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**Surrealism in the service of psychoanalysis: A reading of the
surreal as the uncanny**

Foster, Harold Foss, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1990

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A

SURREALISM IN THE SERVICE OF PSYCHOANALYSIS:

A READING OF THE SURREAL AS THE UNCANNY

by

HAROLD FOSS FOSTER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Art History in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York.

1990

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Much has been written about Surrealism, but little of it has influenced this dissertation. The great exception is the relevant writings of Rosalind Krauss, to whose support I am also most indebted. Her 1981 essay on the photographic conditions of Surrealism presented the first theoretical reconsideration of the movement in decades, and in fact my own psychoanalytical account was first developed in response to her important 1985 exhibition cum catalogue, L'Amour fou: Photography & Surrealism. Beyond particular theoretical insights, her attention to the conceptual structure of Surrealism has most influenced my work. The Freudian aspect of my account does not bear the stamp of any specific writer on Surrealism. However, the Marxian aspect is indebted to the work of Susan Buck-Morss, especially her 1989 The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project.

I want to thank my three readers, Professors Jack Flam, Linda Nochlin and Christopher Prendergast for their interest and help. I am also grateful to the Department of Art History at the University of Michigan for the opportunity to present a draft of the dissertation as a series of lectures in April 1990. Once again I want to thank Sandy Tait for her love and support--and also Tait Foster simply for being. Finally, an essay with a topic like mine, the uncanny, can only be dedicated to one person. "There is a humorous saying," Freud

writes of the uncanniest place of all, the maternal body,
"‘Love is home-sickness’...."

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Interpretive delirium begins only when man, ill-prepared, is taken by a sudden fear in the forest of symbols.

--André Breton, L'Amour fou (1937)

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION:

SURREALISM, REPRESSION AND REPETITION

Over the last decade art history has witnessed the return of Surrealism, as new texts of all sorts now abound on the subject. Lest I merely add another line to the list, I want to begin my own essay on Surrealism with a reflection on its return, on its past repression and present repetition. Not so long ago Surrealism was mostly absent from official modernism. In effect, it was lost twice to art history: repressed in abstractionist narratives centered on Cubism, it was also displaced in neo-avant-garde accounts focused on Dada and Russian Constructivism.¹

Under the Anglo-American formalism represented by Roger Fry and Clement Greenberg, Surrealism was considered a deviant art movement: improperly visual and impertinently literary, relatively inattentive to the imperatives of form and mostly indifferent to the laws of genre, a paradoxical avant-garde concerned with infantile states and outmoded forms, not properly modernist at all.² For neo-avant-garde artists who challenged this hegemonic model three decades

¹ On the other hand, one might argue, Surrealism has helped to structure these narratives of modernism in its very absence.

² See, for example, Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon," Partisan Review vii, 4 (July-August 1940), p. 309.

ago, its very deviance might have made Surrealism an attractive object: as an impensé of Cubocentric art history, it might have exposed the historical limitation, the ideological nature, of this narrative. But such was not the case. Since the formalist model of modernism was staked on the autonomy of modern art as separate from social practice and grounded in visual experience, its antagonist, the neo-avant-garde account of modernism, stressed the two movements, Dada and Constructivism, which appeared most opposed to this visualist autonomy--which sought to destroy the institution of art in an anarchic attack on its formal conventions, as did Dada, or to transform it according to the new practices of a revolutionary society, as did Constructivism.²³ Again Surrealism was lost in the shuffle. To the neo-avant-gardists who challenged the formalist account in the 1950s and '60s, it too appeared corrupt: not critical enough of bourgeois representation (ironically also the complaint of Greenberg), too committed to high culture (guilty by association with Abstract Expressionism). Hence when artists involved in Pop and Minimalism turned away from Picasso and Matisse, they turned to Duchamp and Rodchenko, not to Ernst

²³ See, for example, Peter Bürger, Theorie der Avantgarde (Frankfurt, 1974), translated by Michael Shaw as Theory of the Avant-Garde (Minneapolis, 1984). Although Bürger hardly neglects Surrealism, he tends to conflate it with Dada as an anarchic attempt to sublimate art and life.

and Giacometti.⁴

Clearly times have changed. The formalist doctrine of visual purity has fallen apart, and the avant-gardist critique of art is fatigued--at least in practices that delimit "institution" to physical exhibition and "art" to traditional mediums. A space for Surrealism has opened up, and art history has rushed into the void. Yet it has mostly filled it with the same old stuff: the question of Surrealism is rarely posed anew. Often reduced to painting, Surrealism is perversely called upon to support the old discourses of iconography and style.⁵ One reason for this intellectual failure is a neglect of the other set of preconditions for the return of Surrealism: the dual demands of contemporary art and theory. In the 1960s and '70s Minimalists and Conceptualists concerned with phenomenological effects and institutional limits in art turned to Dada and Constructivism. However, in the 1970s and '80s this concern

⁴ For this historical interest of the Minimalists see Maurice Tuchman, "The Russian Avant-Garde and the Contemporary Artist," in Stephanie Barron and Maurice Tuchman, eds., The Avant-Garde in Russia 1910-1930 (Los Angeles, 1980), pp. 118-21.

⁵ With the single significant exception of L'Amour fou: Photography & Surrealism (Washington and New York, 1985), an exhibition cum catalogue produced by Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston, this appropriation has also targeted Surrealist photography, where it works in complicity with the appropriation of Surrealism by the fashion industry (this is the case, for example, with Richard Marshall, Fashion and Surrealism (New York, 1989)). That Surrealism is raided by fashion and advertisement interests is obvious; some Surrealists (e.g., Magritte) worked for such industries. But this is a subject for analysis, not celebration.

with aesthetic perception and exhibitional space developed into an interest in sexual subjectivity and social identity, an interest prompted by feminist art and theory. Although the Surrealists were hardly protofeminist, they too were concerned with the imbrication of the sexual in the visual, of the unconscious in the real; indeed, they introduced this problematic into modern art. Feminist practice permitted one to think these questions again, particularly in a psychoanalytic frame, and to do so historically was to turn eventually to Surrealism. Similarly, Surrealism became a retroactive point of reference for the postmodernist critique of representation in relation to the real, particularly as investigated through appropriation and simulation. Like the troubling of identity by sexuality, this troubling of reality through representation was undertaken by Surrealism, and to be involved in this problematic was also to become interested in this art.⁶

In the pages that follow I do not link Surrealism directly to these contemporary concerns, but they are immanent in my approach, and this point leads to another primary incentive to rethink Surrealism today. For Surrealism is not only an important site of an alternative, even

⁶ For more on these connections see my "L'Amour faux", Art in America (January 1986).

agonistic modernism within official modernism.⁷ It is also a nodal point of the three fundamental discourses of modernity --psychoanalysis, cultural Marxism and ethnology--all of which inform Surrealism as it in turn develops them. In fact, the great revisions of these discourses are initiated in the Surrealist milieu: it is there that Jacques Lacan first reconsiders Freudian categories in linguistic terms, that Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch focus Marxian concepts on issues of modernism, that Georges Bataille, Roger Caillois and Michel Leiris develop Maussian ethnology into a radical critique (all three were sometime students of Marcel Mauss). These figures are crucial to much contemporary art and theory--which not only points again to the genealogical connection between Surrealism and present practice, but also suggests a triangulated set of concepts with which to map Surrealism. However, except for a few disparate instances, this has not occurred in the literature.⁸ As a result, no

⁷ This point is developed in recent writings by Rosalind Krauss, who has also stressed the "dissident" Surrealism of Georges Bataille over the official Surrealism of André Breton. See, among other texts, her "Giacometti", in William Rubin, ed., "Primitivism in 20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern", vol. 2 (New York, 1984), pp. 503-34, and her "Corpus Delicti", in L'Amour fou: Photography & Surrealism, pp. 57-114. I assume her distinction between these Surrealisms; in this essay I focus on the Bretonian circle. However, involvement in the uncanny, the compulsion to repeat and the death drive cuts across these boundaries: whereas Breton and company often resist these forces, Bataille and others develop them. See note 85 below.

⁸ Krauss has focused on the Freud/Lacan connection in Surrealism. Susan Buck-Morss has addressed the Marx/Benjamin connection in The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W.

theory of Surrealism has emerged which does not rehearse its own descriptions or impose alien ideas upon it. This essay attempts to address some of these lacks.*

In so doing I imply an approach that is remote from the iconographic and stylistic analyses which still dominate art history even as it is also distinct from the social and semiological methods which have done so much recently to transform the discipline.¹⁰ I am concerned with the logic of Surrealism (or the structure of its illogic, if you like), and none of the aforementioned approaches that focus on stylistic aspects or social causes will deliver it. However, neither can this structure be derived apart from Surrealism

Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute (New York, 1977), pp. 124-29, and The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project (Cambridge, 1989), passim. And James Clifford has noted the Mauss/Bataille association in The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 117-51. However, no one has yet articulated all three theoretical instances together vis-à-vis Surrealism.

* Thus (to state the obvious) I do not intend a stylistic account of any one Surrealist oeuvre or a historical narrative of the movement as a whole; rather, I attempt to locate certain concepts structural to Surrealism. Krauss proposes one such structural basis in her "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," October 19 (Winter 1981), pp. 3-34. In Chapter Two I attempt to reconcile her semiological reading with my psychoanalytical account.

¹⁰ My quibble with some social art history is that it sometimes falls back into an iconography, usually of signs of class, that deproblematizes representation--as if class were simply there to be painted (one might argue similarly about much psychoanalytical art history vis-à-vis sexual symbolism). My quibble with some semiological art history is the obverse--that it sometimes fails to grant that meaning in art, though never fixed, is always historically (over)determined.

and then projected back upon it, as often occurs in structuralist analysis. If there is a principle of order to Surrealism, a concept that organizes it unconsciously, it must be contemporary with it, immanent to its field; and it is the historicity of this concept that concerns me here. I believe this concept to be the uncanny, or a concern with the ways in which repressed material returns to the subject in artistic representation and social experience precisely to disrupt all three terms--subjectivity, art and social order. In my argument Surrealism is not only an instance of a repressed event that has returned; it is also a manifold deployment of this uncanny process--of the repression of psychic material and its repetition in symptomatic symbolic forms. Thus I will claim that the uncanny is the crux of general Surrealist notions (such as the marvelous, convulsive beauty and objective chance) as well as of individual Surrealist oeuvres. In this respect the concept of the uncanny is not only contemporary with Surrealism, developed by Freud from interests shared by the group, but also explanatory of many of its activities (in a way that is relatively free of art-historical constraints of biography or medium specificity). Therein lies the paradoxical efficacy of the concept for me: the uncanny is a principle of order that accounts for the nature of Surrealist disorder. Moreover, the uncanny also comprehends many of the aforementioned notions, Marxian and ethnological, that inform Surrealism, in

particular its interest in both the outmoded and the "primitive".¹¹

My essay is thus theoretical. This, I trust, does not automatically render it ahistorical, for again the concepts brought to bear here on Surrealism, derived from Freud and Marx and inflected by Lacan and Benjamin, are all elaborated in its milieu.¹² My essay is also thus textual, as textual in its references as it is visual, but here too it should be

¹¹ Although I touch on it in this essay, the Surrealist involvement in primitivism, problematic as it is, will require another occasion. Suffice it to say here that for the Surrealists as for Freud the return of "primitive" beliefs is uncanny as such. See, for example, "The Uncanny", in Studies in Parapsychology, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), p. 54.

I discuss the outmoded as a historical version of the uncanny in Chapter Five. Developed by Benjamin, this notion derives from Marx, for whom (it might be argued) the return of historical formations is also uncanny insofar as it bespeaks a compulsion to repeat. See, for example, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in Surveys from Exile, ed. David Fernbach (New York, 1973), pp. 143-249. Also see Jeffrey Mehlman, Revolution and Repetition: Marx/Hugo/Balzac (Berkeley, 1977), pp. 5-41, and Ned Lukacher, Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis (Ithaca, 1986), pp. 236-74.

¹² Indeed, Surrealism is a most important attempt to reconcile Freud and Marx, as instructive in its failures as in its successes. It is also crucial to the formation of Lacan and Benjamin. I admit that my use of these thinkers (plus related figures such as Jean Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, Ernst Bloch and Siegfried Giedion) is partial, often opportunistic. For example, I stay close to Freudian conceptions regarding the phylogenetic, important as they are to the uncanny, which are dismissed in the Lacanian revision. (Lacan: "The unconscious is neither primordial nor instinctual; what it knows about the elementary is no more than the elements of the signifier." "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud," in écrits, trans. Alan Sheridan [New York, 1977], p. 170.) However, although the Surrealists influenced Lacan, they engaged Freud, and it is Freud whom I mostly engage here.

stressed that the uncanny is not merely an iconographic key to Surrealism. It cannot be simply seen in this object or that text; it must be read there--not imposed from above but (as it were) extracted from below, often against the resistances of the Surrealists. This textual emphasis is not at all to depreciate the art. On the contrary, it is to take it as seriously as possible: not as a sundry collection of idiosyncratic visions (the condescension with which it is often treated even by its enthusiasts) but as a related set of complex practices, one which develops its own ambiguous conceptions of aesthetics, politics and history through difficult involvements in desire and sexuality, the unconscious and the drives.

If the uncanny is not foreign to the Surrealists, neither is it familiar. When they do intuit it, they often resist it, as its ramifications run counter to the Surrealist faith in love and revolution. Nonetheless, the Surrealists are drawn to its manifestations, indeed to any uncanny reappearance of repressed material. This is the basis of Surrealist connections between symptoms and symbols, hysteria and beauty, the unconscious and the artistic, paranoid projections and critical interpretations. It is also the link that connects the early experiments in automatic writing, dream recitals, hypnotic reveries and mediumistic sessions¹⁰

¹⁰ These activities dominate the first months of Surrealism; they are all in place as early as the Breton text, "Entrée des mediums," Littérature, n.s. 6 (November 1,

to later involvements in hysteria, fetishism, paranoia and the like.¹⁴

However, if the uncanny is not foreign to Surrealism, it is to most studies of it.¹⁵ Art history tends to frame Surrealism in terms either of traditional categories (with "objects" sometimes substituted for "sculpture") and/or of Surrealist definitions (e.g., automatism, dream interpretation, the paranoiac-critical method), despite the fact that the Surrealists often questioned both types of terms.¹⁶ For example, with the partial exception of Breton in Le Surréalisme et la peinture (first edition 1928), the principal Surrealists in the crucial years of the movement (1922).

¹⁴ As we will see in Chapter Two, hysteria, which Breton and Aragon celebrated in "Le cinquantenaire de l'hystérie," La Révolution surréaliste 11 (March 15, 1928), is crucial to convulsive beauty, and fetishism governs many Surrealist objects. Paranoia was championed primarily by Dalí (who was also fascinated by hysteria) in such texts as "Interprétation paranoïaque-critique de l'image obsédante L'Angelus de Millet," Minotaure 1 (February 1, 1933), which appeared next to an early Lacan text, "Le problème du style et les formes paranoïaque de l'expérience." Lacan published another text on paranoia in Minotaure 3-4 (December 14, 1933).

¹⁵ Krauss discusses the concept in "Corpus Delicti", p. 86, and less fully in "The Master's Bedroom," Representations 28 (Fall 1989), p. 67, a text on the early collages of Max Ernst. Jean Clair discusses the uncanny in relation to Giorgio de Chirico in "Metaphisica et unheimlichkeit," in Les Réalismes 1919-39 (Paris, 1981), pp. 27-32, although he refuses to relate it to Surrealism.

¹⁶ In this regard see any of several standard books on Surrealist art, e.g., Sarane Alexandrian, Surrealist Art (New York, 1970), William Rubin, Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage (New York, 1968), Patrick Waldberg, Surrealism (1966), etc., etc.

devoted little theoretical reflection to painting. (Even Breton, in the 1924 "Manifesto of Surrealism," addressed it only as an afterthought, in a footnoted list of mostly historical painters deemed Surrealist avant la lettre.) And when they did consider painting it was often in order to argue for other practices such as collage and objects in its stead (as in the 1930 Aragon manifesto "Challenge to Painting" or the 1936 Ernst treatise "Beyond Painting", the titles of which alone announce the predilections of these Surrealists).¹⁷ Certainly there were partial accounts of Surrealism in terms of painting, such as the model of a Surrealism suspended between automatist gesture and generic depiction first proposed by Breton in 1925.¹⁸ But this model was partly advanced to gain official support, and it is mostly due to institutional bias--of art history and art museums alike--that it became the normative definition. Reinvented 40 years after Breton by William Rubin in his 1968 MoMA catalogue Dada, Surrealism, and their Heritage, it

¹⁷ Louis Aragon, "La Peinture au défi," Galerie Goemans catalogue (Paris, 1930); excerpts translated as "Challenge to Painting," in Lucy R. Lippard, ed., Surrealists on Art (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1970), pp. 36-50. Max Ernst, "Au-delà de la peinture," Cahiers d'art 2, 6-7 (1936), translated in Beyond Painting (New York, 1948), pp. 3-11. For Aragon painting could not adequately engage contradiction, psychic or social. Though sympathetic to this position, Ernst was obviously less rigorous about it.

¹⁸ Breton, "Le Surréalisme et la peinture," La Révolution surréaliste 1 (July 1925), pp. 26-30. This model is then developed in the journal texts collected in Surrealism and Painting, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York, 1972).

remains the dominant account to this day.¹⁷

Lost in this dominance are not only alternative definitions of Surrealism (e.g., the more anthropological concerns of Bataille, Leiris and others, the more political activities of Pierre Naville, René Crevel and others) but also contemporary critiques of this definition. After all, Breton developed his formula largely in response to critiques of Surrealist painting made in the name of Surrealism, i.e., of a properly surreal deployment of the unconscious. For example, in La Révolution surréaliste 1 (December 1, 1924) Max Morise wrote of the automatist mode that "stream of thought cannot be viewed statically," and of the oeneric mode that "secondary attention necessarily distorts an image when it brings it to the surface of consciousness...." His sentence was clear: "The images are surrealist, but not their expression."²⁰ Two issues later Pierre Naville was more

¹⁷ William Rubin, Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage, passim. For a deconstruction of this opposition see Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism."

²⁰ Max Morise, "Les Yeux enchantés," La Révolution surréaliste 1 (December 1, 1924), p. 27. In short, automatism appeared extrinsic to visual art, and pictorial ratiocination seemed at odds with the apparent irrationality of the dream. Although Breton later favored the automatist mode of painting, he too recognized its contradictory aspect. He frequently voiced reservations, and in his first articles he did not openly advocate it. J.-B. Pontalis has recently rearticulated these objections: "On doit...se demander...si les techniques surréalistes peuvent produire autre chose qu'une mimesis conceptée d'un inconscient déjà figurable et déjà mis en mots..." ("Les vases non communicants," La nouvelle revue française 302 [March 1, 1978], p. 32). So has Roland Barthes: "[A]utomatism...is not rooted at all in the 'spontaneous', the 'savage', the 'pure', the 'profound', the

openly contemptuous of the Bretonian formula of a Surrealist painting.²¹ Though residually futurist in tone, the implicit argument of this first Surrealist convert to the Communist Party is a socially historical one: that painting is at once too mediated to express the unconscious and not mediated enough to capture the technological spectacle of modern life. At the very moment that Russian Constructivists declared the anachronism of bourgeois painting in the new social order of the East, Naville suggested its obsolescence in the spectacular capitalist order of the West:

I have no tastes except distaste. Masters, master crooks, smear your canvases. Everyone knows there is no Surrealist painting. Neither the marks of a pencil abandoned to the accident of gesture, nor the image retracing the forms of the dream, nor imaginative fantasies, of course, can be described.

