péret, *Anthologie*, 47–9, 305–7, 348, 295.

65 In the end result, Legrand was responsible for the bulk of the art historical survey, which represents by far the largest part of the text, whilst Breton had written the introductory section and a significantly smaller proportion of the historical survey. Though their respective contributions were not distinguished in the text itself,

Legrand estimated that Breton had written just one-quarter to one-third of the main text. Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind*, 596.

66 This discussion is familiar from essays such as 'Crise de l'objet' (1936) and both manifestoes of the 1920s.

67 Vincent Debaene, *Far Afield: French Anthropology between Science and Literature*, trans. Justin Izzo (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 259.

68 Mitchell, 35.

69 André Breton & Gérard Legrand, *L'Art magique* (Paris: Adam Bíro, 1991), 31. Breton was closely acquainted with Lévi-Strauss. The pair had met on the boat the *Capitaine Paul-Lemerle*, which set sail for New York from Marseille in February 1941, laden with passengers escaping the conflict in Europe. Lévi-Strauss would later refer to their meeting in his famous memoirs, *Tristes Tropiques* (1955). In New York, Lévi-Strauss was closely involved with the émigré surrealists, and contributed to the surrealist journal *VVV*. Many years later, there was a cooling in their relations around the event of the publication of *L'Art magique* in 1957, when Lévi-Strauss snubbed Breton's invitation to contribute to the *enquête* upon the theme of magic by getting his seven-year-old son, Laurent, to write part of it on his behalf (such was his estimation of the intellectual credibility of Breton's questionnaire). As Mark Polizzotti explains, 'Breton printed the response exactly as received, but when the finished book came out he dedicated the complimentary contributors' copy to Laurent, and broke off all relations with Claude.' Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind*, 596–7. Lévi-Strauss conceded that their relationship 'wasn't the same' after this dispute. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss*, ed. Didier Eribon, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 34. Yet Polizzotti's account of a definitive break in relations does not seem entirely accurate, considering that they continued to exchange their published works into the 1960s (see Chapter 5 of this volume).

70 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction*, 34.

71 Ibid., 53.

72 Ibid., 55–6.

73 Breton & Legrand, *L'Art magique,* 31.

74 Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction*, 59–60.

75 Benjamin Péret, *Le Déshonneur des poètes, précédé de 'La Parole est à Péret'* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1965), 24–5.

76 Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction*, 63.

77 'Signifiant Flottant'. http://www.andrebreton.fr/work/56600100442310 (image 4 of 42).

78 'Inadéquation du signifiant et du signifié'. Ibid.

79 'Là est sans doute la leçon la plus consistante et la plus fertile entre toutes celles que peuvent s'attacher à l'idée d'une "tradition" véhiculant de siècle en siècle des "pouvoirs originels", communs aux sorciers, aux artistes et aux poètes, et dont la théorie des correspondances offert comme une transposition stratégique, indispensable pour pénétrer véritablement au cœur du réel où "une image n'est pas une allégorie, n'est pas le symbole d'une chose étrangère, mais le symbole d'elle-même" (Novalis) aperçue en quelque sorte à sa naissance, dans son originalité absolue et avec l'intacte étendue de ses résonances, en nous comme en rapport avec le reste de l'univers.' Breton & Legrand, *L'Art magique,* 44.

80 'Entre l'embaumer de la rue La Rochefoucauld et le peintre de *Nevermore* il y a une commune mesure, celle de la phrase de Jarry: "Logiquement, la recherche de l'extrême lointain, dans les mondes exotiques ou abolis, mène à l'absolu."' Ibid., 234.

81 André Breton, 'Concerning Symbolism' (1958), *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: Macdonald, 1972), 361.

82 '[…] l'œuvre de Gauguin, et singulièrement son oeuvre polynèsienne, témoigne d'une perpétuelle transcendence des "fins plastiques", qui ne sont pour lui que des moyens, entièrement informés par la fin véritable de l'activité artistique: la Poésie. Gauguin est, avant les abords immédiats du surréalisme, le seul peintre à avoir aperçu qu'il portait un magicien en lui, et à en avoir donné une définition ou approximation barbare, plus féconde que les splendides rêves de Gustave Moreau.' Breton & Legrand, *L'Art magique,* 236–7.

83 'La magie est partout dans l'œuvre de Gauguin, où la critique l'épingle en général sous le nom de *primitivisme*.' Ibid., 235. Legrand would later write a monograph on Gauguin in 1966. The breadth of this study, and the direct repetition of certain references from *L'Art magique*, seems to suggest that a significant portion of the discussion of Gauguin in the 1957 publication derived from Legrand's personal researches. Gérard Legrand, *Gauguin* (Paris: Bordas, 1966).

84 Parkinson, 'Towards *L'Art magique*', 90.

85 In the original French:

> 'La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
> Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
> L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
> Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.
>
> Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
> Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
> Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
> Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.'

Charles Baudelaire, 'Correspondances', *Baudelaire: The Complete Verse*, ed. and trans. Francis Scarfe (London: Anvil Press, 2012), 67.

86 Ibid.

87 Novalis, *The Novices of Sais,* 3–5.

88 Breton & Legrand, *L'Art magique,* 218.

89 William Arctander O'Brien, *Novalis: Signs of Revolution* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1995), 105.

90 Ibid., 101.

91 Ibid., 199.

92 This phrase derives from Novalis's controversial 1799 essay (unpublished during his lifetime) 'Christendom or Europe', in which he provided a long overview of the history of Christianity in Europe, its fragmentation into different churches and sects, its contestation under the Enlightenment, and the future prospect of European reunification. The monotheistic presentiments and nationalistic undertones of this essay have been read after the fact as presaging, or indeed informing, certain ideas that would later underpin Nazism. Novalis's use of this poetic phrase within the essay is directed, somewhat disappointingly, to observing analogies between the patterns and repetitions of History. However, the phrase has taken on a life of its own in

scholarship on Novalis, where it has become axiomatic of his wider ideas on the role of symbols and the manifestation of magic.

93 http://www.andrebreton.fr/work/56600100442310 (image 4 of 42).

94 André Breton, 'Yves Laloy', *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: Macdonald, 1972), 254.

95 Ibid., 256.

96 Ibid., 254.

97 Ibid. I have altered the final sentence of Simon Watson Taylor's English translation here, which reads awkwardly: 'The unique feature of Yves Laloy's work is that it combines these two entirely different approaches, describing an itinerary to which he alone holds the key but, as we have no difficulty at all in discovering, transcending ordinary experience.' Breton's original French is as follows: 'Le propre de l'œuvre d'Yves Laloy est de ne faire qu'une de ces deux démarches si distinctes. Ce qu'elle relate est un itinéraire dont il garde la clé, mais dont nous n'avons aucune peine à découvrir qu'il transcende l'expérience commune'. André Breton, 'Yves Laloy', *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 254.

98 The other reason being that, once the ceremony is complete, the Sand Painting is deemed to have inherited the illness or evil from the patient and so needs to be destroyed.