But there are spectacles....The cinema, not because it is life, but the marvelous, the grouping of chance elements. The street, kiosks, automobiles, screeching doors, lamps bursting the sky. Photographs....²²

'subversive', but originates on the contrary from the 'strictly coded': what is mechanical can make only the Other speak, and the Other is always consistent" ("The Surrealists Overlooked the Body" [1975], in The Grain of the Voice, trans. Linda Coverdale [New York, 1985], p. 244).

²¹ Pierre Naville, "Beaux Arts," La Révolution surréaliste 3 (April 15, 1925), p. 27. It was largely this challenge that led Breton to seize editorial control of La Révolution surréaliste from Naville at this time.

²² Ibid. Though, again, residually futurist, this argument is also proto-situationist, and Surrealism was indeed crucial to the development of early Situationism. See Situationist International Anthology, ed. and trans. Ken Knabb (Berkeley, 1981), pp. 1-2, 18-20, 41-42, 115-16, 171-72. Also see Peter Wollen, "From Breton to Situationism," New Left Review 174 (March/April 1989), pp. 67-95.

I will develop another account of Surrealist automatism below; I cite these arguments here simply to show the awareness, at the very beginning of Surrealism, of the inability of both conventional art-historical categories and common Surrealist self-descriptions to comprehend Surrealism conceptually. Such terms cannot account for its heterogeneous practices nor address its quintessential concerns with psychic conflict and social contradiction. A different model must be proposed, one that embraces rather than occludes Surrealist activities and relates rather than collapses the differences among them: a reading of the surreal as the uncanny. Given the strange interpenetration of these two terms, this reading will appear sometimes obscure, sometimes obvious. On the one hand, the uncanny is nowhere thought directly in Surrealism; it remains in its unconscious, as it were, as its very structure. On the other hand, it is everywhere treated actively in Surrealism; it is even implicitly proposed, in the most famous definition of Surrealism, as its very "point":

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.²³

²³ Breton, "Second manifesto du Surréalisme," La Révolution surréaliste 12 (December 15, 1929); translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane in Manifestoes of Surrealism (Ann Arbor, 1972), pp. 123-24.

The paradox of Surrealism, the ambivalence of its practitioners, is this: even as they work to find this point they do not want to be pierced by it, for the real and the imagined, the past and the future only come together in the experience of the uncanny, and its stake is death.

In order to argue the connection between the surreal and the uncanny, the encounter of Surrealism with psychoanalysis must first be sketched. The principal figures of early Surrealism, Breton, Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault, were partly formed in medical circles. Soupault senior was a well-known gastro-enterologue, while both Breton and Aragon were once medical students; in fact, the latter two met as médecins auxiliaires at the Paris military hospital Val-de-Grâce in the first year of the war.²⁴ It was in this medical milieu that the Surrealists-to-be were exposed to psychoanalytical theory.²⁵ In 1916 the twenty-year-old Breton assisted the

²⁴ My account of the Surrealist encounter with psychoanalysis is indebted to Elisabeth Roudinescou, La Bataille de cent ans: Histoire de la psychanalyse en France, vol. 2 (Paris, 1986), pp. 19-49. Other versions more specific to the two Surrealists most involved in psychoanalysis, Breton and Ernst, can be found in Marguerite Bonnet, André Breton, Naissance de l'aventure surréaliste (Paris, 1975), and in Elizabeth R. Legge, Max Ernst: The Psychoanalytic Sources (Ann Arbor, 1989), pp. 17-29.

²⁵ This is ironic for Surrealism was predicated on the extramedical use of psychoanalytical concepts, which were not only adapted in practice but also proclaimed aesthetic as such (e.g., hysteria as "the greatest poetic discovery of the 19th century" [see note 14]). In addition, the only Freud text to appear in Surrealist journals, in La Révolution surréaliste 9-10 (October 1, 1927), was an excerpt from The

military doctor Raoul Leroy at the neuro-psychiatric center of the Second Army at Saint-Dizier, and in 1917 he interned under the neurologist Josef Babinski at the Hôpital de la Pitié.²⁶ Treatment at these institutions included free association and dream interpretation, the very techniques that inspired the automatist devices of early Surrealism (whose inaugural text, the automatist Les Champs magnétiques, was written by Breton and Soupault in 1919).²⁷ More significant for us is the fact that Breton first intuited the existence of a psychic (sur)reality on the basis of the délires aigus of the soldiers under care there--i.e., symptoms of shock, of traumatic neurosis, of scenes of death

Question of Lay Analysis. Even as the Surrealists aestheticized psychic disturbances, they also railed against psychiatric abuses, as in "Lettre aux médecins-clefs des asiles de fous" in La Révolution surréaliste 3 (April 15, 1925). Breton also attacked psychiatry at the end of Nadja (1928), an attack which was returned by Paul Abely, Janet and Clerambault, whose responses were in turn rebutted by Breton in the "Second Manifesto" (1930) as well as in "La Médecine mentale devant le surréalisme," Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 2 (October 1930).

²⁶ On the question of hysteria in particular Babinski differed from Charcot, Janet and Freud. He treated the hysterical symptom as a result of (auto)suggestion, even simulation--which may have incited Breton to his later simulations of psychic disorders, especially in the 1931 automatist text L'Immaculée conception written with Paul Eluard. Only in a 1962 afterword to Nadja does Breton admit his tutelage under Babinski.

²⁷ Breton notes this practice in the "Manifesto", pp. 22-3.

compulsively restaged.²⁶ As we will see, it was partly on such evidence and exactly at this time that Freud developed the notion of compulsive repetition essential to the theories of the uncanny and the death drive.

Although Surrealism was crucial to the reception of psychoanalysis in France, exposure to Freudian theory was a mixed experience for Breton in several respects.²⁷ He first knew Freud only through French summaries (the 1914 edition of the Regis and Hesnard synopsis La Psychanalyse and the 1916 edition of Précis de psychiatrie also by Regis);²⁸ not until

²⁶ Significantly, Breton was particularly struck by a veteran who completely disavowed death--who thought the war was simulated, that the wounded were made up and the dead on loan from the medical schools (shades of Thomas Pynchon). See Entretiens (Paris, 1952), p. 37.

²⁷ Psychoanalysis was resisted in official medical circles; thus the importance of its deployment by the Surrealists, who were remote from such circles. Yet Breton differed from Freud in many respects. E.g., for Breton dream and reality are vases communicants, and Surrealism is pledged to this "communication"; for Freud the two realms are in a relation of displacement. There were also more personal problems. As recounted in "Interview du professeur Freud à Vienne" (Littérature n.s. 1 [March 1922]), Breton was disappointed by Freud upon his October 1921 visit. And later, in Les vases communicants (1932), he accused Freud of suppressions in The Interpretation of Dreams. This piqued Freud, who exchanged letters with Breton on the matter, and opined to Stefan Zweig that the Surrealists were "absolute (let us say 95 percent, like alcohol) cranks." See Letters of Sigmund Freud 1873-1939, ed. Ernst L. Freud, trans. Tania and James Stern (New York, 1960), p. 449, and Ernest Jones, Sigmund Freud: Life and Work, vol. 3 (New York, 1957), p. 251.

²⁸ See Roudinescou, La Bataille, vol. 2, p. 38; also see Jacqueline Gendron-Chenieux, Le Surréalisme (Paris, 1984), pp. 78, 247. Breton may also have looked at the 1906 summary made up by Maeder, and in the 1921 "Interview with professeur Freud à Vienne" he mentions the 1920 Geneva publication Origine et Développement de la psychanalyse. Translation was

the 1920s could he read primary texts in translation.³¹ More importantly, Breton encountered Freud while still under the influence of the psychiatry of Charcot and Janet, the first a teacher of Freud, the second a rival--not to mention that of Emil Kraepelin who was openly hostile to Freud. This Janetian disposition, which was typical in France at the time,³² was ideological as well as institutional, for the French school allowed Breton to privilege automatist techniques far more than did Freud who, although he employed free association, did so in part to be rid of hypnosis and always in the service of interpretation. In this way Breton developed a conception of the unconscious at a remove from Freudian models, a conception of a champ magnétique of associations registered through automatist means, an unconscious based on

obviously not a problem for Ernst, who first read Freud before the war as a psychology student at the University of Bonn. In this regard see Legge, Max Ernst, pp. 17-29, and Werner Spies, Max Ernst, Loplop: The Artist in the Third Person (New York, 1983), pp. 101-9.

³¹ Even then the texts most important to our account appeared rather late, e.g., Essais de psychanalyse, 1927, which included such texts as "War and Death," "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" and "The Ego and the Id," and Essais de psychanalyse appliqué, 1933, which included "The Uncanny". Otherwise, among the first Freud texts to appear in French were Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (noted in an advertisement in La Révolution surréaliste 9-10 [October 1, 1927]), and Totem and Taboo, in which the uncanny is first intimated (both 1923); and Leonardo (1927). For a more complete list of translations see Roudinescou, La Bataille, vol. 1, appendix.

³² Roudinescou writes of Breton that "his formation owes much to the sort of diffuse Janetism which prevailed in France at the time of the introduction of Freud" (La Bataille, vol. 2, p. 38).

originary unity rather than primal repression. Indeed, in the "Manifesto" (1924) Breton defines Surrealism "once and for all" as "psychic automatism",³³ and, as noted, early Surrealism was given over to such experiments as automatist texts, dream recitals and hypnotic sessions.

However, even as Janet stressed automatism he deemed it problematic for it tended, he believed, to a "désagrégation de la personnalité."³⁴ Thus in order to affirm automatism Breton had to transvalue it, viewed as it was negatively as a psychological threat by the French school and indifferently as a technical means by Freud. Perhaps its very nugatory status appealed to Breton; he could affront both the scientism of French psychiatry and the rationalism of Freud in the same gesture.³⁵ In any case, contra Freud Breton made automatism central to Surrealism, and contra the French

³³ Breton, "Manifesto", p. 26.

³⁴ Janet as quoted by Jean Starobinski, "Freud, Breton, Myers," L'Arc 34 (special issue on Freud, 1968), p. 49.

³⁵ Starobinski suggests as much in "Freud, Breton, Myers," pp. 50-1. In this transvaluation of automatism Breton turned toward its dubious spiritualist traditions, in particular the "gothic psychology" of such 19th-century figures as F.W.H. Myers and Théodore Flournoy. Many Surrealists were interested in the occult. This predilection, often dismissed by critics, is important here for it reflects both an interest in uncanny phenomena and an attempt to think them outside the Freudian formulation. Breton mentions Myers and Flournoy in his 1933 essay "Le Message automatique", in Minotaure 3-4 (December 14, 1933), translated in Breton, What is Surrealism? Selected Writings, ed. Franklin Rosemont (New York, 1978), pp. 97-109. He also read such figures as Michet, Alfred Maury, Hervey de Saint-Denys and Helene Smith, who is mentioned in Nadja. For the best account of this tradition in relation to Surrealism see Starobinski, *passim*.

school he eventually gave it an opposite valence: far from a dissociation of personality, he argued, automatism serves to reassociate such diverse dichotomies as perception and representation, madness and reason. This is finally why "psychic automatism" is so important to Bretonian Surrealism: shifted away from strictly therapeutical uses and purely mystical associations, it permitted a conception of the unconscious based less on division than on reconciliation, less on dark primordial and infantile contents à la Freud than on "one original faculty of which the eidetic images gives us an idea of which one still finds a trace among primitive and children."³⁴ Just as importantly, automatism seemed to provide an access to this idyllic space, or at least a record of its liberatory images.

And yet this charmed conception of the unconscious was soon contradicted, not only extrinsically by Freudian models but also intrinsically in automatist practice--in writing and drawing, dream recitals and hypnotic sessions. Although automatism was embraced, at least by Breton, because it appeared to offer a reconciliatory, even Hegelian conception of the unconscious, its logic led Bretonian Surrealists to recognitions similar to the late, grim Freudian theory of a primal struggle between life and death drives--or so I will argue. In any case, the very insistence on a primal unity to

³⁴ Breton, "The Automatic Message," pp. 105, 109. This is obviously a much more romantic view of the primitive and the child than Freud's.

be attained through the unconscious suggests an intimation of the exact contrary: that psychic life is not only founded on repression but also riven by conflict.

This, however, is not how Breton and company understood the problem of automatism. As noted, they thought it in terms of authenticity, i.e., that calculation and correction, impossible to eradicate, interfered with the automatist presence of the psychic.³⁷ But this formulation missed the more fundamental problem, which was that automatism might not be liberatory at all--not because it voided the conscious control of the ego (to escape "the house of correction"³⁸ was its express purpose) but because it decentered the subject too radically in relation to the unconscious and the signifier (writing, painting, etc.).³⁹ In short, the question of the constraints of the conscious mind obscured the more important question of the constraints of the unconscious mind. In many ways the fact that Bretonian Surrealism

³⁷ In 1923 Breton discouraged not only automatic writing but also dream recitals and hypnotic sessions, and the so-called époque des sommeils effectively came to an end. In the "Second Manifesto" (1930) and again in "The Automatic Message" (1933) he deemed automatism at least a partial failure, "une infortune continue."

³⁸ Breton, "The Automatic Message," p. 98.

³⁹ Here we may begin to see why Surrealism was important to Lacan in his later linguistic reformulations of the unconscious; in Chapters Two and Three I relate these reformulations to the Surrealist image and object. Much work remains to be done on the Surrealist influence on Lacan; a beginning is made in Macey, Lacan in Contexts (London, 1989), pp. 44-74.

confused decentering with liberation, psychic disturbance with social revolt, made for the great aporia around which it swirled, an aporia which was manifested as ambivalence. On the one hand, the Surrealists desired this decentering or disturbance; as Breton proclaimed in 1920 and Ernst reaffirmed in 1936, Surrealism, especially in its automatist mode, was pledged against "the principle of identity."⁴⁰ On the other hand, they feared this decentering, and it was automatist practice that exposed its risks most clearly. For automatism pointed to an instinctual mechanism or "automatism" that threatened a literal désagrégation of the subject. Rather than liberate the repressed contents of the unconscious, automatism suggested its compulsive, mechanical dynamic. In so doing it revealed a very different unconscious from the one projected by Bretonian Surrealism--an unconscious not unitary or liberatory at all, but rather primally conflicted, instinctually repetitive.

The Surrealists were not oblivious to the involuntary, even uncanny nature of automatism. In the époque des sommeils death was an obsessive theme, and in Surrealism and Painting Breton relates the psychic state achieved through automatism

⁴⁰ Breton, "Max Ernst" (1920), translated in Max Ernst, Beyond Painting (New York, 1948), pp. 177; and Ernst, "Instantaneous Identity" (1936), in Beyond Painting, p. 13. Breton writes here of the Ernst collages first exhibited in Paris in May 1921, a show of enormous importance to Surrealism. I discuss this decentering further in Chapter Three.

to nirvana.⁴¹ More importantly, they were aware of its "mechanical" aspect;⁴² indeed, in the first text in La Révolution surréaliste 1 (December 1, 1924) they directly associate automatism with automatons: "Already, automatons multiply and dream."⁴³ This association is not only metaphorical, for Surrealist automatism does in fact render one an automaton, a recording machine, an uncanny being because ambiguously sentient, neither animate nor inanimate. One is possessed but mechanically, like the 18th-century automaton cherished by the Surrealists, the Young Writer of Pierre Jacques-Droz, who scratched the same word again and again [Fig. 1].⁴⁴ What is this compulsive mechanism at work in automatism? To what principle does it attest? "All is written," Breton proclaimed as the very motto of automatism.⁴⁵ He meant this statement metaphysically, but it can be read in another way too: "all is written" in the sense

⁴¹ Breton describes this state as "the absence of contradiction, the relaxation of emotional tensions due to repression, a lack of the sense of time, and the replacement of external reality by a psychical reality obeying the pleasure principle alone" (Surrealism and Painting, p. 68). The intuition that automatism points to a principle beyond that of pleasure is here resisted.

⁴² Breton, "The Automatic Message," p. 105.

⁴³ "Preface", La Révolution surréaliste 1 (December 1, 1924). La Révolution surréaliste 3 (April 15, 1925) opens with an image of a mannequin in armor.

⁴⁴ As we will see in Chapter Four, such automatons and mannequins fascinated the Surrealists precisely as figures of the uncanny.

⁴⁵ Breton, "The Automatic Message," p. 98.

that inscribed in each of us as an organism is our end, our death, our debt to nature (as Freud liked to say). Like the major Bretonian categories that issued from it (again, the marvelous, convulsive beauty, objective chance), Surrealist automatism speaks of psychic mechanisms of compulsive repetition and death drive--speaks of them in the experiential register of the uncanny.⁴⁴ It is to this notion, then, that we must turn.

To review "The Uncanny" (1919) is to see its relevance to Surrealism; here I will note only a few connections to be developed later. According to Freud, an uncanny experience involves the return of a familiar phenomenon--object or image, person or event--made strange by repression. This return of the repressed renders the subject anxious and the phenomenon ambiguous, and this in turn produces the primary effects of the uncanny: 1) an indistinction between the real and the imagined, which is the basic aim of Surrealism as defined in both manifestoes of Breton; 2) a confusion between the animate and the inanimate, as exemplified in wax figures, dolls and automatons, all crucial images in the Surrealist repertoire; and 3) a usurpation of the referent by the sign

⁴⁴ Significantly, Lacan translates "the compulsion to repeat" (*Wiederholungszwang*) as "automatisme de répétition." So, too, he develops the term automaton from Aristotle as the very figure of repetition; see his Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de psychanalyse (Paris, 1973), translated by Alan Sheridan as The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (New York, 1977), pp. 53-64, 67.

or of physical reality by psychic reality--and here again the surreal is often experienced, especially by Breton and Dalí, as just such an eclipse of the real by the symbolic, or an enthrallment of the subject to a particular sign or symptom, and its effect is often that of the uncanny: anxiety. "The most remarkable coincidences of desire and fulfilment, the most mysterious recurrence of similar experiences in a particular place or on a particular date, the most deceptive sights and suspicious noises...." This reads as an account of the marvelous according to Surrealism; it is in fact Freud on the uncanny.⁴⁷

Freud traces the estrangement of the familiar that is essential to the uncanny in the very etymology of the German term: unheimlich (or uncanny) derives from heimlich (literally homelike) to which several senses of the word return.⁴⁸ Freud asks us to think this origin literally, i.e., biologically; here he comments on the uncanniness of female genitals for certain male patients:

This unheimlich place, however, is the entrance to the former heim of all human beings, to the place where everyone dwelt once upon a time and in the beginning. There is a humorous saying: "Love is homesickness"; and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, still in the dream, "this place is familiar to me, I have been there before," we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body. In this case, too, the unheimlich is what was once

⁴⁷ Freud, "The Uncanny", p. 54.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 21-30. Among French equivalents Freud offers inquiétant and lugubre--words that often appear in Surrealist titles, especially those of de Chirico and Dalí.

heimisch, homelike, familiar; the prefix "un" is the token of repression.⁴⁷

As we will see, this uncanny homesickness is evoked in important apprehensions of the surreal, as is the primal fantasy of intrauterine existence. Indeed, all the primal fantasies according to Freud--fantasies of seduction, castration, the primal scene (i.e., the witnessing of parental sex) as well as intrauterine existence--are active in Surrealist reflections concerning subjectivity and art.⁵⁰ These infantile or primordial states are also active in the uncanny: "An uncanny experience occurs either when repressed infantile complexes have been revived by some impression, or when the primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed."⁵¹ Among such primitive beliefs Freud notes "animistic mental activity" and "omnipotence of thought," magic and witchcraft, the evil eye and the double.⁵² However

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 51.