99 Breton, 'Laloy', 255–6.

Chapter 5

1 Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Sorcerer and His Magic', *Structural Anthropology vol. 1*, trans. Claire Jacobson & Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (London: Penguin, 1977), 184. The term 'arbitrary' has special import here, in reference to Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of 'The Arbitrary Nature of the Sign', in which he concluded that the signifier is 'arbitrary in that it actually has no natural connection with the signified'. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York; Toronto; London: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 67–9. Lévi-Strauss discussed this point at length in his introduction to *Structural Anthropology*.

2 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, trans. George Weidenfeld & Nigel Nicolson (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), 16.

3 Ibid., 17.

4 Ibid., 13.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., 9.

7 The translators of this edition erroneously translated 'hasard objectif' in Lévi-Strauss's original text as 'objective hazard'. Ibid., 21.

8 The association that Lévi-Strauss made between 'bricolage' and the surrealist worldview seems to have been doubly motivated, in that the collecting habits of the 'bricoleur' – inclusive of the figures of the beachcomber and rag-and-bone man – also closely resemble the surrealists' habit of hunting for discarded objects.

9 'À André Breton, ce livre où l'ethnologue, avec des fleurs et des oiseaux, rend hommage au l'hasard objectif, avec la fidèle admiration de Claude Lévi-Strauss'. http://www.andrebreton.fr/work/56600100733001.

10 Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Scope of Anthropology', *Structural Anthropology vol. 2*, trans. Monique Layton (London: Penguin, 1977), 27.

11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 27–8.
13 See discussion in Chapter 4.
14 Lévi-Strauss, 'Scope of Anthropology', 28.
15 Vincent Bounoure, 'Surrealism and the Savage Heart', trans. Julien Levy & Claude Tarnaud, *Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain*, ed. Edouard Jaguer & José Pierre (New York: D'Arcy Galleries, 1960), 26–9. A French version of Bounoure's essay was later published in the second issue of the surrealist journal *L'Archibras* in October 1967 under the title 'Le Surréalisme et la cœur sauvage', and illustrated with images of the Mexican Revolution.
16 Bounoure, 'Savage Heart', 26.
17 Ibid., 27, 29.
18 Ibid., 29.
19 Danielle Lord, 'Universe de poésie et de merveilleux: Mimi Parent', *Mimi Parent, Jean Benoît. Surréalistes* (Quebec: Musée national des beaux-arts du Quebec, 2004), 14–15. For more information on Alfred Pellan see Guy Robert, *École de Montréal: Situation et tendances* (Montréal: Éditions du Centre de psychologie et de pédagogie, 1964).
20 Danielle Lord, 'Jean Benoît: L'homme de l'Écart absolu', *Mimi Parent, Jean Benoît. Surréalistes* (Quebec: Musée national des beaux-arts du Quebec, 2004), 36.
21 William Pietz, 'The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish', *Res*, no. 13 (Spring 1987), 23.
22 Lord, 'Jean Benoît', 36.
23 Among the small audience invited to witness the event, which was staged at the apartment of the poet Joyce Mansour, were André Breton, Elisa Breton, Roberto Matta, Victor Brauner and Vincent Bounoure.
24 The performance began with Benoît entering the room in full tribal regalia to a clamorous, rumbling soundtrack. Following a series of orations and pronouncements by Breton and others, Benoît then gave a ceremonial striptease (assisted by Parent) conducted to a running commentary of the symbolic significance of each element of the costume being removed. At the climax of the performance, he famously branded himself on the chest with the letters S-A-D-E, following which Roberto Matta impulsively stepped out from the audience and branded himself. Vincent Bounoure reportedly fainted upon witnessing the gruesome spectacle. Alain Jouffroy, 'Une acte surréaliste: l'exécution du testament de Sade', *Arts – Lettres, Spectacles*, no. 754 (23–29 December 1959), 16. See also Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros*, 154–8.
25 Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros,* 155–8. The Dogon comparison, in particular, seems well founded. Not only does Benoît's mask formally resemble the attenuated, sometimes-towering faces of Dogon masks, but it seems likely that Benoît would have been familiar with such specimens since he is reported to have been lectured by Marcel Griaule, pre-eminent expert on Dogon culture, whilst at the Musée de l'Homme. Lord, 'Jean Benoît', 36. 1948, the year in which Benoît arrived in Paris, was also the year in which Griaule published his influential study on the Dogon, *Dieu d'eau*, which was presented as a series of diary entries based around interviews with a blind hunter named Ogotemmêli.
26 Kathleen Morand, 'Paris', *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. CII (January–December 1960), 88–9.

27 Ibid., 89.
28 Ibid.
29 André Chastel, 'Les Temps modernes: masque, mascarade, mascaron', *Le Masque* (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1959), 93.
30 'L'ensemble constitue une véritable résurrection de la vie mythique. Tout y est fidélité à un langage traditionnel de signes: il n'est que de visiter l'actuelle exposition de masques, au musée Guimet, pour apprécier le synthèse prodigieuse de rites et de significations que Jean Benoît à réalisé avec ce costume.' Jouffroy, 'Une acte surréaliste', 16.
31 Morand, 'Paris', 89.
32 This follow-up project appears to have been a commercial venture, led by Henriette Demoulin-Bernard, then assistant curator of the Musée Guimet.
33 Roger Caillois, 'Roger Caillois explique le mystère des masques', *ARTS*, no. 752 (9–15 December 1959), 16.
34 'Il [Caillois] donne ici le point de vue du psychologue et du sociologue sur la présence du masque à travers l'histoire.' Ibid., 1.
35 '[…] il est de fait que toute humanité porte ou a porté le masque … Des civilisations, parmi les plus remarquables, ont prospéré sans avoir l'idée de la roue. Le masque leur était familier.' Caillois, 'Roger Caillois explique', 16.
36 '[…] les peuples accèdent à l'histoire et à la civilisation au moment où ils rejettent le masque, où ils répudient comme véhicule de panique intime ou collective et où le masque se trouve déchu de sa fonction central et institutionnelle.' Ibid.
37 'Sa fabrication comme son utilisation ne relèvent plus de la magie, mais de l'art […] Il est virtuellement thème et objet d'exposition, d'étude scientifique, d'estime esthétique, d'admiration désintéressée.' Ibid.
38 'Le masque a trois fonctions essentielles: il dissimule, métamorphose et épouvante. Elles correspondent aux trois fonctions principales du mimétisme chez les insectes: camouflage, travesti et intimidation.' Ibid., 1.
39 'Plus souvent le masque est instrument de métamorphose. Dans les sociétés dites primitives, celui qui le porte incarne l'être dont le masque est l'effigie. Il est momentanément possédé par cet être (ou par cette force). Il est ainsi transformé à ses yeux et aux yeux des autres. […] le masque libère en lui des énergies inconnues, qui semblent se substituer à sa personnalité ordinaire.' Ibid.
40 'Totem de l'homme-liberté'. Jean Benoît, 'Notes concernant l'exécution du testament de Sade', *EROS: Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* (Paris, 1959), 64.
41 '[…] le masque ouvre la porte à la hardiesse, à l'audace libertine, permet les mots et les gestes défendus, introduit soudain une excitation louche, fiévreuse et survoltée, équivoque et brutale qui rappelle, dégradées, désaffectées, transposées dans l'insolence et la truculence, dans la turbulence ou la licence, l'audace et l'angoisse des grandes agressions de jadis, l'irruption de personnages sacré se conduisant de plein droit au rebours des règles qui gouvernent les relations quotidiennes.' Caillois, 'Roger Caillois explique', 16.
42 'l'irruption de personnages sacré'. Ibid.
43 It is towards ethnographic case studies that one must turn in order to find a possible source for the model of supernatural possession being played out in Benoît's performance, whose disdain for Christian conceptions of God and spirituality was plain to see in the very premise of the *Exécution*, which looked to undo The Church's commandeering of Sade's burial. In his 'Notes', Benoît made a point of specifying that the arrow on the back of the mask was 'pointed towards heaven and preferably destined for the Holy Ghost. One person less in god!' ('Flèche [au dos du masque]