⁵⁰ This is developed extensively in Chapter Three.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 55. For Freud infantile and primitive states are "not always sharply distinguishable" (p. 55); the first in some ways recapitulates the second. This is symptomatic of the phylogenetic, even evolutionist strand in his thought, which is hardly unique to him: the equation of the infantile, the primitive and the insane is made by many modernisms. The Surrealists may recode this ideological trio (we too are children, primitive and mad) but they never deconstruct it.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 40-50. Freud first notes the uncanniness of these beliefs in Totem and Taboo (1913; translated into French in 1923). This supports the notion that the Surrealist relation to the primitive might also be discussed in terms of the uncanny.

consciously or cannily, these beliefs were entertained by many Surrealists. Some, for example, assumed doubles (e.g., the "Loplop" persona of Max Ernst), while others examined the evil eye either specifically in anthropological terms or generally in psychoanalytical terms--in terms, that is, of the gaze.²³ These two avatars of the uncanny, which obsessed the Surrealists, suggests why the uncanny produces anxiety, for the evil eye represents the gaze as a castrative threat, while the double, according to Freud, represents a once protective figure transformed by repression into a "ghastly harbinger of death."²⁴ For Freud the evocation of these two repressed states, castration and death, is the very epitome of the uncanny.²⁵ Yet for a long time (at the very least the

²³ The evil eye is discussed by the anthropologist Marcel Griaule in "Mauvais oeil", Documents 4 (1929), p. 218, and by Kurt Seligmann in "The Evil Eye," View 1 (June 1942), pp. 46-8; many other Surrealists (e.g., Desnos, Bataille) wrote about its fascination. As we will see, Surrealist painting and writing often engage the psychic effects of the gaze, the Lacanian elaboration of which is given in The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis ("The Gaze as Objet Petit a"). This work is informed by Surrealism to the degree that the castrative import of the gaze is a Surrealist insight. There are many iconographical accounts of the eye in Surrealist art; see, for example, Jeanne Siegel, "The Image of the Eye in Surrealist Art and its Psychoanalytic Sources. Part One. The Mythic Eye," Arts 56 (February 1982), pp. 102-6.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 40. Freud here acknowledges the 1914 text of Otto Rank on "Der Doppelgänger" published in Imago.

²⁵ This is why Freud discusses the E.T.A. Hoffmann story "The Sandman" at such length in "The Uncanny"--not only because it involves uncanny figures (e.g., Olympia, "the automatic doll," who is neither live nor dead) but also because it reenacts the Oedipus complex through uncanny doubles that threaten the protagonist Nathaniel with death. In the story Nathaniel confuses the fantasy figure of the

six years since the 1913 Totem and Taboo) he could not grasp the principle at work in these strange returns of the repressed, the dynamic of these repetitions. Obviously it was not that of pleasure (at least not as heretofore conceived), to which the unconscious had appeared to be pledged. Whatever it was, it held the key not only to the uncanny but to a new conception of desire and sexuality, the unconscious and the drives.

Freud only completed "The Uncanny" in May 1919, a month or two after he had drafted Beyond the Pleasure Principle; it was this text that provided the necessary concept which unified the essay. There exists, Freud now argued, an instinctual compulsion to repeat, to return to a prior state, "a principle powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle"; and it is this compulsion that renders certain phenomena "daemonic": "whatever reminds us of this inner repetition-compulsion is perceived as uncanny."²⁶ If we are to grasp the surreal in terms of the uncanny, we must be at

Sandman with the horrific figure of Coppélius/Coppella; both represent the bad castrative father for him. Significantly, in these uncanny figures the fear of castration returns as an anxiety about blindness. I return to the Freudian account of this story in Chapter Three. There are many texts on "The Uncanny" (for a partial bibliography see Elizabeth Wright, Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice [London and New York, 1984] pp. 190-96); among the most provocative are Neil Hertz, "Freud and the Sandman," in Josue Harari ed., Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism (Ithaca, 1979), pp. 296-321, and Hélène Cixous, "Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's Das Unheimliche," in New Literary History 7 (Spring 1976), pp. 525-48.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

least acquainted with its theoretical basis, i.e., with the final Freudian model of a struggle between life and death drives as intuited in "The Uncanny" and articulated in Beyond the Pleasure Principle and related texts.⁹⁷ Significantly for us, Freud conceived this "beyond" of the pleasure principle on the basis of evidence which, though heterogeneous, is hardly extrinsic to the experiences and/or interests of the primary Surrealists: the play of infants just at the point of language, the traumatic neuroses of World War I veterans, and the compulsive repetition (as opposed to the concerted recollection) of repressed materials in analytic treatment. I will focus on the first two instances (as does Freud in Beyond the Pleasure Principle); the third type of repetition will be discussed in Chapter Two.⁹⁸

The specific play that intrigued Freud was the famous fort/da game devised by his eighteen-month-old grandson with a string attached to a spool. In order actively to master rather than passively to suffer the periodic disappearances of his mother, the little boy represented the event

⁹⁷ This is the famous turning point of the 1920s when the new topology of ego, id and superego is also developed.

⁹⁸ Freud understood trauma differently at different times. After he renounced the seduction theory of hysteria in 1897, he did not dwell again on the subject until he was confronted by the traumatic neuroses produced by the war. In effect, the Surrealists were involved in both these discursive instances of trauma, and like Freud they were always ambiguous as to its agency--i.e., whether trauma concerned internal or external stimuli or both. I discuss this ambiguity further in Chapter Two.

symbolically: he would throw away the spool, repudiate it (fort! gone!), only to recover it with the string, each time with delight (da! there!). Freud interpreted the game, which points to the psychic basis in repetition of all representation, as an ingenious way for the infant to compensate for the deprivation of the mother, "the instinctual renunciation" culturally demanded of him.⁵⁷ Yet this reading did not explain the compulsive repetition of the game: why would the little boy symbolically repeat an event, the disappearance of the mother, which was precisely not pleasant to him? An answer came by way of a distant quarter in which Freud worked about the same time: the traumatic neuroses of war veterans fixated on events of fright or shock.⁶⁰ The dreams of the soldiers reenacted the traumatic events, and this contradicted the idea of the dream as wish fulfilment. The war dreams, Freud eventually speculated, were belated attempts to "prepare" the subject to master the shock of the event, to develop the protective anxiety "whose

⁵⁷ Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, trans. James Strachey (New York, 1961), p. 9. The most important Lacanian gloss on the fort/da game occurs in "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," in écrits: A Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1977), pp. 30-113, though see also The Four Fundamental Concepts, pp. 62-3.

⁶⁰ In Beyond the Pleasure Principle (p. 6) Freud distinguishes among Schreck or fright, Furcht or fear and Angst or anxiety as follows: in a state of fear the object of danger is known; in anxiety the object is not known but the danger is expected; in fright there is no such warning or preparation--the subject is shocked. I discuss the importance of shock for Surrealism in Chapter Two.

omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis."⁴¹ After the fact, with his "protective shield"⁴² already breached by excessive stimuli, the soldier subject could only futilely repeat a useless preparation. In this tragic display Freud again saw evidence of a compulsion to repeat, of a principle which in this instance clearly overrode that of pleasure.⁴³

Compelled by this principle Freud rewrote his theory of the drives. A drive, Freud now held, is "an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things," and as the inorganic precedes the organic, "the aim of all life," he concluded in a famous phrase, "is death."⁴⁴ In this model the

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴² Ibid., p. 23. According to Freud, this "shield", both physiological and psychological, filters external excitation into the organism, for "protection against stimuli is an almost more important function than reception of stimuli" (p. 21). For a gloss on this term see Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, The Language of Psychoanalysis, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York, 1973), pp. 357-58.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 30, 32. As is well known, the standard English translation of Freud is nowhere more problematic than in the use of "instinct" for Trieb. "Instinct" possesses a biological essentialism not inherent in Trieb, which should be translated "drive". However, in this instance Freud does stress the biological basis of the death instinct.

The 19th-century science out of which Freud developed the theory is now obsolete, but the test of the theory rests less on scientific fact than on psychological explanation. "The theory of the instinct is so to say our mythology," Freud writes in New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1933). "Instincts are mythical entities, magnificent in their indefiniteness" (The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, trans. James Strachey [London, 1953], vol. XXII, p. 95 [hereafter S.E.]). On the scientific bases of psychoanalysis see Frank J. Sulloway, Freud, Biologist of the Mind (New York, 1979). As the formula "an urge inherent

essence of the drive is its conservative nature, its homeostatic goal; death becomes immanent to life, and life a "detour" to death. A new opposition emerges: no longer ego or self-preservative drives versus sexual drives, but the life drive (which now subsumes the other two) versus the death drive, Eros versus Thanatos. Yet, as with the first opposition, this one is never pure. The two drives appear only in combination, with the death drive "tinged with eroticism."⁴⁵ And the subject is always caught between these two forces, in a state of relative (de)fusion governed by libido.

This theory is complicated, not to say contradictory. On the one hand, the repetitions of the infant, the shock victim and the analysand are attempts respectively to overcome loss (i.e., of the mother), to defend against shock

in organic life" suggests, the death drive is not so much beyond the pleasure principle as anterior to it: dissolution comes before binding--at the level of the cell as well as that of the formation of the ego. In this sense the death drive is the foundation rather than the exception of the pleasure principle, which does indeed "serve" it. On this point see Gilles Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty," in Masochism, trans. Jean McNeil (New York, 1989), pp. 103-21.

⁴⁵ Freud, Civilization and its Discontents (1930), S.E. vol. XXI, p. 120. In The Ego and the Id (1923) Freud had already stated that "the two classes of instincts are fused, blended, and mingled with each other" (p. 224). Essentially, however, "the aim of [Eros] is to establish even greater unities and to preserve them thus--in short, to bind together; the aim of [the destructive drives] is, on the contrary, to undo connections and so to destroy things" (An Outline of Psychoanalysis (1938), S.E. vol. XXIII, p. 148). In his recent work (e.g., The Freudian Body [Berkeley, 1986]) Leo Bersani argues that two terms, the sexual and the destructive, are absolutely inextricable.

(exogenous or external), to deal with trauma (endogenous or internal); in this regard they appear pledged to the "binding" or fusion of the subject, to its self-preservation. On the other hand, these repetitions may also be compulsive; as such they appear pledged to the undoing or defusion of the subject, to its death. So when does repetition serve binding and life, and when defusion and death? Moreover, when, in the search of the lost object, is repetition driven by desire, and when by death? If all drives are ultimately conservative, can that of life finally be opposed to that of death? These complications in Freud also appear in Surrealism. In fact, I will argue, it is precisely at these points of great psychosexual difficulty--where pleasure and death principles come to serve one another, where sexual and destructive drives suddenly appear identical--that Surrealism is at once achieved and undone.

Now all of this is counterintuitive, to say the least. The death drive theory is anathema to the Surrealist affirmation of desire and desublimation, liberation and revolution, at least as conventionally thought. And yet if the surreal is bound up with the uncanny, then so too is it bound up with the death drive. In short, just as Surrealist automatism suggests not liberation but compulsion, so Surrealism in general may celebrate desire only, in the register of the uncanny, to proclaim death. According to this hypothesis, the thrust of Surrealism goes against its own

ambition. Typically Surrealism (automatist, oneiric or otherwise) is seen to contest the reality principle in the name of the pleasure principle, the self-preservative drives in the name of the sexual drives. This is true as far as it goes, which is simply not far enough, for in this very contestation the Surrealists are led to discover that "the pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts,"⁴⁶ and that self-preservative and sexual drives are finally overcoded by a greater destructive will.

A brief outline of the development of the death drive theory will begin to illuminate this deconstructive insight; here I will note only the Freud texts that discuss sadism and masochism, for both terms are crucial not only to the new theory but also to Surrealist practice. Several texts announce or develop the insights of "The Uncanny" and Beyond the Pleasure Principle. In Instincts and their Vicissitudes (1915), published four years before "The Uncanny" but not translated into French until 1940, the economic conception of the drives is already sketched ("the final goal of every instinct" is to abolish "the condition of stimulation"),⁴⁷ and yet the model of self-preservative drives versus sexual drives is still in place. More importantly, sadism is held to be primary and not, as in the death drive theory, masochism.

⁴⁶ Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, p. 57.

⁴⁷ Freud, Instincts and their Vicissitudes (1915), in A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud (New York, 1957), ed. John Rickman, p. 74.

On this point, however, Freud is ambiguous, even contradictory, and the possibility of a primary masochism is at least allowed. For in this text Freud first proposes the concept of "drive reversal" by which the aim of the drive moves between active and passive modes, and that of "turning round" by which the subject can become the object of the drive.⁴⁰ As we will see in Chapter Three, such concepts are implicit in Surrealist theories of artistic subjectivity. In "A Child is Being Beaten" published and translated in the same years as "The Uncanny" (1919 and 1933 respectively), the primacy of sadism is even more in doubt. Here Freud considers the masochistic fantasy of a little girl patient--that it is she who is beaten by the father--as prior to the distanced version of "a child is being beaten." Finally, in "The Economic Problem of Masochism" (1924), published five years after "The Uncanny" but translated five years earlier (1928), masochism is deemed original and sadism secondary, and the death drive is said to move from the one to the other. Out of protection libido directs this destructive drive away from the subject to the world, where it confronts objects as so many things to master, as so many tests of power. When this aggressive relation is sexual it is properly sadistic;

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 77. Drives are always active; only aims (e.g., masochistic or exhibitionist, both of which are pronounced among Surrealists) can be passive. My resumé of these texts is very reductive; it is intended simply to sketch the development of the death drive theory and to point to related Freudian concepts intimated in Surrealism.

otherwise the destructive drive remains bound within the subject, a condition which Freud calls "original erotogenic masochism."⁶⁷

Since the death drive is always "tinged with eroticism," pleasure may be felt in destruction and desire aroused by death. As suggested, this commonality of the sexual and the destructive is intimated in Surrealism; indeed, it illuminates its darkest aspect, sadism, which the Surrealists both practiced and studied.⁷⁰ Such sadism cannot be lightly excused, but neither should it be merely condemned, for in the Freudian model not only is it derived from masochism as a projection of the death drive, but it also lies at the very origins of sexuality. In Surrealism this sadism is typically directed at figures of woman, where it is often compounded with a "punishment" exacted upon her for her putatively castrated state--or, more precisely, for her status as the representative of this state, of its threat to the patriarchal subject.⁷¹ The Poupées of Hans Bellmer, I argue

⁶⁷ Freud, "The Economic Problem of Masochism" (1924), S.E., vol. XIX, pp. 163-64.

⁷⁰ The historical recovery of Sade was largely the work of the Surrealists, Marcel Heine in particular, who annotated and published several Sade texts in Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 2, 4 and 5 (October 1930, December 1931 and May 15, 1933). Enthusiasm for Sade cut across all factions.

⁷¹ See Freud, "Fetishism" (1927), in On Sexuality (New York, 1977), ed. Angela Richards, pp. 356-57. For the important revision that the female object represents a loss or "castration" preexistent in the male subject, see Kaja Silverman, The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema (Bloomington, 1988), pp. 1-22, and

in Chapter Four, are extreme instances of this deadly complex of sadomasochism and fetishism [Fig. 2]. But this complex is pervasive in Surrealism; it may even lie behind its general mandate, in painting, collage and objects alike, to destroy the object as such.⁷⁸

Were the Surrealists aware of this Freudian model? There are no references to the pertinent texts in Surrealist writing before 1929, and only a few thereafter. This silence is not only due to the fact that Beyond the Pleasure Principle was not translated until 1927 and "The Uncanny" only in 1933; a certain resistance is also involved. The death drive theory is a very disputed aspect of Freudian thought. Placed as it

my "The Art of Fetishism," forthcoming in Emily Apter and William Pietz, eds., Fetishism as a Cultural Discourse (Ithaca, 1991). Clearly Surrealist representations of women are subject to feminist critique (as performed, for example, by Xavière Gauthier in Surréalisme et sexualité [Paris, 1971]). However, the Surrealists were more reflexive about misogyny than many modernists (e.g., the Futurists): they explored male fantasies, investigated the patriarchal unconscious; they did not merely express them symptomatically. For more on this matter see my "L'Amour faux" and Chapter Two.

⁷⁸ For example, the "Preface" to La Révolution surréaliste 1 (December 1, 1924) reads in part: "Any discovery changing the nature, the destination of an object or a phenomenon constitutes a surrealist fact." In Chapter Two I discuss the found object, but not the assemblage or tableau, many of which appear pledged not only to the detabulation of the object but to its destruction. To this degree they might be seen in terms of a reversal of an "original masochism"--terms which might be more generally applied to modernism. For a different perspective see Michael Balint, "Notes on the Dissolution of Object-Representation in Modern Art" (1952), in Problems of Human Pleasure and Behavior (New York, 1956), pp. 117-24.

is in the service of revolution and love, Surrealism cannot be expected to comprehend a theory of repetition and death-- however sympathetic it is to psychoanalysis in other respects. Or can it? We noted that death was an obsessive theme in the époque des sommeils; the Surrealists were also fascinated by suicide.⁷³ In fact, the first Surrealist enquête, in La Révolution surréaliste 2 (January 15, 1925), addresses this subject directly:

Inquiry: one lives, one dies. What is the role of will in all this? It seems that one kills oneself as one dreams. It is not a moral question that we pose: IS SUICIDE A SOLUTION?⁷⁴

Conscious will, it is implied here, plays a minimal role in the mechanisms of life and death, which are "beyond" morality, good and evil, just as the death drive is "beyond" the pleasure principle. This qualification renders the question ambiguous: in what sense is suicide a solution, and a solution to what? Is it an act of will that solves, i.e., concludes, the ennui of life? Or does it bespeak an

⁷³ Some took this interest too far: e.g., Jacques Vaché, the Dadaesque dandy who so influenced the young Breton; Jacques Rigaut, who also wrote on suicide; René Crevel, who died in despair of any Surrealist-Communist rapprochement; and Oscar Dominguez. In La Bataille de cent ans Roudinescou also mentions "the Surrealist cult of suicide." And she adds: "The Surrealists were not 'influenced' by the publication in German of Beyond the Pleasure Principle, which was translated in France in 1927. Nevertheless, the seduction of death that runs throughout its poetic writing since its origins constituted, in Surrealism, a favorable ground for the implantation of the Freudian notion of the drive" (vol. 2, p. 31).

⁷⁴ La Révolution surréaliste 2 (January 15, 1925), p. 11.

involuntary mechanism that solves, i.e., completes, the drive to death?⁷⁵ Almost five years later in La Révolution surréaliste 12 (December 15, 1929), Jean Frois-Wittmann, the only one of the first generation of French analysts to write for the primary Surrealist journals, published a text titled "Les mobiles inconscients de suicide." Suicide, Frois-Wittmann argues, is typically determined not only by melancholy, the inability to surrender a lost love object, but also by the death drive, "l'appel du néant," to which theory he directly refers.⁷⁶ Apart from this citation in a Surrealist context, the essay is significant for us because it suggests that the death drive is active not only in sexual desire (as in la petite mort) but also in intoxication and reverie, all states to which the Surrealists aspired.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ The Breton reply is significant in that it stresses the decentering of the subject even or especially in suicide; he simply quotes Théodore Jouffroy: "Suicide is a badly conceived word; he who kills is not identical to he whom is killed" (La Révolution surréaliste 1, p. 12). In André Breton (Geneva, 1967) Clifford Browder asserts that the death drive "always exerted a special fascination for Breton" (p. 66), but he makes nothing of it.

⁷⁶ "[T]he inorganic precedes life. Scarcely born, the organism strains to neutralize all excitation in order to reestablish this previous condition" ("Les Mobiles inconscients de suicide," La Révolution surréaliste 12 [December 15, 1929], p. 41). Although "The Economic Problem in Masochism" was translated by 1928, Frois-Wittman retains the theoretical primacy of sadism: "[T]he desire of th ego for its own extinction can only come of a turning round of sadism on the ego..." (p. 41).

⁷⁷ Frois-Wittmann also suggests that "intrauterine Nirvana" is a particular fantasy of schizoïdes who, withdrawn from ego conflicts and worldly exigencies, remain enveloped by the mother, as it were. As we will see in Chapters Three

Significantly, however, Frois-Wittmann resists the full ramifications of the theory. In a text published four years later in Minotaure 3-4 (December 14, 1933) he places modern art under the aegis of the pleasure principle--as if in defense of the "beyond" of this principle. I say "in defense" because Frois-Wittmann argues an "affinity" among modern art (primarily Surrealism), psychoanalysis and "the proletarian movement."⁷⁶ And to argue this point the defusion posited by the death drive theory must somehow be suspended, for it severely qualifies any project of revolution. If psychoanalysis was essential to Surrealism, to its project of "affination", then theoretically at least this theory had to be resisted or transvalued--not only for the liberatory model of the unconscious and the supreme status of love to be upheld, but also for the political commitment to revolution and even the social cohesion of the group to be sustained.⁷⁷

and Six, intrauterine fantasies are very active in Surrealism.

⁷⁶ Frois-Wittmann, "L'Art moderne et le principe du plaisir," Minotaure 3-4 (December 14, 1933), pp. 79-80.

⁷⁷ Political Freudians faced a similar problem at the same time. In "The Masochistic Character" Wilhelm Riech criticized the theory as a biologization of destruction that obviated any "critique of the social order" (in Character Analysis [1933; New York, 1949], p. 214). And in "A Critique of the Death Instinct" (1935) Otto Fenichel questioned as well its psychoanalytical bases, e.g., its contradiction of other definitions of the instincts, its ambiguity regarding (de)fusion, its assumption of a primary masochism (in The Collected Papers of Otto Fenichel, ed. Hanna Fenichel and David Rapaport [New York, 1953], vol. 1, pp. 363-72). Also see Laplanche and Pontalis, The Language of Psychoanalysis, p. 101.

In this regard Frois-Wittmann not only introduced the death drive theory to Bretonian Surrealists; he also suggested its problematic--why it might both fascinate and repel them.

In any case, Bretonian Surrealists were aware of the theory by late 1929 at least. The preface to the program of the first showing of the 1930 Buñuel-Dalí film L'Age d'or, apparently written by Breton but collectively signed, includes a section titled "The Sexual Instinct and the Death Instinct."²⁰ Although Breton engages the concept of the death drive here, he does so in Surrealist terms, and the result is a symptomatic contradiction. On the one hand, he embraces the theory in order to transvalue it, to place it in the service of revolution ("to urge the oppressed to satisfy their hunger for destruction and...to cater to the masochism of the oppressor").²¹ On the other hand, lest it undercut the Surrealist premise in love, he defends against the theory, concludes contra Freud that eros, not death, is "the farthest, the slowest, the nearest, the most entreating

²⁰ Program to L'Age d'or (Paris, November 1930), n.p. It appears, then, that by this time Breton had read either Beyond the Pleasure Principle or The Ego and the Id, which rehearses the theory of the two drives. Parts of the Surrealist tract are translated in Marcel Jean, ed., Autobiography of Surrealism (New York, 1980), p. 257, and in What is Surrealism?, pp. 327-28.

²¹ Breton, L'Age d'or, as translated in What is Surrealism?, p. 328. In his 1929 text on suicide Frois-Wittmann also associated the death drive with the decadence of ruling classes.

voice."⁸² In short, Breton first conflates the Freudian drives and then reverses them in value. The death drive, though apparently assimilated, is actually elided, and eros is restored not only as primary but also as liberatory. Here in his very wording he evokes Beyond the Pleasure Principle (with the agency of death typically projected away from the psychic to the social) but only to invert its hierarchy:

The day will soon come when we realize that, in spite of the wear and tear of life that bites like acid into our flesh, the very cornerstone of that violent liberation which reaches out for a better life in the heart of the technological age that corrupts our cities is LOVE.⁸³

The Bretonian insistence on love begins to appear compensatory, posed in defense against its apparent opposite, death. The same is true of the Bretonian insistence on

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid. However, even as Breton celebrates love, he never endorses sublimation. In the L'Age d'or program Breton disputes the hope expressed by the elderly Freud in a cultural renunciation of the destructive drives--disputes it before the fact, as it were, since he could not have read Civilization and its Discontents (1930), translated only in 1934. Breton does so, Roudinescou suggests (La Bataille, vol. 2, p. 32), to comply with Surrealist transgression which, though practiced at the level of art, is thought on the analogy with sexuality. However, this commitment places him again in a bind fundamental to Bretonian Surrealism: on the one hand to be drawn to transgression, on the other to be leery of the defusion or destruction at its core. This bind is suggested in his prudery regarding "perversions"; Breton would only admit to a little fetishism in "Recherches sur la sexualité," La Révolution surréaliste 12 (March 15, 1928), pp. 32-40. In this discussion among early Bretonian Surrealists (e.g., Aragon, J.-A. Boiffard, Morise, Naville, Benjamin Péret, Raymond Queneau, Man Ray, Yves Tanguy) Breton is not only a hypocritical advocate of monogamy but also a defensive homophobe (he threatens to stop the proceedings if pédérastie is discussed). Much work remains to be done on the homosocial basis of such avant-gardes as the Surrealists.

resolution, the Hegelian reconciliation of such dualisms as waking and dreaming--this, too, begins to appear as a compensatory defense against the psychic conflict that splits the subject, ultimately the dualism of the drives.^{e4} Decisive here, however, is that these contradictory defenses break down. At some moments Bretonian Surrealism works to separate desire and death, to oppose the first to the second--only to find in times of desire the presence of death. At other moments this same Surrealism works to reconcile desire and death (as in the two "Manifesto" definitions of surreality), to qualify the second with the first--only to discover that this point of reconciliation of desire and death is the very punctum of the uncanny, i.e., the point where desire and death interpenetrate in a way that cannot be reconciled. In this way if Bretonian Surrealism is indeed in the service of psychoanalysis, it is a service that is always ambivalently rendered. For even as Surrealism resists psychoanalytical insights, even collapses around them, it also recognizes

^{e4} Many of the concepts of Bretonian Surrealism are indeed intended to reconcile such oppositions: in automatism, waking and dreaming, life and death, thought and language, perception and representation; in objective chance, determinism and freedom; in mad love, man and woman; in Surrealism generally, art and politics, etc. In Breton this defense takes excessive forms: e.g., his fascination with Fourier (concepts of attraction, natural regeneration, sexual liberation and cosmic humanism), with myths of androgyny, with analogical thought, etc. The "philosophical" analyses of Surrealism reiterate this metaphysics rather than deconstruct it; see, for example, Michel Carrouges, André Breton et les données fondamentales du surréalisme (Paris, 1950) and Ferdinand Alquié, Philosophie du surréalisme (Paris, 1955), translated as The Philosophy of Surrealism (Ann Arbor, 1965).

them, even develops them. This is the case, for example, when it seeks liberation only to enact repetition, or when it proclaims desire only to bespeak death.²² In my argument, then, certain Surrealist practices intuit these uncanny discoveries of psychoanalysis, sometimes to work through them, sometimes even to exploit them: i.e., to use the uncanniness of the return of the repressed, the compulsion to repeat, the immanence of death for disruptive purposes--to produce out of this psychic ambivalence a provocative symbolic ambiguity in art.

To read Surrealism symptomatically in terms of the uncanny is to regard it obliquely: no one object of inquiry, no simple line of argument, will suffice. Hence I deal with

²² One can distinguish the major Surrealisms according to their positions on desire and death. My concern is with Bretonian Surrealism, its recognitions and disavowals of the uncanny, the compulsion to repeat and the death drive. A more expansive essay would necessarily address Bataille's Surrealism as well. Just as Bretonian Surrealists tend to resist the ramifications of the death drive theory, so Bataille's Surrealists tend to develop them, even to exacerbate them, especially in notions of mimesis (e.g., Roger Caillois, "Mimétisme et psychasthénie légendaire," Minotaure 7 [June 1935] and later of eroticism (e.g., Georges Bataille, L'Érotisme [Paris, 1957]). In L'Érotisme Bataille nowhere cites Beyond the Pleasure Principle, but his thinking is coincident in many respects. Whereas Bretonian Surrealism poses eros as a synthetic force against the dissolution of death, Bataille's Surrealism sees eros as a break with the discontinuity represented by life, "an assenting to life up to the point of death." Whereas Bretonian Surrealism seeks to reconcile oppositions idealistically, Bataille's Surrealism works to destructure them materialistically, to oppose Hegelian sublation with heterological abjection. In this regard the death drive might be seen as the ultimate destructuring of oppositions, not only of pleasure and reality principles but even of life and death.

images, objects and texts of all sorts, sometimes familiar, often obscure, in the belief that, even as the repetition of repressed material structures central oeuvres of Surrealism, so too does it surface in its marginal sites. Chapter Two considers the Surrealist marvelous and its various avatars (convulsive beauty, objective chance) as an uncanny confusion between opposed states--a "hysterical" confusion rooted in trauma. Here a reading of Breton novels reveals that the two primary forms of objective chance, the unique encounter and the found object, are precisely uncanny to the degree that they recall or repeat past traumas; as such they are neither objective nor aleatory.

If Chapter Two proposes a reading of the Surrealist object as a refinding of a lost object, Chapter Three suggests a reading of the Surrealist image as a juxtaposition of different psychic signifiers. Here I take up the problem of repetition in the work of three artists, Giorgio de Chirico, Max Ernst and Alberto Giacometti, all of whom attempt to work through (fantasmatic) traumas both thematically and procedurally. The risks in this project are high. For even as these artists deploy psychic disturbance--in order to disrupt conventional pictorial space (de Chirico), artistic identity (Ernst) and subject-object relations (Giacometti)--so too are they subject to this psychic disturbance, threatened by its disruptions. Nonetheless, they are rewarded not only with new types of

aesthetic practice ("metaphysical" painting, collage techniques and "symbolic" objects respectively) but also implicitly with a new conception of art original to Surrealism: the image as an enigmatic trace of a traumatic experience and/or fantasy, ambiguous in its equally curative and destructive effects.

If Chapters Two and Three examine the psychologic of certain uncanny practices, Chapters Four and Five explore the cultural politics of certain uncanny figures. That is, they reposition the Surrealist uncanny in terms of specific societal forms and historical processes in order to argue that Surrealism works over the shocks of modern capitalism as well as the traumas of individual experience. Chapter Four develops in a social register the uncanny confusion between animate and inanimate states discussed in a psychic register in Chapter Two. Here I read such Surrealist figures as the automaton and the mannequin as uncanny emblems of the becoming machine and commodity of the body under capitalism. A discussion of Bellmer also traces the relation of these processes to the death drive on the one hand and to fascism on the other.

Chapter Five develops in collective terms the uncanny return of past states discussed in subjective terms in Chapter Three. Here I argue that Surrealism works through historical as well as psychic repression, and that it does so primarily through a recovery of outmoded objects and images

that is both redemptive and disruptive. In this regard the various deployments of outmoded spaces in the visual texts of Aragon, Ernst and Dali are examined in particular.

Finally in Chapter Six I propose from the foregoing insights that Surrealism be understood in terms of an uncanny return of two psychic states above all--states which indicate just how determined Surrealism is by the patriarchal unconscious. On the one hand, Surrealism is governed by a fantasy of maternal plenitude, of an auratic, pre-Oedipal space-time before any loss or division; on the other, by a fantasy of paternal punishment, of an anxious, Oedipal space-time where "man, ill-prepared, is taken by a sudden fear in the forest of symbols."²⁴ Throughout this essay my claim is not only that the Surrealists are subject to the uncanny return of such repressed material, but also that they seek to exploit it for transformative purposes and to recoup it for therapeutic ends--and in so doing that they develop innovative notions of aesthetic practice, cultural politics and critical history.

²⁴ Breton, L'Amour fou (Paris, 1937), translated by Mary Ann Caws as Mad Love (Lincoln, 1987), p. 15.

Chapter Two
COMPULSIVE BEAUTY

If automatism points to an unconscious less liberatory than compulsive, this is all the more true of the marvelous, the concept which gradually supercedes automatism as the basic principle of Bretonian Surrealism. Developed primarily by Breton, the marvelous has two cognates: convulsive beauty and objective chance, the first announced in Nadja (1928), the second developed in Les Vases communicants (1932), and both refined in L'Amour fou (1937).¹

Originally the marvelous was a medieval term for a rupture in the natural order; "we marvel at something," Thomas Aquinas wrote, "when we do not know the cause."² This challenge to rational causality is essential to the

¹ The marvelous was discussed by many other Surrealists besides Breton, both early (e.g., Aragon, whom I engage briefly below) and late (e.g., Pierre Mabille). I focus, however, on the Bretonian notion as the most significant and symptomatic. I refer to these editions of the novels: Nadja (Paris, 1928), trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1960), noted hereafter as N in the text; Les Vases communicants (Paris, 1932; 1955), VC hereafter; and L'Amour fou (Paris, 1937) translated by Mary Ann Caws as Mad Love (Lincoln, 1987), AF hereafter.

² Thomas Aquinas as quoted by Michael Camille, The Gothic Idol (Cambridge, 1989), p. 244. On the medieval marvelous see Jacques Le Goff, L'Imaginaire médiéval (Paris, 1980), pp. 17-39. Sometimes a distinction is drawn between "miraculous" and "marvelous" depending on whether this rupture is thought to be divine or not. In "Le Merveilleux contre le mystère" Breton favors the lucidity of the first over the obscurity of the second (Minotaure 9 [October 1936], pp. 25-31).

medievalist aspect of Surrealism--its fascination with magic and alchemy, with mad love and analogical thought. It is also fundamental to its spiritualist aspect--its interest in such things as mediumistic practices and gothic literature (e.g., Mathew Gregory Lewis, Ann Radcliffe, Edward Young) where the marvelous is again in play. In fact, these enthusiasms suggest the project to which the Surrealist marvelous is pledged: the reenchantment of a disenchanted world, of a capitalist socius made ruthlessly rational. But they also suggest the ambiguity of this project, for in all three renderings of the marvelous--medieval, gothic and Surrealist--it is not clear whether it is an external or internal event, of otherworldly, secular or psychic agency.³

The primary purpose of the Surrealist marvelous, however, is clear: the negation of the real. If "reality," Aragon writes in 1924, "is the apparent absence of contradiction," a construct which effaces conflict, then "the marvelous is the eruption of contradiction in the real," an eruption which exposes this construct as such.⁴ Like Breton

³ In its concern with taboo, transgression (especially incest) and the morbid anxiety associated with the return of the repressed, gothic literature addressed the uncanny long before Freud.

⁴ Louis Aragon, La Révolution surréaliste 3 (April 15, 1925), p. 30; the aphorism is repeated in Le Paysan de Paris (Paris, 1926), translated by Simon Watson Taylor as Paris Peasant (London, 1971), p. 217. For Benjamin this "true, creative overcoming of religious illumination" was the most important achievement of Surrealism, for it offered "a profane illumination, a materialistic, anthropological inspiration" ("Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the

throughout his life, Aragon refers the marvelous to love. However, six years later in La Peinture au défi, he is more expressly political: the marvelous is a "dialectical urgency" in which one "bourgeois" reality is refused, and another, implicitly proletarian, proposed. Here the marvelous involves a contradiction between historical orders that can be expressed through aesthetic "displacement", a conception which underwrites his support of Surrealist collage in this text.⁵

For Breton, meanwhile, the marvelous is more personal than political. In his 1920 essay on the early collages of Ernst, a text which develops the nascent aesthetic of Surrealist juxtaposition, Breton stresses the subjective effects of the marvelous--its disorientation of "memory", its disruption of "identity".⁶ However, he soon qualifies this marvelous aesthetic in order to accommodate painting (whose facture cannot decenter the subject, artist or viewer, as can

Intelligentsia" [1929], in Reflections, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott [New York, 1978], p. 179). I return to the Aragon marvelous in Chapter Five.

⁵ Aragon, La Peinture au défi (Paris, 1930), translated by Lucy R. Lippard as "Challenge to Painting," in Lippard, ed., Surrealists on Art (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), pp. 37-8. It is here that Aragon thinks the marvelous as "negation". For Michel Leiris, too, the marvelous is a "rupture of relations, intense disorder" ("A Propos de 'Musée des Sorciers'," Documents 2 [1929], p. 109). This definition, in which the marvelous as a tabulation of wondrous objects is recast as a rupture in the modern order of things, illuminates many Surrealist assemblages and tableaux.

⁶ Breton, "Max Ernst" (1920), reprinted in Max Ernst, Beyond Painting (New York, 1948), p. 177.

the juxtapositions of collage). More important for us, he defends against its psychic ramifications. Ever Hegelian in his definitions of the surreal, Breton sees the marvelous in terms of resolution rather than contradiction: "What is admirable about the fantastic," he writes in the "Manifesto", "is that there is no longer anything fantastic: there is only the real."⁷ For Breton unlike for Aragon, contradiction is a problem to overcome poetically more than a "profane illumination" to exploit critically.⁸

Given the paradox of a state at once otherworldly, secular and psychic, how are we to understand the Surrealist marvelous? In all its variants, I will argue, the marvelous is the uncanny--but projected, at least in part, away from the unconscious and repressed material toward the world and future revelation.⁹ (It is this defensive projection that

⁷ Breton, "The Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924), in Manifestoes of Surrealism, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor, 1972), p. 15; M hereafter.