pointée vers le ciel et destinée, de préférence, au Saint-Esprit. Une personne de moins en Dieu! […]'). Benoît, 'Notes', 65. (Special thanks to Krzysztof Fijalkowski for improving this translation.)

44 Kristoffer Noheden, *Surrealism, Cinema, and the Search for a New Myth* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 79.

45 'Dans son essai de sociologie fondé sur l'étude des jeux, Roger Caillois a mis en lumière les caractères communs à toute une série d'activités que domine l'instinct d'imitation et qu'il classe dans une même catégorie, celle de la mimicry, ainsi nommée d'un mot anglais qui désigne le mimétisme observé chez certaines espèces animales.' Jean-Louis Bédouin, *Les Masques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961), 12.

46 'L'homme qui se masque y est censé perdre réellement son identité pour permettre à l'ancêtre, à l'animal totémique, au héros mythique, de se manifester *à visage découvert*. Le masque existe par lui-même; il agit conformément à sa nature propre; il frappe de terreur sacrée les non-initiés, parce qu'il n'est pas humain.' Ibid., 20.

47 "… dans la religion des Pueblos […] le masque a une important plus grande qu'ailleurs. […] Les hommes qui les portent ne sont plus de simples hommes. Ils sont eux-mêmes un lien entre le monde terrestre et le sacré". À l'origine, il y a identité entre les masques et les dieux masqués, ou *katchina*.' Ibid., 118–19.

48 'Quand il coiffe le masque, le porteur assume la divinité qu'il représente.' Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Amérique du nord et Amérique du sud', *Le Masque* (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1959), 25.

49 Morand, 'Paris', 89.

50 *Sun Chief* was a landmark publication in twentieth-century American literature. Along with *Black Elk Speaks* (1932), published ten years earlier, *Sun Chief* was one of the earliest published works written from the first-hand perspective of an indigenous American Indian. It was of special historical and sociological interest on account of its portrayal of the devastating impact of mission work, local government and industrialization on the native communities over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. *Soleil Hopi* received a preface from none other than Claude Lévi-Strauss. In a televised interview with Pierre Dumayet in 1959, to publicize the new translation, Lévi-Strauss described the book as tracing a territory that 'never was penetrated by professional ethnologists', and likened its revelatory significance to the discovery of an 'autobiography of an inhabitant of the planet Mars', in terms which clearly elucidate its contemporary appeal to the surrealists. http://www.ina.fr/video/I00014610.

51 Collective, 'Letter to Don C. Talayesva', *André Breton: What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, ed. Franklin Rosemont, trans. John Ashbery et al. (London: Pluto Press, 1978), 345.

52 Lord, 'Jean Benoît', 44.

53 *André Breton: 42 rue Fontaine, Arts primitifs* (Paris: CalmelsCohen, 2002), 270. For more on Breton's interest in Sand Painting specifically see Chapter 4.

54 The Kôkô spirits of the Zuni are believed to reside at the great river confluence site of Koluwala:wa, and visit the Zuni people in the guise of Kôkô dancers and through the wooden Kôkô dolls. Similarly, the Kachina spirits of the Hopi are believed to reside in the San Francisco Peaks, where they remain throughout the winter, before visiting the Hopi over a period of seven months each year in the guise of Kachina dancers, and via the wooden Kachina dolls. See Dorothy K. Washburn, 'Kachina: Window

to the Hopi World', *Hopi Kachina: Spirit of Life*, ed. Dorothy K. Washburn (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 1980), 41–3.

55 Don C. Talayesva, *Sun Chief* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 44, 47.

56 Ibid., 91.

57 Ibid., 44.

58 'LAISSEZ PASSER le marquis de Sade "tel qu'en lui-même" et réinvesti de tous ses pouvoirs par Jean Benoît.' André Breton, 'Enfin Jean Benoît nous rend le grand cérémonial', *EROS: Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* (Paris: Galerie Daniel Cordier, 1959), 61.

59 'La Communion solennelle' was a short play in which a conversation between a young girl and her grandmother about her rite of passage into womanhood is driven to distraction by the marauding figure of the necrophiliac, whose intermittent appearances on stage eventually corrupt the young girl. Fernando Arrabal, 'La Communion solennelle', *La Brèche*, no. 4 (February 1963), 54–9.

60 Lisa Downing, *Desiring the Dead: Necrophilia and Nineteenth-century French Literature* (Oxford: Legenda, 2003), 2.

61 'Grignoté par sa faim obscène, nacré sous son collier de pierres tombales, silencieux et laiteux comme l'huître dans sa coquille, le Nécrophile entrebaîllera sa bouche et laissera jaillir sa langue prélunaire …' (original ellipsis). Joyce Mansour, 'L'Écart absolu. Exposition internationale du surréalisme 1965–1966. Éléments mnémotechniques pour un rêve futur', *L'Archibras,* vol. 1 (April 1967), 60.

62 The surrealists' renewed admiration for Brauner and Matta was announced, along with the official retraction of their 1948 exclusions, in Breton's essay 'Dernière heure' published in the *EROS* catalogue. André Breton, 'Dernière heure', *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives, 1922–1969, vol. II*, ed. José Pierre (Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1982), 182–3.

63 'En traitant des têtes des défunts, en modelant l'argile sur les crânes des membres importantes du groupe, en y ajoutant souvent les symboles caractéristiques de leurs fonctions ou de leurs grades sociaux, c'est l'homme qu'on immortalise par le moyen du masque. Satisfait, son esprit fixé par l'image ne viendra plus hanter les vivants.' Henriette Demoulin-Bernard & Georges Pierre, *Masques* (Paris: Olivier Perrin, 1965), 66.

64 Items 119 and 122 respectively in the *Le Masque* (1959) catalogue.

65 Tristan Corbière, 'Toit', *Les Amours jaunes* (1873). In full, the final verse reads: 'Dans ton boîtier, ô fenêtre! / Calme et pure, gît peut-être … / … … … … … … … … … … … …. / Un vieux monsieur sourd!' I have used the compounded term 'window-glass' here in my translation in order to try and retain the rhyming couplet 'fenêtre'-'être' that exists in the original poem. Corbière was the first case study in Verlaine's *Les Poètes maudits*, alongside Arthur Rimbaud and Stephen Mallarmé. Paul Verlaine, *Les Poètes maudits* (Paris: Léon Vanier, 1884), 1–16.

66 Vincent Bounoure, 'Un Reliquaire de Jean Benoît', *L'Archibras*, no. 6 (December 1968), 41.

67 Ibid.

68 'Depuis les énormes forêts d'Amazonie où elle est née non loin du Rio Tapajos, la très belle enfant dont l'humeur inquiète nous est, presque miraculeusement, transmise avait toujours voyagé exposée aux regards des chiens. Mais Langlois et Benoît se sont rencontrés dans une égale dévotion, dans une même ferveur jalouse. Il n'est jamais trop tard pour être aimée.' Ibid.

69 Demoulin-Bernard & Pierre, *Masques,* 66.

70 Writing in 1958, anthropologist Robert F. Murphy described how: '[t]he preparation of the trophy head began during the return march from the enemy village. First the brains were extracted with the wide bamboo point of a war arrow, which was inserted into the head through the foramen magnum. The teeth were then knocked out and carefully stored away, and the head was lightly boiled and dried near the fire. This process made the skin dry and parchment-like and effectively preserved it. Finally a woven cord was inserted in the mouth and led out through the nostril by a hole pierced in the hard palate, leaving the tasseled ends of the cord dangling from the mouth and nostril. At a later time, the eye sockets were sealed with beeswax and two paca teeth affixed across either eye.' Robert F. Murphy, 'Mundurucú Religion', *University of California Publications of American Archaeology and Ethnology*, vol. 49 no. 1 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1958), 54. The striking glass eyes of Benoît's head are the only noticeable way in which it differs from this description.

71 Benoît travelled to Oceania in 1967, 1969, 1971–2 and 1974. For most of these trips he was accompanied by his friend Pierre Langlois. Parent only joined Benoît on his 1972 trip. Lord, 'Jean Benoît', 44–6; Lord, 'Mimi Parent', 23.

72 Item 120 in the *Le Masque* (1959) catalogue.

73 Breton owned several Korwar figures during his lifetime, including one example which now resides in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York: http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2001.674/.

74 André Breton, 'Korwar', *Poems of André Breton: A Bilingual Anthology*, ed. and trans. Jean-Pierre Cauvin & Mary Ann Caws (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 189.

75 On 13 February 1969 the tract 'Aux grand obliers, salut!' was signed by Legrand, José Pierre, Philippe Audoin, Claude Courtot, and Jean-Claude Silbermann as a pact of disaffection from the movement. Just over a month later, in late March 1969, the majority of the remaining members of the group signed the tract 'Sas', which declared that the January issue of *L'Archibras* (no. 7) had been the last collective publication of the French Surrealist Movement, and that a motion had been passed to suspend all group activities, effective from 8 February. Both Parent and Benoît were among the twenty-seven signatories. Collective, 'Sas', *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives, 1922–1969*, ed. José Pierre (Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1982), 286. Under Bounoure's editorial leadership, Benoît signed the opening declaration of *Bulletin de liaison surréaliste* in November 1970 along with Bédouin, Zimbacca, Mansour and Jorge Camacho.

76 Bounoure, 'Savage Heart', 29; 'Parmi les perversions cultivées par Jean Benoît, les tendances fetichistes ont été les plus fécondes […]'. Bounoure, 'Un reliquaire de Jean Benoît', 41.

77 The book was published by Payot as part of a series that included scholarly works on innovative topics, such as a feminist history of women and madness, and the legacy of Greek Tragedy in modern theatre.

78 'En soumettant l'échange linguistique à la logique de l'échange de signes, la linguistique a ouvert la voie au totalitarisme du code, à la communicologue fonctionnelle, à la contrainte de consommation des signes, à la substitution du sémiologique au symbolique.' Bernard Caburet, 'Chaînes parlées et prisons linguistiques', *La Civilisation surréaliste*, ed. Vincent Bounoure (Paris: Payot, 1976), 102.

79 'Car la loi de l'homme est la loi du langage, en ce sense que l'homme n'est lui-même qu'à témoigner de la supériorité de la parole sur la langue, du signifiant sur le signifié et, finalement, dans l'a-légalité poétique, à marquer sa responsabilité, à marquer dans le langage sa réponse au langage'; 'Le poète entreprend de rejoindre les sources vives et primitives du sens, car il sait – comme on a toujours su – que le langage est ce qui, pour nous tous, "rêve et crée" bien avant que l'individu lui-même se soit mis à rêver et créer.' Ibid., 101–2.

80 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Way of the Masks*, trans. Sylvia Modelski (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), 12–14.

81 'Dans un fortune aussi aisément explicable, l'entreprise anthropologique s'est pourtant développé suivant deux directions contradictoires; l'une visant à l'inventaire descriptive d'un monde humain considéré comme immobile permettait la recherche de ce dénominateur commun où le néopositivisme, le rationalisme conventionnel et la formalisme de type universitaire s'efforcent encore de trouver la garantie de leurs spéculations. Ceux qui s'avançaient dans l'autre direction estimaient au contraire qu'aucun phénomène psychosocial n'est intelligible hors du dynamisme qui en aligne les séquences, que les faits de l'histoire ne sauraient s'expliquer entièrement par ce qui les précède, mais bien davantage par leur avenir, et que l'analyse historique, pour déceler en chaque instant l'orientation du présent, doit impérieusement prendre en considération le non-avenu où s'enveloppent encore les volontés et les désirs.' Vincent Bounoure & Vratislav Effenberger, 'L'Invention du monde', *La Civilisation surréaliste*, ed. Vincent Bounoure (Paris: Payot, 1976), 29–30.

82 'L'anthropologie, présentant comme son objet unique l'homme de l'histoire naturelle, sous quelque déguisement qu'il apparaisse, s'est trouvée fournir au moment opportun un joli Logos tout neuf, extrêmement multiplié sur la terre, et susceptible de délivrer à toute enquête l'interprétation unitaire des choses de conscience et des actes d'existence'; 'Cette anthropologie révolutionnaire […] Dès les années 20, le surréalisme coincide pour un part avec l'anthropologie révolutionnaire […]'. Ibid., 29–30.