⁸ See note 4. For the Marxist Aragon the marvelous is "dispossessed" in the abstract; not so for the Hegelian Breton, whose concept of the marvelous is related to the various definitions of the Surrealist image as a juxtaposition of contradictory elements (from Lautréamont to Ernst by way of Reverdy). However, no Surrealist, not even Aragon, referred the Surrealist aesthetic of juxtaposition directly to the Marxist concept of contradiction. Bretonian Surrealists may have intuited contradiction between "realities" as the dynamic of modern art, but they displaced it from the social into discourses of the dream, the marvelous and the image.

⁹ Again, "The Uncanny" was not translated until 1933, or several years after the articulation of the marvelous and convulsive beauty in the "Manifesto" and Nadja. However, Breton did publish parts of L'Amour fou in 1934 and 1935 ("La

accounts for the confusion as to its site: e.g., is the marvelous a subjective experience? is chance an objective event?) Thus, on the one hand, the Surrealists exploit the uncanny return of the repressed for disruptive purposes,¹⁰ while, on the other, they resist its consequences regarding the death drive. To argue this will require two steps: first the marvelous as convulsive beauty will be seen as an uncanny confusion between animate and inanimate states; then the marvelous as objective chance--as manifest in the sudden encounter and the found object--will be revealed as an uncanny reminder of the compulsion to repeat. Both these terms, convulsive beauty and objective chance, connote shock, which suggests that the marvelous also involves traumatic experience, that it may even be an attempt to work through such experience. In this way, too, the marvelous can be understood in terms of the repetition that governs the

beauté sera convulsive" and "La nuit de tournesol" in Minotaure 5 and 7 [February 1934 and June 1935], "Equation de l'objet trouvé" in Documents 34 [June 1934]), and we know from a 1936 postscript that he had read The Ego and the Id (1923) which contains a short chapter on "The Two Classes of Instincts," in the 1927 translation which included Beyond the Pleasure Principle. Breton may have read this text, too, by the time of L'Amour fou; he may also have read Civilization and its Discontents, which, also translated in 1934, glosses the death drive. However, who read what when is less important than the parallelism of the thought and the power of the resistance. For a typology that opposes the marvelous and the uncanny see Tzvetan Todorov, Introduction à la littérature fantastique (Paris, 1970), translated by Richard Howard as The Fantastic (Ithaca, 1975).

¹⁰ Breton: "Fear, the attraction of the unusual, chance, the taste for things extravagant are all devices which we can always call upon without fear of deception" (M 16).

uncanny and the death drive.

In the "Manifesto" Breton offers, without explanation or illustration, two examples of the marvelous: romantic ruins and modern mannequins (M 16). Both are prized emblems in Surrealism, especially the mannequin, but what renders them marvelous? Each combines or conflates two opposed terms: in the ruin the natural and the the historical, and in the mannequin the human and the nonhuman. In the ruin cultural progress is captured by natural entropy, and in the mannequin the human figure is given over to the commodity form--indeed, the mannequin is the very image of capitalist reification.¹¹ In short, in both images the animate is confused with the inanimate, a confusion that is uncanny precisely because it evokes the conservatism of the drives, the immanence of death in life. In this light we may begin to see the uncanniness of the Bretonian marvelous in general. Breton resists this grim connection; he would not otherwise have associated the marvelous with the beautiful. Nevertheless, if the marvelous is beautiful, as is announced in the "Manifesto" (M 14), and if this beauty is convulsive, as is proclaimed at the end of Nadja (N 160), then its convulsive force must involve an uncanny return of repressed material. In this regard we might amend the famous dictum of Surrealist aesthetics, the one that concludes Nadja, as follows: Beauty will be not only

¹¹ This relation is developed in Chapter Four.

convulsive or will not be, but also compulsive or will not be.

It is in 1928 in Nadia that Breton begins to think the marvelous in terms of convulsive beauty. Not coincidentally it is also in 1928 that Breton along with Aragon celebrates hysteria as a "supreme means of expression."¹² In this context convulsive beauty suggests hysterical beauty--an experience of the world convulsed, like the body of the hysteric, into an obscure sign or symptom.¹³ For the primary theorists of hysteria, Charcot, Janet and Freud, all of whom Breton read, hysteria is a "malady through representation";¹⁴ they differ, however, on its aetiology. For Freud the cause concerns sexual repression: the hysterical symptom is a somatic signification of a cathected idea, wish or desire (this type is thus termed conversion hysteria). In his early texts Freud understands this effect to be born of an actual

¹² Breton and Aragon, "Le Cinquantenaire de l'hystérie," La Révolution Surréaliste 11 (March 15, 1928). This celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Charcot "discovery" included several photographs of "the passionate attitudes" from his Iconographie.

¹³ Although her theoretical reference is Derridean rather than Freudian, Rosalind Krauss glosses convulsive beauty in a related way as "an experience of reality transformed into representation...nature convulsed into a kind of writing" ("The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," October 19 [Winter 1981], p. 29).

¹⁴ Pierre Janet, L'état mental des hystériques (Paris, 1894), pp. 40-47. As noted in Chapter One, Breton briefly worked under Babinski, who believed hysteria was (auto) suggestive. This tutelage may have partly inspired the Surrealist practice of simulated madness.

event or specific trauma, that of sexual seduction; thus the famous formula that "hysterical patients suffer principally from reminiscences."¹⁵ Now in their homage Breton and Aragon define hysteria as a "reciprocal seduction", which implies, by allusion to the seduction theory, that convulsive or hysterical beauty involves trauma, and in Nadja Breton relates convulsive beauty directly to shock (N 160). And, indeed, in convulsive beauty as in trauma there is a confusion between internal and external impulses, in which compulsions in the unconscious are read as convulsions in the world. Here the peculiar character of Surrealist beauty begins to emerge: convulsive in its physical effect, compulsive in its psychic affect, it somehow partakes of the return of the repressed, that is to say, of the uncanny.

The examples of the marvelous in the "Manifesto" as well

¹⁵ Freud (with Josef Breuer), "On the Psychological Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena" (1892), in Early Psychoanalytical Writings, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), p. 40. The Surrealist interest in hysteria is problematic in many ways. On the one hand, as noted in Chapter One, Breton saw it as less a psychic disorder than a "poetic discovery"; he also suggested that it was largely an institutional construction ("madmen are made there," he writes of the sanatorium where Nadja is placed [N 139]). On the other hand, like Charcot Bretonian Surrealists regarded women as ipso facto hysterical; indeed, convulsive beauty is largely a specularization of the female body (in which the misogyny of the category "hysteria" is exacerbated rather than transvalued). In recent feminist theory hysteria is taken (e.g., by Luce Irigaray) as a metaphor precisely of this exclusion of women from discourse. Certainly it functioned in this way in Surrealism. However, the Surrealist celebration also betrays a certain confusion with the hysteric, or rather a certain confusion in sexual identity such as experienced by the hysteric. I argue the importance of this "hysterical" confusion for Surrealism below and in Chapter Three.

as its association with hysteria in Nadia only point to the uncanny; to grasp this connection we must turn to the definition of convulsive beauty in L'Amour fou: "Convulsive Beauty will be veiled-erotic, fixed-explosive, magical-circumstantial or will not be" (AF 19). Famously cryptic, this riddle comes with different clues. For the category of the veiled-erotic Breton offers these images: a limestone deposit shaped like an egg (not illustrated in L'Amour fou); a quartz wall formed like a sculpted mantle (also not illustrated); a rubber object and a mandrake root that resemble statuettes [Figs. 3, 4];¹⁶ a coral reef that appears like an underwater garden [Fig. 5]; and, finally, crystals deemed by Breton a paradigm of automatist creation [Fig. 6]. Clearly, all are instances of natural mimicry, which relates them to other phenomena prized by the Surrealists: e.g., the Blossfeldt photographs of flowers that resemble architectural forms; the Brassai photographs of "involuntary sculptures" or everyday materials subconsciously molded into strange shapes; and the Man Ray photographs of hats that subliminally elaborate upon genital forms.¹⁷ But what is the particular

¹⁶ Breton places these two found objects under the category of the magic-circumstantial (which I discuss below), but they are also veiled-erotic in nature.

¹⁷ See Krauss, "Photographic Conditions," p. 28. The Blossfeldt photographs were discussed by Benjamin in a 1928 review of his Urformen der Kunst, Photographische Pflanzenbilder and in "A Short History of Photography" (1931), trans. Phil Patton, in Alan Trachtenberg, ed., Classic Essays on Photography (New Haven, 1980). The Brassai and Man Ray photographs appeared in Minotaure 3-4 (December

nature of the Bretonian veiled-erotic? In each example, Breton states, "the animate is so close to the inanimate" (AF 11). Here the veiled-erotic is unwittingly associated with the uncanny, and indeed each example evokes a petrified nature in which not only natural form and cultural sign but also life and death become blurred. It is this indistinction that renders the veiled-erotic marvelous, i.e., uncanny, for it attests to the dominance of death over life.¹⁰

This uncanny indistinction also has a phylogenetic register, for such substances as limestone, coral and crystal all exist in subterranean or submarine realms that are eerily evocative of primal states, both biological (i.e., in the womb) and evolutionary (i.e., in the sea). Moreover, the images of the veiled-erotic which do not evoke such fantasies of intrauterine existence, or the return to the mother, suggest the converse: fantasies of phallic intercession, or the law of the father, as is the case with the strangely

1933); the former illustrated the Dalí text "Sculptures involontaires" (see Chapter Five), the latter the Tzara text "D'un certain automatisme du gout." Natural mimicry was of especial interest to Caillois, who developed it theoretically in "Mimétisme et psychasthénie légendaire," Minotaure 7 (June 1935), translated by John Shepley as "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia" in October 31 (Winter 1984); this text was of great importance to Lacan.

¹⁰ Although the Breton examples mostly concern inorganic substances in organic guises rather than animate forms returned to inanimate states, the uncanniness resides in the confusion of the two conditions. The most radical Surrealist figure of this indistinction of life and death is the praying mantis, an obsessive motif of many oeuvres that is often seen simply as a figure of the castrative woman. See Roger Caillois, "Le mante religieuse," Minotaure 5 (February 1934).

totemic rubber and root figures (significantly, Man Ray titled the first Moi, Elle [1934], and Breton saw the second as Aeneas bearing Anchises [AF 16]). As we will remark on other occasions, Surrealism oscillates between these two uncanny fantasies of maternal plenitude and paternal punishment, between the dream of a space-time before bodily separation and psychic loss and the trauma of such events. In fact, this Oedipal conundrum can be seen to structure Surrealism as such.¹⁷

In sum, the veiled-erotic is uncanny primarily in its in/animation, for this suggests the priority of death, the primordial condition to which life is recalled. The fixed-explosive, the second category of convulsive beauty, is uncanny primarily in its im/mobility, for this suggests the authority of death, the dominant conservatism of the drives. Again the definition is cryptic: the fixed-explosive involves an "expiration of motion" (AF 10), and Breton provides but two examples. The first is only described: a "photograph of a speeding locomotive abandoned for years to the delirium of a virgin forest" (AF 10). The second is only illustrated: a Man Ray photograph of a tango dancer caught, body and dress ablur, in midtwirl. In the first image, which deepens the ambiguous role of nature in convulsive beauty, an old train engine lies engulfed in a bed of vines [Fig. 7]. Nature here is vital yet inertial: it grows but only, in the guise of

¹⁷ I develop this notion further in Chapter Six.

death, to devour the progress of the train, or the progress which it once emblemized.²⁰ The sexual import of this drama is obvious: the phallic engine exhausted in the virgin forest, a common Surrealist image of feminine sexuality.²¹ Under this sexual sign nature, like pleasure, is seen to serve death: not only is the inertia of the entropic, the regression toward the inanimate, suggested in this image of expiration, but so too is the immanence of death in sexuality. This evocation also renders the fixed-explosive marvelous, i.e., once again uncanny, for according to Freud it is only thus "tinged with eroticism" that the death drive is sensed.²²

The second image of the fixed-explosive also attests to this uncanny mutuality of destructive and erotic impulses. Here the fixed-explosive is the counterpart of the veiled-

²⁰ Withheld from L'Amour fou without explanation, the image appeared in a short text by Benjamin Péret titled, significantly, "La Nature devore le progrès et le dépasse" and published in Minotaure 10 (Winter 1937). With its title and date this text reads as a gloss on the fixed-explosive, and Péret does describe several related images, e.g., a telegraph wire cut in a jungle, a pistol "murdered" by flowers, a rifle "crushed" by a snake. In his allegory the locomotive and the forest are first adversaries, then lovers: "Then begins the slow absorption."

²¹ See, for example, Magritte's Je ne vois pas la [femme] cachée dans la forêt, an array of Surrealist mugshots around a nude woman, published in La Révolution surréaliste 12 (December 15, 1929). This association is common to the entire romantic-medievalist tradition; see Le Goff, L'Imaginaire médiéval, pp. 59-75.

²² See Freud, Civilization and its Discontents (1930), trans. James Strachey (New York, 1961), pp. 73-7, and Chapter One.

erotic: rather than the "spontaneous action" (AF 11) of the inanimate become animate, we have the arrested motion of a body become an image [Fig. 8]. The beauty of the dancer is indeed convulsive, at once explosive and fixed, disruptive and suspended, which characterizes precisely the sadomasochistic nature of sexuality as posed by the death drive theory: "an enormously productive, decentering sexuality and a sexuality identical with its own explosive and definitive end."²³ This sexuality is strongly evoked in the dancer image, which is truly the complement to the train image. Whereas the stalled train represents for a masculine subject the expiration of sexuality, the suspended dancer enacts the sadistic projection of this masochistic expiration onto the figure of the woman: here it is her vital activity that is violently arrested.

This violent arrest of the vital, this sudden suspension of the animate, is not only the sadomasochistic basis of sexuality posed by the death drive theory; it is also the very principle of photography as practiced by the Surrealists. This suggests that convulsive beauty must also be thought in terms of photographic shock (again, Breton:

²³ Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, The Forms of Violence: Narrative in Assyrian Art and Modern Culture (New York, 1985), p. 34. "The terror of motion," Bersani writes, "in the apparently uncontrolled motions of sado-masochistic sexuality is betrayed--both in Baudelaire and Sade--by a fascination with corpses" (p. 89). A similar terror is similarly expressed by certain Surrealists, most of whom celebrated both Baudelaire and Sade. Here, too, Surrealist sadism can be seen as an expression of a primary masochism.

relates beauty to shock at the end of Nadia). As the Breton examples attest, photography was the best way to capture this beauty, and it became more important to Surrealism as Surrealism became more devoted to this beauty. Photography can actually produce both the veiled-erotic--nature configured as a sign--and the fixed-explosive--nature arrested in motion; and it is in part for this reason that Rosalind Krauss has argued that the very conditions of the Surrealist aesthetic are photographic.²⁴ However, our psychoanalytical principle, the uncanny logic of the death drive, subsumes this important photographic (or grammatological) account. The veiled-erotic, or reality convulsed into a writing, is indeed a photographic effect, but fundamentally it concerns an uncanny trace of a prior state, i.e., of the compulsion to return to an ultimately inanimate condition: the mineral death of limestone, quartz, crystal. The fixed-explosive, or reality convulsed in shock, must also be seen in these terms: the subject suddenly suspended is again a photographic effect, but here too its fundamental import is psychic--an uncanny intuition of death. That photography "arrests" movement was its distinctive characteristic for Brassai; so it was, too, for Roland Barthes, who in Camera Lucida develops an implicitly

²⁴ Krauss, "Photographic Conditions," passim.

Surrealist theory of photography in terms of the uncanny.²⁵

Photography points to the uncanny logic of the death drive in two ways: in its shock (for Barthes the punctum, prick or wound, of the photograph or "shot") and in its tense (the future anterior of the photograph: this will have been).

Before a camera, Barthes writes,

I am neither subject nor object, but a subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a micro-version of death (of parenthesis): I am truly becoming a specter...Death is the eidos of that Photograph.²⁶

This photographic process of in/animation is bound up with trauma, anxiety and repetition: "I shudder, like Winnicott's psychotic patient, over a catastrophe which has already occurred."²⁷ Convulsive beauty is bound up with these same effects. Indeed, repetition keyed not simply to primordial death but also to personal trauma is the basis of its third

²⁵ Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1981). Brassai is quoted to this effect in Lawrence Durrell, "Introduction", Brassai (New York, 1968), p. 14.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 96. Significantly, Barthes alludes to the Lacanian term for trauma, tuché, "the encounter with the real" that is always missed. See The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1978), pp. 53-4, and note 67 below. In her two important essays on Surrealist photography, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism" and "Corpus Delicti" (in L'Amour fou: Photography & Surrealism [Washington, 1985]), Krauss delineates two fundamental principles of Surrealist photography: doubling and the informe (not the formless so much as the other of the formal). The first is uncanny as such; the second, pledged to indistinction or de-definition, is uncannily suggestive of the death drive (in this regard it may also be seen as complementary to the veiled-erotic).

category, the marvelous as magic-circumstantial.

In/animate and im/mobile, the veiled-erotic and the fixed-explosive are figures of the uncanny that also suggest the inextricability of desire and death. Breton sublimates the "morbid anxiety" provoked by this uncanniness into an aesthetic of beauty.²⁸ In this way he opposes to death a beauty, a desire, that is in fact bound up with it--a contradiction which, never resolved, drives him to crisis after crisis. The pattern is repeated with the magic-circumstantial or objective chance. In retrospect Breton regarded objective chance as "the problem of problems";²⁹ it is one we must consider at some length.

Objective chance has two related forms, the encounter and the trouvaille, defined by Breton as both "fortuitous" and "foreordained" (AF 19), "super-determinant in the Freudian sense of the word" (N 51).³⁰ Breton insists on the

²⁸ Or so he terms it; it is rather more an aesthetic of the sublime insofar as 1) it concerns the representation of the unrepresentable, and 2) it involves a mixture of delight and dread, an awe that is most often evoked in relation to the feminine.

²⁹ Breton, Entretiens (Paris, 1952), pp. 140-41. Here again the notion is not a Breton monopoly (earlier, in Le Paysan de Paris, for example, Aragon discusses such phenomena), but Breton makes the most out of it, crucial as it is to his conception not only of the marvelous but also, because it concerns the relation of freedom and necessity, of the political.

³⁰ This last statement actually refers to dreams, but in Les Vases communicants Breton relates objective chance directly to dreamwork: its manifestations are said to be

spontaneity of objective chance,³¹ and yet this very claim suggests its opposite: that the encounter is a rendez-vous, that the trouvaille or found object is a retrouvaille or lost object refound. Here again a paradox basic to Surrealism emerges: a category of experience that appears at once underdetermined and overdetermined, imprévu and déjà vu.

However spontaneous, objective chance is not free of causality. In fact, under this category derived from Engels, Breton seeks to reconcile both Marxian and Freudian models of determination (AF 21). In so doing he apparently stresses the psychic or internal aspect of necessity (such terms as "disturbing links" and "paroxysmal disturbances" [AF 24] even invoke the uncanny), yet he actually privileges its external aspect: "Chance is the form of manifestation of an exterior necessity as it opens a path in the human unconscious" (AF 23).³² This definition, which does not greatly challenge

governed by the primary process of condensation, displacement, substitution, revision (also see AF 32). Surrealist chance is thus more determined than Dadaist chance, yet it too is posed against causal order and proper form. In effect, Surrealist chance is Dadaist chance read through the uncanny (for Freud there is no simple chance).

³¹ "Nearly all the discoveries of images produced the effect on me of spontaneous creations" (Les Pas perdus [Paris, 1924], p. 73).

³² Here I amend the Caws translation slightly. Again, what Breton calls objective chance Freud calls uncanny: "The most remarkable coincidences of desire and fulfilment, the most mysterious recurrence of similar experiences in a particular place or on a particular date, the most deceptive sights and suspicious noises..." ("The Uncanny", in Studies in Parapsychology, ed. Philip Rieff [New York, 1963], p. 54).

conventional causality, again betrays a defensive projection at work, according to which an unconscious compulsion associated with a real event is seen instead as a real event that produces an unconscious effect. (This projection of the psychic onto the real is as crucial to Surrealism as it is common: it is why, for example, Ernst feels a passive "spectator" of his own work, or Breton an "agonized witness" [N 20] of his own life.)³³ Like convulsive beauty, objective chance is this "hysterical" confusion between internal impulse and external sign; unlike convulsive beauty, however, objective chance points to the mechanism that underlies this confusion: the compulsion to repeat.

In the particular compulsion active in objective chance, the subject repeats a traumatic experience, whether actual or fantasmatic, exogenous or endogenous, that he does not recall --repeats it because he cannot recall it: repetition occurs due to repression, in lieu of recollection. This is why each repetition in objective chance seems fortuitous yet foreordained, determined by present circumstances yet governed by "some 'daemonic' force at work."³⁴ Bretonian

³³ The Ernst quotation is from Beyond Painting, p. 8. The original Breton phrase is temoin hagard. Temoin suggests an external event, while hagard, which Richard Howard aptly translates as "agonized," suggests a psychic origin. I return to this projection, essential as it is to Surrealist pictoriality, in Chapter Three.

³⁴ Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), trans. James Strachey (New York, 1961), p. 29. Freud first discussed this repetition in its relation to resistance and transference in "Recollection, Repetition and Working

Surrealists intuit this force: it fascinates them even as they defend against it. The result is that, just as the uncanny is recoded as the marvelous and arrested animation is sublimated as convulsive beauty, so repetition-compulsion is inverted as objective chance: its instances are taken as external "signals" (N 19) of future events rather than internal signs of past states; the anxious is projected as the portentous. At this point, however, this is simply an hypothesis that we must now test.

In the three principal Breton novels, Nadja, Les Vases communicants and L'Amour fou, objects are "rare", places "strange", meetings "sudden" (N 19-20), yet all are haunted by repetition, as indeed is Breton, to the point where he experiences being as haunting. "Perhaps my life is nothing but an image of this kind," he writes early in Nadja; "perhaps I am doomed to retrace my steps under the illusion that I am exploring, doomed to try and learn what I should simply recognize, learning a mere fraction of what I have forgotten" (N 12). Such repression and recurrence structure objective chance as a paradox: a serial repetition of unique encounters, a repetition governed not only by compulsion but also by identification and desire.²⁵ In the novels the

Through" (1914). A most symptomatic character in this regard is Nadja.

²⁵ As noted in Chapter One, in Bretonian Surrealism it is often difficult to distinguish the two types of repetition, which again suggests a connection between desire and death. On the one hand, such repetition drives the Breton

encounters with men are strangely similar, and Breton often hails them as doubles (in Nadia Eluard, Soupault, Desnos and Péret appear in this uncanny register). The encounters with women are also serial, although repetition here concerns desire more than identification. These "unique loves" are also uncannily reiterative: each woman, perhaps each man, appears to Breton as a potential substitute for a lost love object.³⁴ At the end of Nadia even Breton tires of this "substitution" (N 158), but this move from surrogate to surrogate is the very metonymic motion of his desire, and so it is enacted, indeed exacerbated, to the point where he comes to figure it as such, as repetition, in L'Amour fou, which opens with an extraordinary image of two rows of ambiguous figures, one of his former selves (the axis of identification), another of his former lovers (the axis of desire). In Nadia Breton poses the Oedipal riddle in three ways: first "Who am I?", then "Whom do I 'haunt'?" (N 11), and finally Who haunts me? In L'Amour fou it is clear that

narratives; on the other hand, when the connection between desire and death is perceived (as it is at the end of Nadia) the narratives break down. It is this psychic tension that renders the novels so convulsive.

³⁴ I include men because not in spite of his homophobia (Breton denounces homosexuality in the inquiry into sexuality in La Révolution surréaliste 11 [March 15, 1928]). Although there were few gay Surrealists (Crevel was perhaps the only one embraced by Breton), the homosocial bonding basic to so many avant-gardes is extreme in Bretonian Surrealism.

this other lies within his own subjectivity.³⁷

Breton terms his encounters and trouvailles "signals" (N 19). Enigmatic, they are laced with anxiety, yet not as portents of things to come but rather as reminders of repressed events, past stages, the compulsion to repeat. Precisely as Freud theorized in 1926, anxiety in Bretonian Surrealism is a "signal" (Angstsignal), a repetition of a reaction to a past trauma triggered by a perception of a present danger.³⁸ Repressed, the trauma is now subsumed by the signal, just as in the uncanny the referent is subsumed by the sign. The enigma of the signal, then, attests not to a lack of signification to be filled in the future but to an overdetermination produced in the past. This is why Breton is an "agonized witness" of these signals, and why they provoke both "surprise" (a term expressly derived from de Chirico) and "loss", "anxiety" and "ennui" (N 12-17): although the trauma has always already occurred, its each repetition comes

³⁷ The Surrealists frequently quoted the Rimbaudian dictum "Je est un autre," and the "Manifesto" concludes "Existence is elsewhere" (M 47). For Breton psychoanalysis is pledged to this "expulsion of man from himself" (N 24).

³⁸ Freud, Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety (1926), trans. James Strachey (New York, 1961). In his prior model anxiety was regarded as an effect of a sexual excitation that could not be mastered. As an internal process, anxiety is also triggered when the ego comes under attack by the drive. I discuss anxiety in relation to Surrealism further in Chapter Six.

as a shock.³⁷ In rare moments of recognition Breton grasps the stake of these repeated signals: "our very instinct of self-preservation," he says in Nadia (N 20); "of Eros and the struggle against Eros!," he exclaims in L'Amour fou (AF 37).

Such is the stake as Breton pursues these signals in the three novels: like the infant of the fort/da game, he seeks to master actively what previously he had suffered passively --only to suffer again and again. Indeed, the novels provide several analogues to the specific types of compulsive repetition that Freud related to the uncanny and the death drive: repetition to master the loss of the love object, as in the fort/da game; repetition to "prepare" for a shock already come, as in traumatic neurosis; and repetition that occurs in lieu of recollection, as when the analysand, in a condition of transference with the analyst, reenacts the repressed.⁴⁰ These types of repetition can be associated,

³⁷ In Le Surréalisme (Paris, 1984) Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron reads objective chance as an empty sign completed by a later event, but this account, though often insightful, mostly rehearses Surrealist self-understanding in semiotic disguise. In Chapter Three I argue that the repetition of trauma--a trauma that need not be real to be psychically effective--structures the most important Surrealist oeuvres.

⁴⁰ In Beyond the Pleasure Principle Freud suggests another type of repetition pertinent to Surrealism: Schicksalzwang or fate compulsion, in which the subject feels "pursued by a malignant fate or possessed by some 'daemonic' power," usually experienced as a series of similar, unfortunate events (p. 15). Rather than the victim of this fate the subject wishes it, according to Freud, and it is only because this wish is unconscious that it appears to arrive as fate. The Bretonian Surrealists suffered (indulged?) this uncanny syndrome collectively. Two sets of events suggest this compulsion: the 1914 de Chirico portrait

respectively, with the trouaille, the encounter, and the relationships that emerge from these events (especially between Breton and Nadja in Nadja, and between Breton and Giacometti in L'Amour fou, each of whom plays both analyst and analysand to the other). As noted in Chapter One, such repetitions serve very different ends. In the fort/da game and in traumatic neurosis, repetition appears pledged to self-preservation, to the erotic binding of the subject against the loss of the object or the shock of the trauma.⁴¹ But repetition can also act to undo the subject as a defusive agent of the death drive. In the Breton novels as in the Freud texts it is often difficult to distinguish these two ends (as it is to determine the degrees of in/volition and un/pleasure involved in the repeated events). Breton seeks a mastery in repetition, or at least a binding in these events, but he often experiences, especially with Nadja and Giacometti, a repetition that is regressive, generally defusive, even deadly. Finally, the drama of the Bretonian text is this conflict of the drives as represented in the repeated objects and events of objective chance.

of Apollinaire with a bandaged head painted before he was in fact wounded in the war, and the 1931 Victor Brauner Self-Portrait with a Gouged Eye painted before his eye was in fact blinded in a 1938 fight. For a discussion of the latter see Pierre Mabille, "L'Oeil du Peintre," Minotaure 12-13 (May 1939).

⁴¹ On Bindung or binding see Chapter One, note 65.

Two examples each of the trouvaille and the encounter from Nadia and L'Amour fou must suffice to make this point; as uncanny reminders of past loss or future death, they do indeed test his instinct of self-preservation. My first example is just one of the ambivalent objects in Nadia: a bronze glove [Fig. 9]. However unusual (insolite is a privileged term for the Surrealist object), the glove has art-historical associations from Klinger through de Chirico to Giacometti, but this lineage hardly explains its uncanny effect on Breton. It seems that Breton was intrigued by the blue gloves worn one day by a woman visitor to the "Centrale Surréaliste" (i.e., the Bureau of Surrealist Research). He both wanted her to remove the gloves and dreaded that she might; eventually she left the bronze glove as a substitute, a compromise that psychically suited him perfectly (N 56). The eerie appeal of the object is not difficult to decode, for not only does it cast a human form in a deathly mold, but more importantly it captures a fetishistic response to castration, which Breton can both recognize (in the displaced form of a "severed" hand) and disavow (though empty, the glove remains "on", as it were, to cover any absence). It is thus a doubly uncanny reminder of both the primordial condition of inanimation and the infantile fantasy of castration. (The Benjaminian definition of the fetish as "the sex appeal of the inorganic" neatly captures both aspects of the glove, which is similar in this regard to so many

Surrealist objects.)⁴² Significant here is that this instance of objective chance is an imaged repetition of a past (fantasmatic) loss, one that returns in the guise of the uncanny to be repeated in this text (e.g., in a drawing by Nadja which endows the glove with a female gaze and so effectively glosses it as desired object, castrative threat and fetish all in one [Fig. 10]) and elsewhere (e.g., the equally fetishistic slipper spoon of L'Amour fou [Fig. 11]). In this way the bronze glove is a typical Bretonian object uncanny in its repetition, and Breton moves from one such object to another as from loss to loss (or, more precisely, as from fort to da).

My second example of objective chance is the prototypical Bretonian encounter, the liaison with Nadja, which Breton enters in the hope that she will stay his repetition of loss, staunch his desire as lack: if he seizes the glove as a fetishistic stopgap, he turns to Nadja (as to all his lovers) for erotic binding. But he finds less a lover than a double who enthralls him for another reason altogether: as a figure of his own compulsion to repeat, his own struggle with the death drive. With all her inhibitions and

⁴² Walter Benjamin, "Paris--the Capital of the 19th Century" (1935), in Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism, trans. Harry Zohn (London, 1973), p. 166. I might have selected as well the two tribal objects illustrated in Nadja, which Breton also regards ambivalently ("I have always loved and feared" [N 122]) and which, as noted in Chapter One, Freud also sees as potentially uncanny. In Chapter Six I do take up this problematic primitivism briefly.

recriminations, fixed ideas and compulsive acts, Nadja is an obsessional neurotic.⁴³ Her symptomatic repetition of repressed material disturbs Breton, but it also fascinates him precisely because it is marked by repetition, destruction, death. In her transference love for Breton Nadja fully implicates him in this defusion, and it is only at this point that he breaks away from it (and so effectively condemns her to it).⁴⁴ Melancholic about past loss, anxious about future trauma, Breton had turned to Nadja for erotic binding, only to discover through her "a more or less conscious principle of total subversion" (N 152). This recognition comes after the fact, with Nadja ensconced in an

⁴³ "The obsessional act is ostensibly [i.e., consciously] a protection against the prohibited act; but actually [i.e., unconsciously], in our view, it is a repetition of it" (Freud, Totem and Taboo [1913], trans. James Strachey [New York, 1950], p. 12; translated into French in 1924). In this text, of course, Freud associates neurotic symptoms with primitive taboos. In The Ego and the Id he argues "the marked emergence of the death instinct" in obsessional neurosis (p. 32).

⁴⁴ Like Freud's Dora, Breton's Nadja is a case history of a failed cure: although he understands her desire (or transference), he does not grasp his own desire (or countertransference). In the same year as Nadja Breton had defined hysteria as a "reciprocal seduction", which implicates the desire of the other, i.e., the analyst Breton. In Nadja, however, he resists this recognition, and then blames psychiatry for his own failing. For Lacan hysteria is the "original sin" of psychoanalysis precisely because of the inability of Freud to recognize the significance of his own desire; see The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, p. 12.

asylum, in a note about a "nocturnal ride".⁴³ Once in a car Nadja, "desiring to extinguish us" (N 152), had blinded Breton with a kiss. This death wish tempted him; its sexuality aroused him (a page later he confesses a "convulsive" impulse to suicide). But in a grandiose act of will ("What a test of life, indeed!") he opts for the other principle, that of love and life, also represented by a woman, Suzanne Musard, his next love object. Yet this move hardly frees him of repetition, of desire as lack and in death; it is simply its next manifestation. And in fact in L'Amour fou Suzanne Musard is soon associated with death, and his next love object, Jacqueline Lamba, with love and life.⁴⁴

Jacqueline Lamba is the heroine of the famous encounter in L'Amour fou, the Night of the Sunflower, my third example of objective chance. By this episode Breton is desperate to think objective chance in terms of unique love rather than deathly repetition. In Les Vases communicants he argued contra Freud that the dream can be prophetic; so here he

⁴³ Significantly it is appended to a remark about the gaze of a wax figure of a prostitute; again Breton unconsciously associates death and castration. I return to this figure in Chapter Four.

⁴⁴ In L'Amour fou Suzanne is associated with the ambiguous token of death, the flea-market mask, and Jacqueline with the move way from this enthrallment. In Nadia Breton addressed Suzanne thus: "All I know is that this substitution of persons stops with you" (N 158). By L'Amour fou he both recognizes and disavows the impossibility of this closure of metonymic desire, in a tortured catechism addressed to Jacqueline: "Because you are unique, you can't help being for me always another, another you" (AF 81). The prototype of this object of desire is discussed below.

claims that poetry can be "predictive" (AF 53, 61), specifically that his 1923 poem "Sunflower" about a Parisian flaneuse prophesied his 1934 encounter with Jacqueline Lamba (AF 65). Breton obsessively decodes the poem as a cryptic map of their nocturnal dérive, yet clearly the poem does not predict the encounter so much as the encounter enacts the poem: this is a repetition that Breton has compulsively sought out à la Schicksalzwang or fate compulsion.⁴⁷ As such it produces "a mixture of panic-provoking terror and joy" (AF 40); once again objective chance is intuitively linked to traumatic anxiety. Breton senses the uncanny nature of the encounter but resists its traumatic basis in the compulsion to repeat: thus he insists on the imprévu as a defense against the déjà vu. Nevertheless, this basis cannot be completely repressed; in the end Jacqueline Lamba appears as "the all-powerful commander of the night of the sunflower" (AF 67), an ambiguous cipher of a double tropism toward light and dark (la nuit de tournesol), of the struggle between life

⁴⁷ See note 39. This dérive passes from Les Halles to the Hôtel de Ville by the Tour Saint-Jacques to the Quai aux Fleurs. In "Mysteries of Paris: The Collective Uncanny in André Breton's L'Amour fou" (Dada/Surrealism 17 [1988]), Margaret Cohen argues a selective repression by Breton, troubled by his relation with the Communist Party, of the revolutionary past of this "cradle" of Paris. Clearly, the Surrealist uncanny has a historical dimension (which I discuss in terms of the outmoded in Chapter Five), especially in relation to a city continually transformed by revolution, capital and power. In Nadia, for example, Breton is made anxious by the statue of one Etienne Dolet (removed by the Nazis) in the Place Maubert. Dolet was a Protestant publisher executed for heresy, and the Place Maubert, like the Place Concorde, was a sacrificial site.

and death drives.

Finally, the ambiguity of this figure is that of the role of sexuality in the drives: which one, life or death, does it serve? Unlike Nadja, Jacqueline Lamba remains ambiguous, for with her Breton thinks desire in relation to its origin rather than its end: "To love, to find once more the lost grace of the first moment when one is in love" (AF 44). The prototype of this lost love is clear: the mother (Breton speaks of "the path lost with the loss of childhood" [AF 49]). Each new love object is, then, a repetition of this maternal term: "Are you, at last," Breton asks Jacqueline, "this woman"? (AF 49). As we will see, this search for the lost object, which is the Surrealist quest par excellence, is as impossible as it is compulsive: not only is each new object a substitute for this lost one, but the lost object is a fantasy, a simulacrum. My fourth and final example of objective chance will clarify this relation among desire, object and repetition as intuited by Breton.

L'Amour fou presents the twin paradigm of the Surrealist object: the spoon and the mask found by Breton and Giacometti in the Saint-Ouen flea market in 1934 [Figs. 11, 12]. This instance of objective chance fully reveals its uncanny logic; as a crucial moment in the psychic economy of mature Bretonian Surrealism, it warrants protracted scrutiny. Accompanied by Giacometti, Breton places the episode under the sign of The Invisible Object (or Feminine Personage,

1934; fig. 13), a sculpture which had preoccupied both men at the time.⁴⁶ For Breton this abstracted nude evokes the "desire to love and to be loved" through "the invisible but present object" (AF 26) apparently held in her empty hands. Temporarily, under "feminine intervention," Giacometti had lowered the hands to reveal the breasts--a disastrous move, according to Breton, in which the invisible object was lost (with the return of the breasts, we might say, the lost object was lost again). This underlined connection among desire, breast and lost object, one shrouded in "painful ignorance," is important to retain.⁴⁷ At this point, however, Breton turns to the head, which Giacometti could not realize. To Breton this difficulty was due to a "sentimental uncertainty" (AF 26), a "resistance" that Giacometti had to overcome, and this in fact occurred through the intercession of the found object: the metal half-mask. This object, which attracted both men (although Breton will later deny it), partakes equally of a military helmet and an amorous mask. As ambivalent as it is ambiguous, Giacometti finally bought it, and its immediate effect was salutary: it helped him resolve

⁴⁶ Both titles are significant for us; together "invisible object" and "feminine personage" link lost object and mother.