83 Michael Löwy has elaborated on the reasoning behind Bounoure's chosen title: 'Why "civilization" instead of "surrealist revolution"? In an interview with *Communist Critique* (1978) Vincent explained, "If one wants to make a revolution it's to bring about a new civilization"'. Michael Löwy, 'Vincent Bounoure: A Sword Planted in the Snow', *Morning Star: Surrealism, Marxism, Anarchism, Situationism, Utopia*, trans. Jen Besemer (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 86.

84 'L'aspect anthropologique du surréalisme n'est rien d'autre que cette tentation généralisée de récupération et de restauration des "pouvoirs perdus" devant le graduel rétrécissement du possible humain.' Bounoure & Effenberger, 'L'Invention du monde', 30.

85 'L'objet est miroir magique dès que le "revivifient la volonté et l'imagination de l'observateur"'; 'Ce que nous voulons, c'est un cérémonial surréaliste. Nous savons sa généalogie. Nous savons son invariable destination: il est inséparable de l'interprétation du monde et nécessaire à sa transformation.' Martin Stejskal, 'La Relation cérémonielle', *La Civilisation surréaliste*, ed. Vincent Bounoure (Paris: Payot, 1976), 308–9.

86 'Le désir de transformer l'objet du désir est une pulsion active, agissante, masculine. Chemin de la magie dont le terme est l'objet changé, dominé, possédé.' Ibid., 309.

87 Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 61. 'Nous y voyons se fondre en mille gouttes étincelantes le sujet et l'objet.' Stejskal, 309.

Conclusion

1 An assessment that is entirely erroneous in the eyes of the movement's active adherents today, who regard themselves as the inheritors of a long and unbroken surrealist discourse.
2 Carole Reynaud-Paligot, *Parcours politique des Surréalistes, 1919–1969* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1995), 194.
3 'L'erreur et l'errance sont humaines, et à voir le cul-de-sac de rituels torturés où s'est perdu le mouvement, on comprend que sa vitalité se soit vite étiolée.' Jean-Pierre Le Grand, 'Le Prix de la Liberté', *Vie des Arts*, vol. 49 no. 195 (2004), 88–9.
4 Mauss & Hubert, *A General Theory of Magic*, (2001), 66.
5 Frazer, *The Golden Bough: Aftermath*, 1.
6 Jacques Rivières, 'On the Current Tendencies in Painting', *A Cubism Reader: Documents and Criticism, 1906–1914*, ed. Mark Antliff & Patricia Leighten, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 250–1.
7 Ibid., 251.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 251–2.
10 Georges Bataille, *Prehistoric Painting: Lascaux or the Birth of Art*, trans. Austryn Wainhouse (Geneva: Éditions d'Art Albert Skira, 1980), 127.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Breton, 'Surrealist Manifesto', 28.
15 'Et ici reparaît l'idée trop simple que se font en commun, de la magie préhistorique ou "archaïque", les tenants de thèses par ailleurs diamétralement opposées. La magie, pour tous les lecteurs de documents paléolithiques ou d'"objets sauvages", est une activité d'essence utilitaire: manger, assurer la continuité de l'espèce, telles seraient les seules préoccupations du 'primitif', conçu pour plus de sécurité sous l'aspect immuable d'un clan où règne seule la conscience collective (?) de Durkheim. Ce positivisme épais, qui règne tout spécialement en France, n'indigne pas seulement les 'occultistes' ou les chercheurs non-scientifiques: il décourage tous ceux pour qui la poésie n'est pas un vain divertissement, ni la philosophie une méthode périmée de comprendre 'l'esprit' des gestes et des rêves humains.' André Breton & Gérard Legrand, *L'Art magique* (Paris: Club Français du Livre, 1957), 125.
16 Mauss & Hubert, *A General Theory of Magic* (2001), 66.
17 Georges Bataille, 'Van Gogh as Prometheus' (1937), trans. Annette Michelson, *October* 36 special issue, *George Bataille: Writings on Laughter, Sacrifice, Nietzche, Un-Knowing* (Spring 1986), 58–9. Parkinson, *Enchanted Ground*, 306.
18 Antonin Artaud, 'Van Gogh, the Man Suicided by Society', trans. Helen Weaver, in *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings,* ed. Susan Sontag (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 512.

19 Breton, 'Yves Laloy', 254.

20 'Bien que le problème du *chamanisme* et de sa diffusion dans le monde sorte du cadre de notre étude, il ne sera peut-être pas inutile de rappeler que le mot *chaman* (ou *schaman*), d'origine sibérienne, désigne, particulièrement dans les cultures paléo-sibériennes, esquimaudes et amérindiennes, l'homme qui est chargé de la cure magique des maladies. C'est "l'homme-médecine" des auteurs anglais et l'on pourrait le définir sommairement comme un technicien de l'extase, une sorte d'aventurier de l'au-delà, par vocation, tout autant que par profession.' Bédouin, 38.

21 Michael Löwy & Robert Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, trans. Catherine Porter (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 17. The inherent conceptual tensions of the restoration-cum-break implied by Romanticism's 'revolutionary restitution' are explored at length by Löwy and Sayre in *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*.

22 '"Transform the world", Marx said; "change life", Rimbaud said. These two watchwords are one for us.' André Breton, 'Speech to the Congress of Writers', *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Helen R. Lane & Richard Seaver (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 241.

Index

Ades, Dawn 182 n.61
Agrippa, Cornelius 91–4, 96, 99
alchemy 8, 14, 17–19, 28, 34, 36–8, 44–8, 69, 89–90, 117, 170, 180 n.33, 181 n.49, 185 n.107, 187 n.123
  definitions of 23–7
  in dialectics 29–32
  and geology/mining/metallurgy 35, 38–41, 45
  and interwar period 42–3
  and law of correspondence 104–7, 111
  and Rosicrucianism 99, 102–4
  surrealists' reading into 19–23
  and volcanism 45
Alexandrian, Sarane 79, 83, 92–3, 98
analogy 15, 41, 91, 105, 111–12, 120–1, 132
anamorphosis 34
anarchism 118
anthropology 1, 15, 137–41, 151, 164–8, 170
'archaic fantasies of the mask' 144–9
Arcimboldo 130–1
Arrabal, Fernando 157
Artaud, Antonin 170–1, 174
art history 128, 145, 174
Art magique *(L'Art magique)* 2, 7–8, 11, 15, 107, 125–30, 132–6, 139, 143, 170, 174, 203 n.119, 209 n.69, 210 n.83
Ashmole, Elias 24
astrology 93, 111
automatic/automatism 34, 46, 173, 182 n.61
  drawing 39, 75
  painting 46–7
  writing 165