⁴⁷ In psychoanalytical terms it can be seen as an intuition into the carving out of desire from need, or sexuality from self-preservation. Significantly, Breton suggests, the relation between object and breast in the sculpture was somehow disturbed, rendered less necessary, when Giacometti had a lover (AF 26).

the head and finish the sculpture. In retrospect the mask filled a formal gap in the series between Head (1934; Fig. 14) and The Invisible Object; and this "catalytic role" (AF 32) inspires Breton to associate the finding of such objects with the wish fulfilment of dreams: just as the dream expresses a psychic conflict, so the found object resolves a "moral contradiction" which in this case allowed Giacometti to resolve the "plastic contradiction" (AF 32) of the sculpture, to render form, style and affect one. And yet, as we will see, this object has no more to do with wish fulfilment than the dreams of traumatic neuroses; indeed, it too points beyond the pleasure principle.

For Breton the mask restored the feminine personage to a "perfect organic unity" (AF 32); in effect, its shielded gaze rendered her a woman without lack, a phallic mother. This brings great relief to both men (the threat of lack is momentarily lifted), which is the moral of the trouvaille for Breton. But there is another story, counter to this one of wish fulfilment, in which the figure sustains rather than occludes the psychic conflict at its source. To tell this story we must rearticulate the role of the mask and the effect of the sculpture. Like any negation the underlined insistence that the mask was "never seen" (AF 28) points to its opposite--that it is a repetition of a prior object, a reminder of a primal state (we have encountered this trope before). So, too, its symbolic evocation of both war and

love, death and desire, suggests that it is the psychic representative of a conflict or confusion between these principles, which renders it so tensely ambiguous. "This blind face," Breton saw, represents a "necessity not known to us" (AF 28), but he resists its revelation--at least he does so until its point is brought uncannily home to him through his own trouvaille, the wooden spoon with a little boot for a base.

Initially for Breton the spoon, like the mask, is simply a manifestation of objective chance, i.e., a marvelous resolution of "internal finality" and "external causality" (AF 21), desire and object. If for the sculptor the resolution was formal, for the poet it is linguistic: the spoon appears as the answer to a riddle, the phrase le cendrier Cendrillon (Cinderella ashtray), which had obsessed Breton at the time. And yet no more than the mask is this riddle about resolution; rather, it concerns the metonymic slippage of the subject, Breton, in language and desire--a slippage in which meaning is never fixed and desire cannot be satisfied. As with the sculpture, then, the only resolution here is a fetishistic one: through the slipper, a classic fetish, conjoined with the spoon, a common Surrealist symbol of woman, Breton attempts to arrest this slippage.²⁰ He

²⁰ Breton plays on "the phonic ambiguity of the word 'glassy'" (AF 33), which combines the verre of the fetishistic glass slipper with the vair of the fetishistic ermine fur (see Caws note 6, AF 126). Giacometti, meanwhile, often uses the spoon as an emblem of woman (e.g., Spoon Woman

points to its fetishistic nature when he terms the spoon both a "lack" ("of which I think there was already a trace in my childhood" [AF 33]) and a "unity" (the same fetishistic term used for The Invisible Object). This unity, however, is so precarious that the spoon becomes for Breton a figure not simply of fetishism, i.e., of a disavowal of castration or sexual difference, but of androgyny, i.e., of a preemption of castration or sexual difference altogether. Not just a subjective phallic substitute, Breton sees it as an "objective equation: slipper = spoon = penis = the perfect mold of this penis."¹ "With this idea," he concludes prematurely, "the cycle of ambivalences found an ideal closure" (AF 36).

But clearly this too is wish fulfilment, and in fact the ideal closure is undone when the "associative" nature of the spoon, the metonymic motion of his desire, is revealed to Breton in this trope: the single slipper spoon becomes for him an open series of shoes, large and small, that corresponds psychically to the series of lost objects in his life. That is, the spoon becomes "the very source of the stereotype" (AF 33) not of a "perfect organic unity" but of

[1927]). In the Lacanian formulation the slipper spoon is perhaps a point de capiton, a stitching or buttoning of desire that gives way. At times Breton exploits this metonymic slide of desire; at other times he attempts to arrest it, as he does here.

¹ Breton was fascinated by the myth of primordial androgyny, as indeed was Freud, who remarks upon it often (e.g., early in Beyond the Pleasure Principle).

an originary psychic split. It is a representative of the Lacanian objet petit a, the object from which the subject must separate in order to become a subject at all--the object which must be "lost" in order for the subject to be "found", the object which is the origin or cause of desire, not its end or satisfaction.²² In short, in the very figure onto which Breton projects a primal unity (with the mother), he confronts an image of desire based on an originary separation (from her) and driven by an infinite substitution (of her). In this way, this paradigmatic Surrealist object is not simply a fetish that covers up lack (if it were, the Surrealist object search would end here for both men); it is also a figure of lack, an analogue of the lost object that is keyed to the maternal breast, as indeed "the invisible object" of the sculpture is so keyed. We arrive, then, at this paradoxical formula of the Surrealist object: just as the unique encounter of objective chance is in fact an uncanny repetition, so too the found object of objective chance is a lost object that, never recovered, is forever

²² "The objet a is something from which the subject; in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as organ. This serves as a symbol of the lack, that is to say, of the phallus, not as such but in so far as it is lacking. It must, therefore, be an object that is, firstly, separable and, secondly, that has some relation to the lack" (The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, p. 103). Lacan speaks of the objet a as a primal separation, a self-mutilation; the "little a" signals that it is barely other (autre), i.e., barely detached, from the subject (interestingly, he uses the example of the spool from the fort/da game [p. 62]).

sought, forever repeated.⁸³

In this way Breton intuits a painful but profound psychoanalytical insight. In Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905) Freud links the stirring of sexuality to the taking of nourishment; the maternal breast is thus the first external object of the drive. Soon, however, the infant "loses" this object; significantly, regarding The Invisible Object, this occurs precisely when he is "able to form a total idea" of the mother.⁸⁴ Thus deprived, the infant becomes auto-erotic before he seeks outwardly again, and "not until the period of latency has been passed through is the original relation restored." Freud concludes: "The finding of an object is in fact a re-finding of it."⁸⁵ Later, in his

⁸³ Here again, as with Surrealist chance, the Surrealist object must be rigorously distinguished from its Dadaist precedent. According to Duchamp, the readymade is "based on a reaction of visual indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste...a complete anesthesia" ("Apropos of 'Readymades'" [1961/66], in Salt Seller: The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson [London, 1975], p. 141). The Surrealist object, on the other hand, is "the only one deemed indispensable" (Breton, "Quelle sorte d'espoir mettez-vous dans l'amour?", La Révolutionn surréaliste 12 [December 15, 1929]). With the Surrealist object it is not only the artist who selects the object, as it is with the readymade; it is rather more the object which thus marks the subject.

⁸⁴ Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, trans. James Strachey, in On Sexuality, ed. Angela Richards, (London, 1953), p. 144. Translated into French in 1923, this crucial text includes an early account of fetishism, but it is not known precisely when Breton read it, although he probably did so by 1936.

⁸⁵ Ibid. In the special issue of Cahiers d'Art on the Surrealist object (1936) Marcel Jean seems to echo Freud: "The found object is always a rediscovered object...." But he

1914 essay "On Narcissism", Freud elaborates on this "anaclitic" type of object-choice where the prototype is the parental nurturer, preeminently the mother.²⁶ In this model the sexual drive is propped upon the self-preservative function: the infant sucks milk out of need, which can be satisfied, but experiences pleasure, a desire to repeat pleasure, which cannot be so satisfied. (In the Lacanian formulation desire is this demand once need is subtracted.) The real object, milk, is the object of self-preservative need, not the object of sexual desire; this object is the breast, which in the auto-erotic "sensual sucking" of the infant becomes hallucinated, fantasmatic.²⁷ The infant seeks

also suggests its sadomasochistic implication: "Exalted by sexual desire, it implies, opposed to a fixation (as in painting or sculpture), a potential motion of a great poetic violence...." See "Arrivée de la Belle époque," in Jean, ed., The Autobiography of Surrealism (New York, 1980), p. 304.

²⁶ The other type is "narcissistic" object-choice where the prototype is the ego. The gist of this distinction was presented in a 1915 footnote to Three Essays, so if Breton read this text he was at least exposed to these concepts.

²⁷ The beginnings of fantasy and sexuality are thus bound up with one another. "The first wishing," Freud writes, "seems to have been a hallucinatory cathecting of the memory of satisfaction." On the relationship of need and desire see Jean Laplanche, Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore, 1976), pp. 8-34; on the relationship of fantasy and sexuality see Laplanche and Pontalis, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality" (1964), recently republished in Formations of Fantasy, ed. V. Burgin, J. Donald and C. Kaplan (London, 1986), pp. 5-34. They write of this "mythical moment of disjunction between the pacification of need and the fulfilment of desire, between the two stages represented by real experience and its hallucinatory revival, between the object that satisfies and the sign which describes both the object and its absence: a mythical moment at which hunger and sexuality meet in a

this object of desire which appears lost to it. On the one hand, then, the finding of an object is indeed a refinding of it, while, on the other hand, this refinding is only and ever a seeking: the object cannot be rediscovered because it is fantasmatic, and desire cannot be satisfied because it is defined as a lack. The found object is always a substitute, always a displacement, that drives on its own search. This is the dynamic which propels not only the Surrealist object but the Surrealist project in general, and it deprives both of any real closure.™

In the metal mask and the slipper spoon the stirring of sexual desire in the losing of the maternal object is intuited. Again, this lost object is ghosted in the Surrealist object, and in The Invisible Object Giacometti configures it, or rather he conveys its impossibility: in the hands of the supplicant figure the lost object is shaped in its very absence. The sculpture thus signifies not the fulfilment of desire (as Breton hopes) but the desire to desire (as Breton knows: "the desire to love and to be loved"

common origin" (p. 25). This is the place to note how many Surrealist objects--from the Breton spoon to various Dali assemblages to the Oppenheim cup--involve a marked orality. Dali in particular fantasized a cannibalistic incorporation of the object, whereby it is variously preserved, destroyed, assimilated.

™ This is why for Surrealism, or for any art as deeply staked in desire, there can be no origin that grounds the subject and delivers the object, and why the foundational ambition of so many different modernisms is here subverted from within. I discuss this further in "Origin Myths of Modernism" (unpublished manuscript).

[AF 26]).⁸⁷ Apparently the Surrealist search for the lost object proves too psychically difficult for Giacometti. (Certainly his ambivalence as expressed in such works as the two Disagreeable Objects is more extreme, more defusive, to the point where they appear riven by the very conflict of the drives, the very struggle within sexuality between erotic binding and thanatonic destruction). In any case, in 1935, a year after The Invisible Object, he repudiates his Surrealist objects and renounces his Surrealist search.⁸⁸

Breton, however, has too much at stake to surrender so. As he toils on in mad love he develops a notion of desire intuitive of the Freudian formulation and proleptic of the Lacanian one. Like Lacan Breton locates desire "in excess of the need" (AF 13), and he even states that the trouvailles assume "the meaning of the lost object" (although the allusion here is to the slipper of "folklore" [AF 36]). And, if he does not quite consider the object the cause of desire,

⁸⁷ In a sense, the best account of Invisible Object was written before it was made in a poem by Paul Eluard from Capitale de la douleur (Paris, 1926), which also invokes the lost object and reads in part: "The shape of your hands is chimerical/And your love resembles my lost desire,/O sighs of amber, dreams, glances./But you were not always with me. My memory/Is still obscured, having seen you coming/And going. Time uses words, as love does."

⁸⁸ In so doing Giacometti effectively rejected or at least rethought psychic conflict as the source of his art, eventually to turn to an existentialist problematic which in its more extreme versions denies the existence of the unconscious altogether. In a sense, Giacometti passed from the world of Lacan to that of Sartre. I discuss his work in relation to primal fantasy in Chapter Three.

he does not regard it simply as its fulfilment either: he calls it a "marvelous precipitate" (AF 13-15). Finally, Breton is generally aware of both the fetishistic aspect and the maternal reference of the trouvailles. Certainly he senses the psychic connection among the mask, the lost object and the maternal wholeness of the figure; here he also refers the slipper spoon to the phallic mother: "it symbolized for me a woman unique and unknown" (AF 37), i.e., originary and unconscious. As Guy Rosolato has written,

The multiple dialectic between the partial and the total object, the breast and the mother as a whole, between the genitals and the entire body but also between the lost object and the found object is centered on the fantasy of the maternal penis, around which the identifications of the two sexes are organized.⁴¹

This multiple dialectic is teased out through the two trouvailles: both the spoon and the mask speak of fantasies of maternal reunion, of a love before lack or beyond loss, even as they also attest to anxieties about paternal interdiction, castration, death.

Of course, to seek this total object--a unity before separation, an immediacy before language, a desire outside of lack--is indeed mad. It may also be psychically necessary, for without such mad love, such erotic binding, Breton is

⁴¹ Guy Rosolato, "L'Amour fou," manuscript. Also see Pontalis, "Les vases non communicants," La nouvelle revue française 302 (March 1, 1978), pp. 26-45. Breton is the prince to the Cinderella of the slipper. His totem is the dauphin, a term for both dolphin and prince, and in Nadia he is continually drawn to the Place Dauphine, uncannily uterine in shape. I discuss this uncanny attraction in Chapter Six.

psychically prey to the defusion of the death drive, to thanatonic breakdown.⁴² However, it is precisely here, with these trouvailles, that the repetition pledged to this breakdown also emerges most strongly. The slipper spoon is not only a fetish that combines a perception of castrative "lack" with an image of phallic "unity"; it is also a "Cinderella ashtray" that conflates a figure of desire (Cinderella) with an image of extinction (ashes). With its associations of love and war, maternal gaze and military death, the mask combines similar terms even more cruelly.⁴³ Breton first published his account of these objects in 1934.⁴⁴ In a 1936 postscript in L'Amour fou he was forced to reconsider it for two reasons (AF 37-38). In the interim he had learned from the Belgian Surrealist Joë Bousquet that the mask was indeed a military helmet with an "evil role" (Bosquet was paralyzed in the war). He also had learned that Suzanne Musard had encountered the same object, had even witnessed the entire episode of the flea market. These two signs, the first of death in war, the second of loss in love, transform the mask for Breton into a "precipitate" not only

⁴² On this point see the Pontalis introduction to Xavière Gautier, Surréalisme et sexualité (Paris, 1971).

⁴³ As indeed does the Giacometti Head [Fig. 14], the effective other of Brancusi versions, which seems to conflate maternal gaze and demonic death mask--as if the maternal gaze were here figured as a momento mori.

⁴⁴ In the Belgian journal Documents 34 (June 1934), under the title "Equation de l'objet trouvé."

of desire but also of "the 'death instinct'" (AF 38).

However, this brave recognition is immediately resisted. Breton cannot tolerate the ambivalence which such ambiguity produces, and so he simply opposes the spoon and the mask as respective "disguises" of the life and death drives. The spoon (associated with Jacqueline Lamba) now represents erotic binding alone, the mask (associated with Suzanne Musard) destructive defusion alone. Through this forced opposition Breton attempts to balance the two drives-- to separate sexuality from death (i.e., from pain and aggression), to claim desire for life. But this opposition cannot hold: as we have seen, the spoon and the mask have a similar psychic valence as mixed images of desire and death.⁶⁹ "Of Eros and the struggle against Eros!" Breton exclaims more than once. This line is in fact a quotation from The Ego and the Id, from a section that reprises the conflict of life and death drives proposed in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (which was included in the same 1933 translation). Here Breton seeks to purify the opposition between the two drives, but the very citation from Freud

⁶⁹ As suggested, both must be seen in relation to the lost object; both, that is, are involved in the metonymic mise-en-abîme of desire. Breton insists that the mask arrested this displacement for Giacometti, as he insists that the spoon effected a closure for him--but the perfect fit slips away in both cases. The only possible arrest is in death, desire for which the mask and the spoon also figure. This is what makes the mask in particular so cruel a riddle: an image of a longing for the mother conflated with an image of a destructive drive toward death.

deconstructs it absolutely: "The two instincts, the sexual instinct and the death instinct, behave like preservation instincts, in the strictest sense of the word, because they tend, both of them, to reestablish a state which was troubled by the apparition of life'" (AF 38).⁴⁴ In short, Breton opposes the two drives, only to quote Freud to the effect that they cannot be so opposed: on the one hand, both draw on the same sexual energy, the same libido (there is no "destrudo"), and, on the other hand, both are governed by a repetition in thrall to a dominant instinctual conservatism that conduces to death. "But," Breton intervenes with the classic signifier of disavowal, "But I had to start loving again, not just to keep on living!" Whereas Giacommetti surrenders to this intuited recognition, Breton resists it in a blind testament to love. It is perhaps a necessary leap of faith, but that is all it is. At this moment Surrealism as an aesthetic, indeed a politic, of desire stands deconstructed.

Two final points should be drawn from this lesson, the first concerning the valence of sexuality in Surrealism, the second regarding the role of trauma. Along with the new model of the drives presented in such texts as Beyond the Pleasure Principle and The Ego and the Id comes a new notion of

⁴⁴ For the Strachey translation of this passage see The Ego and the Id (New York, 1961), pp. 30-1. This passage also glosses the association of sexual and self-preservative drives and the relation between binding and defusion.

sexuality. No longer are the sexual drives opposed to the ego or self-preservative drives; the two are united in Eros against the death drive. Sexuality is no longer seen as disruptive of the subject; on the contrary, it is devoted to its binding. Now, consciously or not, the Surrealists long operated according to the first model of a subversive sexuality, and, devout Sadeans that they were, they exploited it as such. Later, however, the Bretonian Surrealists at least regarded sexuality in terms of Eros, as a synthetic principle rather than a disruptive force, which is in keeping with the new Freudian formulation just as the prior practice was in keeping with the old. I believe this transformation, at least for Breton, occurs in the face of the events narrated in L'Amour fou: the perception of desire as lack, the recognition of the found object as impossible lost object, the encounter with the death drive. Here Breton suddenly sees the stake of this model of a subversive sexuality, the risk for the subject, and his thought is transformed precisely at the point of the moral of the mask and the spoon. (He probably glimpsed it before--in his relationship with Nadja certainly, in his disapproval of "perversions" perhaps, in his denunciation first of Bataille and later of Dali maybe--but here the crisis can no longer be parried.) As a cult of desire in a culture of the death drive, Surrealism had to resist the collapse of the one into the other. As suggested in Chapter One, the defusion proposed

by the death drive theory undermines the binding that is necessary for the making not only of a political revolution but even of an aesthetic movement. Breton had to disavow this drive at the potential cost of both political illusion and psychic splitting: "But I had to go on...."