Balakian, Anna 193 n.87
Barthes, Roland 121, 135
Bataille, Georges 68, 118, 172–4, 185 n.88
Baudelaire, Charles 49, 91, 125, 128–9, 200 n.59, 207 n.39
Bauduin, Tessel M. 9–10, 19–21, 117, 205 n.25
Baugh, Bruce 29, 182 n.70, 183 n.76
Bédouin, Jean-Louis 137, 151–2, 166
Benjamin, Walter 69–70, 73, 110
Benoît, Jean 15, 140–54, 156–8, 160–3, 165–7, 169–70, 173, 212 n.24, 212 n.25, 213 n.43, 216 n.70, 216 n.71, 216 n.75
  Emboîtage 158, 160–4
  Le Nécrophile 157–8
  L'Exécution du testament du marquis de Sade 140, 142–50, 153, 156–8, 213 n.43
Bernard, Émile 129
Bertrand, Aloysius 19
Bertrand, François 157, 162
Bindhoff, Elisa 109, 141
black magic 14–15, 49, 51–2, 56–62, 68–70, 74–7, 79, 170–1, 174, 192 n.52
Bounoure, Vincent 14, 140–1, 161, 163–8
Brassaï 39
Brauner, Victor 8, 10, 15, 17, 48, 50, 77–107, 111, 116–17, 158, 170, 173, 195 n.6, 196 n.15, 196 n.29, 197 n.37, 198 n.46, 199 n.56, 206 n.34
  Hommes supércelestes pantaculairiens 97–8
  Image du réel incréé 80, 98–9
  La Mandragore 85–6
  La Pierre philosophale 17, 88–9
  Les Amoureux 79, 94–5, 99, 117, 206 n.34
  Objet de contre-envoûtement 79, 93, 158
  Paysage Méditerranéen 81–2

Portrait de Novalis 97, 100, 102–3
Portrait Pantaculaire de Novalis 100–1, 103
Promenade 86–9, 93, 196 n.29, 198 n.38, 198 n.46
Breton, André 1–12, 14–15, 17–22, 26, 29–30, 36, 38, 42–5, 50, 59–60, 63, 65, 67, 70, 74, 77–8, 81, 85, 99–100, 106–7, 110–21, 125–30, 132, 135–6, 138–41, 143–5, 151, 153–4, 156–8, 160, 162–3, 170, 173–5, 176 n.7, 182 n.61, 182 n.74, 184 n.83, 187 n.120, 190 n.24, 193 n.87, 203 n.119, 205 n.14, 206 n.29, 208 n.65
Arcanum 17 9–10, 41, 109, 113, 115, 119–20, 158, 203 n.1, 205 n.25
'Ascendant Sign' 120–1, 125, 207 n.53
The Communicating Vessels 4, 42, 52, 65, 184 n.83
'Crisis of the Object' 3–7, 41
Les Pas Perdus 19
Mad Love 3, 41, 43–4, 52–5, 70, 85, 138, 186 n.110, 190 n.23, 190 n.27
Nadja 30, 52, 110, 183 n.72, 186 n.109
'Second Manifesto of Surrealism' 14, 18–21, 25, 30, 36, 42, 67, 180 n.27, 183 n.72, 183 n.76
Surrealism and Painting 115
Surrealist Manifesto 5, 13, 67, 113

Caillois, Roger 7, 68, 149–51, 156
Camacho, Jorge 170
Carlat, Dominique 68
Carrington, Leonora 2, 8, 13, 78, 170
Cauvin, Jean-Pierre 39, 120, 208 n.60
Caws, Mary Ann 42, 187 n.115
ceremony/ceremonial 15, 120, 136, 141, 153–4, 156, 167, 204 n.3, 211 n.96, 212 n.24
Char, René 77
The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz (Rosenkreutz) 20, 23, 44–5, 88–90, 103–5, 198 n.46
Clifford, James 111, 205 n.10
Clouston, Victoria 205 n.14
collective unconscious 26, 182 n.57
Colquhoun, Ithell 8, 14, 17–18, 22, 170
Alchemical Figures 17, 45–6
The Goose of Hermogenes 44–5, 48
The Opal (I) 17–18, 46
and the stone 43–8
Conley, Katharine 6–7
contagious magic 59
convulsive beauty 38–9, 53
Cornell, Joseph 158
correspondances (of Baudelaire) 91–2, 129, 200 n.59, 210 n.85
correspondence (theory of) 128–9
Cox, Kenneth 12–13

Dalí, Salvador 8, 14, 17, 22, 27–8, 41–2, 182 n.61, 185 n.88, 185 n.94, 186 n.106, 186 n.107, 185 n.108
The Font 36
Geological Destiny 35
meteor of the imagination 31–8
Symbolically Functioning Object 27, 34
The Damned (Huysmans) 62
D'Arcy Galleries 140
Darie, Camelia 80–1
Davidson, Susan 80
Debaene, Vincent 125
de Givry, Grillot 20, 22
de Momper, Joos 130–1
De Natura Rerum (Paracelsus) 92–3
desire 4, 21, 27, 38, 53, 55, 59–60, 85, 109, 111, 122, 167, 186 n.106, 189 n.17
Dogme et rituel de la haute magie (Lévi) 24
Domínguez, Óscar 81–2
Ducasse, Isidore 63–4
Duchamp, Marcel 4

Eburne, Jonathan P. 67
Effenberger, Vratislav 166
Eliade, Mircea 34–5, 41–2, 48, 188 n.3
Embo, Suzy 158
Emerald Tablet (Trismegistus) 18, 20, 30, 45, 104, 178 n.4
enchantment/enchant/enchanter/enchantress 90, 140, 170, 191 n.35
Ernst, Max 6, 8, 77–8
esotericism 8–9, 15, 19, 111–19, 135, 205 n.14

fascism 1, 43, 66, 119
Faujour, Jacques 110

fetishism 27, 142, 170
Fijalkowski, Krzysztof 5, 52–3, 55, 64, 67–8, 70, 183 n.76, 192 n.74
film 64–6, 146, 151, 166–7
Fini, Leonor 146
Finkelstein, Haim 27, 34, 182 n.61
First World War 1, 4, 190 n.27
Flahutez, Fabrice 94–5, 199 n.56
Flamel, Nicolas 18–21, 43, 180 n.27
Forgerons et alchimistes (Eliade) 35
Francés, Esteban 81
Frazer, James George 59–60, 83, 126, 139, 171, 192 n.52
Fulcanelli 21, 28, 181 n.45, 199 n.56

Galerie Andrée Olive 163
Galerie Charles Ratton 204 n.8
Galerie Daniel Cordier 141, 145
Galerie de la Cour d'Ingres 135
Galerie Maeght 117–18, 198 n.46
Galerie Surréaliste 110
Gauguin, Paul 128–30, 210 n.82
General Theory of Magic (Mauss and Hubert) 11–12, 170
The Gift (Mauss) 1–2
Girard, Guy 19, 111–12
The Golden Bough (Frazer) 59, 83, 171
Gorky, Arshile 115
gothic novel/gothic literature 44, 62–3, 192 n.61
Graubard, Allan 188 n.5

Harris, Steven 29–30, 184 n.83
hau 1
Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition (Magee) 30–1
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 20, 22, 29–31, 38–40, 67, 103, 163, 183 n.72, 184 n.77, 184 n.79, 193 n.94
Henderson, Joseph 25, 35, 40, 178 n.4
Henry, Maurice 146
Hérold, Jacques 182 n.74, 187 n.122
Hitler, Adolf 84, 118
homeopathy/homeopathic magic 60
Hopi 109, 113–15, 120, 152–6, 214 n.54
Hubert, Henri 1, 11–12, 170
Huysmans, Joris-Karl 62

imitative magic 60, 171
Inwood, Michael 29

Jarry, Alfred 158
Jouffroy, Alain 145–6, 149
Jung, Carl 24–8, 34, 47, 103

Kachina 109–10, 114–15, 119, 152–3, 155–6, 214 n.54
Korwar sculpture 163
Kuni, Verena 93, 195 n.10, 201 n.74

La Civilisation surréaliste (Bounoure) 164, 166–7
Laloy, Yves 135–6, 175, 211 n.95
Lamba, Jacqueline 7, 42, 77
La Philosophie occulte et la magie (Agrippa) 92
L'Art magique. See Art magique *(L'Art magique)*
Lautréamont, Le Comte de 3, 20, 63–4, 100, 125, 192 n.65
Lavaud, Jean 148, 153–4
Lebel, Robert 145, 153–4, 156
Lefebvre, Henri 117, 207 n.39
Legrand, Gerard 2, 15, 107, 111, 125, 128–9, 132, 135, 139, 143–4, 170, 174, 208 n.65, 210 n.82
Leiris, Michel 15, 20
Le Miroir du merveilleux (Mabille) 78, 198 n.46, 208 n.63
Les Demeures philosophales (Fulcanelli) 21, 28
Les Masques (Bédouin) 151–2
Le Surréalisme en 1947 9, 107, 116–21, 196 n.12, 198 n.46
Le Surréalisme: parcours souterrain (Lepetit) 9
Lévi, Eliphas 24
Lévi-Strauss, Claude 11, 126–8, 135, 137–41, 145, 152, 156, 166, 205 n.22, 209 n.69, 211 n.1, 211 n.8, 214 n.50
  The Savage Mind/La Pensée sauvage 137–8
  Structural Anthropology/Anthropologie structurale 137, 140–1
  The Way of the Masks/La Voie des masques 166

Lomas, David 185 n.94
love 55, 66–8, 86–7, 162, 202 n.111
Luca, Ghérasim 14–15, 49–78, 170, 174, 188 n.1–188 n.2, 190 n.23–190 n.24, 190 n.27–190 n.28, 191 n.38, 191 n.42, 192 n.65, 192 n.72, 193 n.87, 196 n.29. *See also The Passive Vampire* (Luca)
'The Dead Death' 68
Dusk 57–8, 60, 191 n.35
The Ideal Phantom 54–5
The Letter L 58, 60, 65

Mabille, Pierre 8, 78, 82–3, 208 n.63
Magee, Glenn Alexander 30–1, 184 n.78
magic 6, 10–12, 169–75
academic definitions of 1–2, 11, 59–60, 83, 126, 171
alchemy and 42–3
of ambiguity 132–6
black 14–15, 49, 56–62, 68–70, 74–7, 170–1, 174
contagious 59
cubomaniac 75–6
imitative 60–1, 83–4, 171
magician 170–5
mask and 149–52
mimetic 83–4, 90, 99
myth and 119
Novalis and 99–104, 129–32
and religion 68
and revolutionary anthropology 163–8
ritual 15, 141–4, 163, 170
surrealism and 1–3, 7–10
talismanic 15, 78, 88, 93, 99–100, 170
tangible 170–5
theoretical representations of 10–11, 170–4
magical art 125, 128, 135, 140, 163, 170
magical-circumstantial 38–9, 42, 138, 173
Malangan carving 133–4
mana 126–8, 135
Man Ray 2–6, 85, 110, 151
Mansour, Joyce 158, 212 n.23
Marquès-Rivière, Jean 78, 90–1, 93, 96, 99, 104–5, 199 n.53
Marx, Karl (Marxism/Marxist) 31, 42, 117, 141–2
Matta, Roberto 156, 203 n.117, 212 n.24, 215 n.62
Mauss, Marcel 1–2, 11–12, 126–7, 168, 170, 174, 205 n.22
Mezei, Arpad 120–1
Minotaure 38, 40, 74, 82, 110, 150
Miró, Joan 6, 8
Mitchell, Clio 11, 126, 186 n.107, 206 n.29
modernist art 136
Morando, Camille 87, 94–6, 99, 198 n.38, 198 n.46
Moreau, Gustave 128
Murnau, F. W. 64–5
Murphy, Robert F. 216 n.70
Musée de l'Homme 15, 141–2, 144, 156, 160, 162, 212 n.25
Musée Guimet 145–6, 149, 151–2, 156, 158, 162–3, 213 n.32
myth 9, 15, 85–6, 102, 107, 109, 112–15, 121–7, 136, 139, 144–5, 151, 164, 166, 170, 203 n.1
new myth 116–20, 205 n.25

Nabis 129
Navajo 109, 115, 120, 135–6, 154, 175
Sand Painting 135–6, 154, 175
Nazi/Nazi Germany/Nazism 50, 73, 77, 86, 210 n.92
New Burlington Galleries 43
nihilism 66, 69–75
Nosferatu 64–6
Novalis 16, 20, 77–8, 86, 97–8, 104–5, 107, 109, 127, 135, 202 n.100, 202 n.102, 210 n.90
Hymns to the Night 97–8, 100, 102
and the magic wand of analogy 129–32
The Novices of Sais 99–104, 107, 129–30, 132, 202 n.100, 203 n.119, 203 n.119
and the poetic wellsprings of magic 99–104

objective chance 42, 53–5, 62, 67, 69, 82–3, 138, 189 n.17–190 n.18, 190 n.27
O'Brien, William Arctander 130, 132
occultism 8–9, 19, 106, 169
Occult Surrealism 7–8, 10

Oppenheim, Meret 141–2
Ottinger, Didier 78

Paalen, Wolfgang 6, 176 n.20
pantacle 90–9
Paracelsus, Theophrastus 23, 91–3, 97, 99, 201 n.74
Parcours politique des surréalistes (Reynaud-Paligot) 12, 169
Parent, Mimi 14–15, 140–4, 146–7, 149, 152–6, 158, 162–3, 165–7, 169–70, 216 n.75
  Crypte du fétichisme 141–3
  Reliquaire pour un crâne surmodelé du Moyen-Sepik 14, 162–3
The Passive Vampire (Luca) 14, 51–2, 68–70, 74–5, 189 n.15, 190 n.28, 196 n.29
  bewitchment and black magic in 56–62
  familiar and unfamiliar terrain 52–6
  Gothic world of 62–6
Pellan, Alfred 141
pentacle 79, 106, 199 n.53
Péret, Benjamin 15, 111–15, 119, 127, 135, 170, 174
  Anthologie des mythes, legends et contes populaires d'Amérique 122–5
  and myths of the Americas 122–5
Philosopher's Stone 17, 19, 21, 24, 46, 48
Philosophy of Nature (Hegel) 30–1, 40, 187 n.122
Polizzotti, Mark 7, 209 n.69
primitive cultures 158
psycho-atmospheric-anamorphic object 32, 34–5, 37, 41, 185 n.88

Rabaté, Michel 40, 183 n.74
Răileanu, Petre 52, 60, 74
Reynaud-Paligot, Carole 12, 169
Richardson, Michael 12, 19, 183 n.76
Rimbaud, Arthur 3, 18, 21, 125, 207 n.39
Rivière, Jacques 171–2, 174
Romanticism 8–9, 175
Roob, Alexander 24, 181 n.45
Rosemont, Franklin 176 n.17
Rosicrucianism 99, 102–4
Roussel, Raymond 21

Sade, Marquis de 142, 146–7, 150, 157, 213 n.43
Satan 51, 62–3, 66, 68–9
Second World War 6, 9, 11, 14, 49–50, 74, 77, 113, 121, 158, 190 n.24, 196 n.12, 205 n.14
Seligmann, Kurt 8, 10, 91–2, 102
  The Mirror of Magic 92, 102
Semin, Didier 78–9, 83, 100, 195 n.6
Sépik region 162
Sérusier, Paul 129
Sherwood, Dyane 25, 35, 40, 178 n.4
Shillitoe, Richard 43–4
Simmons, John Galbraith 51, 66
The Songs of Maldoror (Ducasse) 63–4
spagyrics 23
Stalin, Joseph (Stalinism) 11, 118
Stejskal, Martin 167–168
structural anthropology 137, 140–1, 164–5
Sun Chief (Talayesva) 153–6, 214 n.50
Surrealism and Magic 10, 12
Surrealism and the Occult (Bauduin) 9–10, 203 n.117
Surrealist Art and Thought in the 1930s (Harris) 183 n.83
Surrealist Movement 3–4, 7–10, 12–13, 26, 29, 31, 43, 49–50, 62–3, 67, 139–41, 144, 151, 163, 169–70, 173–4
surrealist object 3–6, 14, 22–3, 27–8, 31–2, 41, 51–3, 70, 74, 110, 182 n.61, 184 n.83, 196 n.29
Surreal Objects: Three-Dimensional Works from Dalí to Man Ray 6
Švankmajer, Jan 37, 170, 185 n.102
Symbolism/symbolist art 9, 111, 128, 130

Talayesva, Don C. 153–6
talisman/talismanic magic 15, 78, 88, 90–100, 102, 104, 158, 170
Tanguy, Yves 50, 65, 81
Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum (Ashmole) 24
Touching and Imagining (Švankmajer) 37
'A Tower Struck by Lightning' (Cox) 12–13
Trismegistus, Hermes 18–21, 44–5, 104, 180 n.27

Trost, Dolfi 52, 67, 69, 75, 190 n.24
Tsimshian 133
Tylor, Edward Burnett 11, 126

unconscious 4, 11, 25–8, 34, 36, 40, 55, 64, 83, 111, 125, 138–9, 170, 182 n.57, 182 n.61, 189 n.17–190 n.18

vampire 62–6, 80, 157, 192 n.72. *See also The Passive Vampire* (Luca)
Varo, Remedios 2
vodou/voodoo 7, 116, 120, 206 n.29

Warlick, M. E. 8, 22, 180 n.33

Zamani, Daniel 10, 78–9, 119, 196 n.12
Zimbacca, Michel 151, 166, 216 n.75
Ziolkowski, Theodore 35, 181 n.49
zodiac 23, 97
Zuni 109, 115, 120, 152–6, 214 n.54



Plate 1 Victor Brauner, *La Pierre philosophale*, 1940, oil on canvas, 50 × 81 cm. Legs Jacqueline Victor-Brauner, 1987 n° inv : 90.10.9 Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Cyrille Cauvet / Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole.

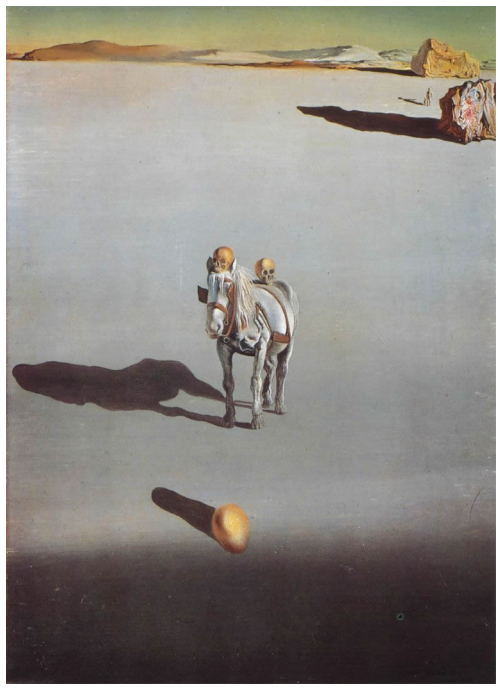


Plate 2 Salvador Dalí, *Geological Destiny*, 1933, oil on wood panel, 21 × 16 cm, Private Collection. © Salvador Dali, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, DACS 2022.



Plate 3 Salvador Dalí, *The Font*, 1930, oil and collage on wood panel, 26 in × 16 1/4 in, Collection of The Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, FL (USA) 2022. © Salvador Dali, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, DACS 2022.



Plate 4 Victor Brauner, *Objet de Contre-Envoûtement*, 1943, Cire, terre crue, plomb, fil de fer, papier, bois, verre, 25 × 13.8 cm, Centre Pompidou, Paris. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / image Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI.



Plate 5 Victor Brauner, *Portrait de Novalis*, 1943, Cuivre, plâtre, fil de fer, cire, encre de Chine et gouache sur papier, bois, verre, 21.9 × 15.8 cm, Centre Pompidou, Paris. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / image Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI.



Plate 6 Victor Brauner, *La Charmeuse de serpent*, 1943, encaustic on canvas, 65.1 × 54 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: © Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Plate 7 Poupée Kachina Hopi, *c.* 1850–1950, painted wood and feathers, height 25 cm, Formerly in the collection of André Breton, Musée d'Arts africains, océaniens, amérindiens, centre de la Vieille Charité, Marseille. Photo: © Ville de Marseille, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Claude Almodovar / Michel Vialle.



Plate 8 Yves Laloy, *Le Grand casque*, 1951–2, oil on canvas, 1.9 × 3.01 m. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022. Photo: © MBA, Rennes, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Jean-Manuel Salingue.



Plate 9 Jean Benoît, *Emboîtage pour une tête trophée Mundurucu*, 1968, Private Collection. © Estate of Jean Benoît.



Plate 10 Mimi Parent, *Reliquaire pour un crâne surmodelé du Moyen-Sepik*, 1976, Private Collection. © Estate of Mimi Parent.