The second point concerns trauma, which is how this recognition comes to Breton: these "disguises" of the drives, he says of the mask and the spoon, tested him "blow by blow" (AF 38). As we have seen, he often refers the marvelous, convulsive beauty and objective chance to shock, trauma and repetition.⁴⁷ In fact, many if not most of the major concepts

⁴⁷ In this last paradigmatic instance of the objects Breton seems to recognize the traumatic basis of objective chance. As for convulsive beauty, it is "like a train," Breton writes at the end of Nadia, "destined to produce one Shock" (N 160). This metaphor may not be entirely coincidental, for the discourse of shock was developed in the 19th century primarily in relation to railway accidents, the traumatic effects of which were regarded initially in physiological, then psychological and finally psychoanalytical terms. Shock, in short, is another route to the unconscious, the discovery of which is so often traced strictly to hysteria. In the concept of convulsive beauty, then, Breton alludes to two of the discourses fundamental to the discovery of the unconscious and the beginnings of psychoanalysis. On shock in the 19th century see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century (New York, 1977), pp. 129-49.

Trauma and repetition are absolutely crucial to both modernist art and psychoanalytical theory. In "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939) Benjamin draws directly on Beyond the Pleasure Principle to think the significance of modern shock for the aesthetic of "involuntary memory" from Baudelaire to Proust, an aesthetic which Surrealism develops (in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn [New York, 1969]). And in The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis Lacan discusses trauma and repetition in terms of tuché and automaton, Aristotelian terms which he uses

of Bretonian Surrealism involve a traumatic uncanniness. "Interpretive delirium," Breton writes in L'Amour fou in a famous line developed from Baudelaire, "begins only when man, ill-prepared, is taken by a sudden fear in the forest of symbols" (AF 15). On the basis of this clue fundamental notions of Surrealism--the famous paranoic-critical method, the vaunted posture of psychic disponibilité, the modern city as an array of anxious signs--might be read in terms of traumatic neurosis. Indeed, all these Surrealist practices might be seen as so many attempts, compulsively repeated, to master trauma, to transform anxiety into beauty, the uncanny into the marvelous.⁴⁰

There are, of course, as many traumas as there are individuals, but the prototypical scenes are few, and in his discussion of convulsive beauty and objective chance Breton suggests what his are. As we have seen, convulsive beauty involves states--veiled-erotic and fixed-explosive--that uncannily recall death or, more precisely, the inextricability of desire and death. "Neither static nor dynamic" (N 160), Bretonian beauty is like a petite mort in

respectively to think trauma as "the encounter with the real" and repetition as "the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the signs" (pp. 53-4). This encounter, this trauma, is both always "missed" and ever repeated because it is never recognized by the subject as such: "What is repeated, in fact, is always something that occurs--the expression tells us quite a lot about its relation to the tuché--as if by chance." This is precisely the formula of objective chance.

⁴⁰ This is discussed further in Chapter Six.

which desire and death are one, in which the subject, in an experience of jouissance, is momentarily shocked free of identity. This is finally why Breton terms beauty convulsive, and why we must see it as uncanny. So, too, as we have seen, objective chance involves states--triggered by found objects and enigmatic encounters--that recall a primal loss. For Breton and Giacometti, as ultimately perhaps for us all, this is the trauma of the disappearance of the mother, the loss of the primal love object, which Breton seeks to recapture in his serial lovers and Giacometti seems to resent in his (dis)agreeable objects. It is also the trauma of the fantasmatic perception of castration, a related loss which overdetermines all others, and the objects which Breton and Giacometti find (or, as Breton more aptly says, which interrogate them) are props with which to negotiate this Oedipal conundrum too. In this way the marvelous is based in traumas that involve the origin of desire in loss and its end in death, and in attempts to overcome or otherwise transform these traumas. This is a formulation that we must now test against three of the most important Surrealist oeuvres, those of de Chirico, Ernst and Giacometti.

Chapter Three
PRIMAL FANTASIES

If the marvelous as the leitmotif of Surrealism involves the uncanny, and if the uncanny as the return of the repressed involves trauma, then trauma must somehow inform Surrealist oeuvres. Such is the hypothesis that I want to test here in relation to de Chirico, Ernst and Giacometti. Again, according to Freud, the uncanny is evoked by returns of many sorts: not only reminders of death but also repetitions of traumatic scenes from childhood, the sighting of castration above all. This Freudian child of trauma is the father of the most important Surrealist practices.

Freud distinguished three primal fantasies: that of seduction, the primal scene proper (where the child witnesses parental sex), and that of castration. First called scenes, they were later termed fantasies when it became clear that they need not be actual events to be psychically effective, indeed, that they are often constructed, in whole or part, after the fact, in analytic treatment. Yet, however contrived, these fantasies tend to be uniform; in fact they appear so fundamental that Freud deemed them phylogenetic--given schema that we all elaborate upon. (For many this recourse to hereditary ur-narratives remains the most problematic aspect of the theory.) They are fundamental, Freud speculated, because it is through these fantasies that

the child teases out the basic riddles of origins, of identities (they are thus primal in this sense too): in the fantasy of seduction the origin of sexuality, in the primal scene the origin of the individual, in the fantasy of castration the origin of sexual difference. Freud added another primal fantasy, that of intrauterine existence, which might best be seen as a salve to the other, traumatic fantasies, especially castration. This, at least, is how it functions in Surrealism where it is pervasive (again, the return to the maternal term, estranged through repression, is an important form of the uncanny). Here, however, I will focus on the three other types, specifically on the ways that they structure the work of de Chirico, Ernst and Giacometti, each of whom casts the origin of his art in terms of such a fantasy.²

² This typology of primal fantasies (Urphantasien) first appears in Freud in "A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Psychoanalytic Theory of the Disease" (1915); it was then developed in "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (1918), the Wolfman case. But the concept was already sketched in "The Sexual Enlightenment of Children" (1907) and "Family Romances" (1908), and "the primal scene" is mentioned as early as The Interpretation of Dreams (1900). The de Chirico texts which I cite date from 1912-13, '19 and '24, and the relevant works begin in 1910; the cited Ernst texts date from 1927, '33 and '42, and the relevant works from 1919; both Giacometti texts and works are from the early 1930s. In Chapter Two we saw that Nadia is a kind of case history and L'Amour fou a form of self-analysis. De Chirico, Ernst and Giacometti also experimented with self-analysis. I touch on the degrees of awareness of Freud below; here I want simply to stress the uncanny intuition of these artists to think artistic beginnings in relation to primal fantasies. As Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis write, these fantasies "represent the insertion, mediated by an imagined scenario, of the most radically formative symbolism, into corporeal

Of course, fantasy cannot be reduced to these three types, nor are they pure on several counts. As we will see, the seduction fantasy of de Chirico has a castrative aspect; the primal scene of Ernst betrays a seductive side; and the castration fantasy of Giacometti begins as an intrauterine wish. These fantasies are also inflected by screen memory and conscious design; they are thus not temporally primary so much as structurally originary.² Yet it is precisely in this way that primal fantasy illuminates Surrealist art as no other concept can. More fundamental than the dream (since it involves the very advent of representation), primal fantasy provides a way to think entire oeuvres rather than merely decode individual works iconographically. Moreover, as expressly visual scenarios in which the psychic, the sexual and the perceptual are all bound together, primal fantasy does much to explain the peculiar pictorial structures and object relations of Surrealism--specifically, why subject positions and spatial constructions in this art are rarely fixed. The scene of a daydream, for example, is relatively

reality" ("Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," in Formations of Fantasy, ed. V. Burgin, J. Donald and C. Kaplan [London, 1986], p. 32). I am indebted to Laplanche and Pontalis throughout this chapter. In Chapter Six I discuss the fourth fantasy, that of intrauterine existence.

² That is, the "primal" in primal fantasy is not about primacy so much as efficacy. For example, the fantasies in question here are screen memories based on primal fantasies. Yet, as Laplanche and Pontalis argue, fantasy is structurally consistent, whether unconscious or conscious, primal or secondary.

stable because the ego is relatively centered. This is not the case in primal fantasy where the subject not only is in the scene but also can identify with any of its elements (as Freud suggests in the 1919 essay "A Child is Being Beaten," an analysis of a fantasy in which the subject eventually occupies all possible positions). Such participation renders the scene as elastic as the subject is mobile, and this is so because the fantasy is "not the object of desire, but its setting," its *mise-en-scène*.³ Such fantasmatic subjectivity and spatiality are intrinsic to Surrealist art, where the first is so often passive and the second is so often perspectively skewed or anamorphically distorted.⁴

Breton struggled to articulate this fantasmatic basis of Surrealist art in two crucial metaphors. In the "Manifesto" he points to the fantasmatic position of the Surrealist subject with the automatist image of "a man cut in two by a window."⁵ This image suggests neither a descriptive mirror nor a narrative window, the traditional paradigms of postmedieval art, but a fantasmatic window, a "purely

³ Laplanche and Pontalis, p. 26.

⁴ In Chapter Two I noted that Ernst wrote of the artist as a passive "spectator" and Breton as an "agonized witness". Before them de Chirico also wrote of the artist as a "surprised" viewer; see "Meditations of a Painter" (1912), in James Thrall Soby, Giorgio de Chirico (New York, 1955).

⁵ André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924), in Manifestoes of Surrealism, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor, 1972), p. 21; M hereafter.

interior model"⁶ in which the subject is somehow split both positionally--at once inside and outside the scene--and psychically--"cut in two." In L'Amour fou Breton complements this image of the subject in fantasy with an image that suggests its projective aspect: Surrealist art as a grid inscribed "in letters of desire."⁷ Significantly, in both accounts it is implied that the artist does not invent new forms but rather retraces fantasmatic scenes.⁸

Two points should be stressed here. Certainly the three fantasies in question are threaded through the Oedipus complex, especially castration, to which the Surrealists respond in the typical patriarchal ways: fetishism, voyeurism, sadism. In a trenchant critique of Surrealism Adorno argued that its

pictures are not so much those of an inner essence;
rather they are object-fetishes on which the subjective,

⁶ Breton, Surrealism and Painting, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York, 1972), p. 4.

⁷ Breton, L'Amour fou (Paris, 1937), translated by Mary Ann Caws as Mad Love (Lincoln, 1987), p. 87; AF hereafter.

⁸ Of the "Manifesto" image Breton writes: "Here again it is not a matter of drawing, but simply of tracing" (M 21). The image seems to point to a trauma, which Breton cannot "incorporate... into...poetic construction" (M 22). Perhaps it is a residue of a primal fantasy, one of castration; in any case, he repeats it more than once. The L'Amour fou metaphor also suggests a "tracing" of trauma, which Breton typically projects from the past to the future: "This grid exists. Every life contains those homogenous patterns of facts, whose surface is cracked or cloudy. Each person has only to stare at them fixedly in order to read his own future. Let him enter the whirlwind; let him retrace the events which have seemed to him fleeting and obscure among all others, which have torn him apart" (AF 87).

the libido, was once fixated. They bring back childhood by fetishism and not by self-submersion."⁹

This is indeed the rule in Surrealism, but the primal fantasies point to exceptions: they suggest, at least potentially, a self-submersion that might subvert fixated notions of subjectivity, sexual difference and representation, a Surrealism that might defetishize these terms. In short, the Surrealist subject is more various than its fetishistic, voyeuristic and sadistic types might otherwise suggest (again, such mobility is characteristic of fantasy). Moreover, the primal fantasies are precisely riddles about the origins of sexuality, difference and representation: they question rather than fix these things.

Second, just as the site of the Surrealist marvelous is uncertain, so too is the source of Surrealist fantasies, as is registered in the paradoxical language called upon to describe them. Breton, for example, says that he "looks out" into a pure interior, Ernst that he limns "what is visible inside him."¹⁰ Again, as with the marvelous, this uncertainty is finally that of the source of the trauma narrated in the primal fantasy, as Laplanche and Pontalis clarify in a

⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, "Looking Back on Surrealism" (1954) in Irving Howe, ed., The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts (New York, 1967), p. 223. Between the lines this reads as an objection, long after the fact, to the influence of Surrealism on Walter Benjamin; on this matter see Chapter Five.

¹⁰ Breton, Surrealism and Painting, p. 4. Ernst, Beyond Painting (New York, 1948), p. 20; BP hereafter.

discussion of the Freudian theory of seduction:

[T]he whole of the trauma comes both from within and without: from without, since sexuality reaches the subject from the other [preeminently the parent]; from within, since it springs from this internalized exteriority, this "reminiscence suffered by hysterics" (according to the Freudian formula), reminiscence in which we already discern what will be later named fantasy.¹¹

With this clue I want to claim again, as I did in Chapter Two, that the distinctive character of Surrealist art resides in the different ways which it works through psychic trauma in scenes that register as both internal and external, endogenous and exogenous, fantasmatic and real--in a word, surreal.

Primal fantasy structures other Surrealist oeuvres, and certainly it illuminates the contradictory and simulacral aspects of the Surrealist image in general.¹² However, I focus on de Chirico, Ernst and Giacometti texts because each not only represents a different fantasy but also accounts for a different method or medium: the invention of "metaphysical" painting by de Chirico, of collage, frottage and grattage by Ernst, of "symbolic" objects by Giacometti. These origin myths are the manifest content of the elaborated fantasies,

¹¹ Laplanche and Pontalis, p. 10.

¹² I return to these aspects below. Two other obvious candidates for analysis in terms of primal fantasy are Dalí and Bellmer. However, the dynamic of their work involves not so much an uncanny return of traumatic scenes as an overt regression to sadistic scopophilia for Bellmer, oral cannibalism for Dalí. For more on Bellmer see Chapter Four, for Dalí Chapter Five.

but they are grounded in more basic questions concerning origins: again, for de Chirico that of sexuality, for Ernst identity, for Giacometti gender difference. Here the degree of consciousness becomes very difficult to decide. As we will see, Ernst appears to exploit the genre of the primal scene in order to upset given ideas of identity, which, he writes in Beyond Painting after Breton, "will be convulsive or will not exist" (BP 19). The Giacometti fantasy of castration, on the other hand, seems truly traumatic--in ways which his subsequent sculpture fetishistically resists or sadistically repeats more than formally works through. Finally, de Chirico is somewhere between the two; although his fantasy is traumatic, he desires it too, even deploys it: "Surprise," he writes, "is the great new means."¹³ And yet his traumatic scene is also repeated in repetitions that are finally more defusive than binding--a fate that holds for the others as well.

The return of such traumas in art is uncanny in its own right, but so is the very structure of the original scenes, formed as they are through a reconstructive repetition or "deferred action" (Nachträglichkeit).¹⁴ As noted in Chapter

¹³ De Chirico quoted in Soby, Giorgio de Chirico.

¹⁴ Freud points to the uncanniness of such scenes in his first mention of the primal scene: "It is, I may say, a matter of daily experience that sexual intercourse between adults strikes any child who may observe it as something uncanny and that it arouses anxiety in them" (The Interpretation of Dreams [1900], trans. James Strachey [New York, 1965], p. 624, my emphasis).

Two, in his early work Freud refers each neurosis to an actual event: for every hysteric there is a perverse seducer. Although he abandons this seduction theory in 1897, he retains the essential idea of a trauma that is originary albeit often fantasmatic. This initial event, whether sexual or simply enigmatic, is one which the child cannot comprehend (significantly Freud describes this state as one of fright [Schreck]).¹⁵ The memory of this event becomes traumatic, even pathogenic, only if it is revived by a second event that the now sexual subject associates with the first, which is then recoded as sexual and so repressed. This is why trauma seems to come from within and without, and why it is the memory, not the event, which is traumatic.¹⁶ Not strictly real for the child nor simply contrived by the adult, these primal scenes, Freud proposes around 1914, are in fact

¹⁵ Here we may see that the child in fright before a traumatic event is the prototype of the "ill-prepared" Surrealist "taken by a sudden fear in the forest of symbols" (AF 15), the quintessential Surrealist state. Once again the significance of shock in Surrealism is underscored.

¹⁶ The best gloss in Freud is the earliest one: "Here we have an instance of a memory exciting an affect which it had not excited as an experience, because in the meantime the changes produced by puberty had made possible a new understanding of what was remembered. Now this case is typical of repression in hysteria. We invariably find that a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma after the event. The reason for this state of things is the retardation of puberty as compared with the remainder of the individual's development" (Project for a Scientific Psychology [1895], in The Origins of Psychoanalysis, trans. James Strachey [New York, 1954], p. 413. For a gloss on Nachträglichkeit see Laplanche and Pontalis, The Language of Psychoanalysis, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York, 1973), pp. 111-14.

fantasies, intended at least in part "to cover up the auto-erotic activity of the first years of child, to embellish it and raise it to a higher plane."¹⁷ And yet they have all the effectivity of real events--even more so, Freud argues, for the subject often reworks actual experience according to the given scenarios of seduction, parental sex and castration.¹⁸

The concept of deferred action is potentially important for art history;¹⁷ it is absolutely crucial to an understanding of the function of fantasy in Surrealist art.

¹⁷ Freud, On the History of the Psychoanalytical Movement (1914), in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, trans. James Strachey (London, 1953), vol. XIV, pp. 17-8; S.E. hereafter. This last comment is especially relevant to the Ernst fantasies in which art and autoerotism are bound up with one another (e.g., the rubbing of frottage). The other fantasies touch on this too: although they concern different origins, all three involve that of sexuality in autoerotism and fantasy. In this way these artists intuitively relate the origins of their art to the primary act of sublimation. See Laplanche and Pontalis, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," p. 25.

¹⁸ See "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (1918). Freud argues that under the pressure of the inherited schema of castration the Wolfman came to imagine his father as castrative despite his "negative Oedipus complex," i.e., despite his love for him. The cases of de Chirico and Ernst offer parallels in this regard.

¹⁷ Dominick LaCapra and Peter Brooks have begun to articulate its ramifications for historical and literary studies (in "History and Psychoanalysis," in Françoise Meltzer, ed., The Trials of Psychoanalysis [Chicago, 1987], pp. 9-38, and in Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative [New York, 1984] respectively); it is time art historians did the same. Among other things the concept of Nachträglichkeit may allow one to complicate readings of influence, to think the effectivity of the present on the past, and to mitigate the teleological overdetermination of dominant narratives of Western (especially modern) art.

The Ernst fantasy is a screen memory of a primal scene that is only activated through other events. The Giacometti fantasy is also a screen memory that encompasses both an Oedipal moment of paternal threat and a pubertal dream of sadistic revenge. Finally, the de Chirico fantasy is set only in an adult moment, but then its basis in seduction is most deeply sublimated, so much so that de Chirico terms it "enigmatic". In a recent text, however, Jean Laplanche uses this very de Chirican term to rethink all the primal fantasies as forms of seduction--not as sexual assaults but as "enigmatic signifiers" received by the child from the other (parent, sibling, etc.).²⁰ It is this enigmatic, even seductive nature of primal fantasy that moves the artists not simply to simulate it in art but more importantly to elaborate the very origins of their art in its terms. They cannot, however, escape the traumatic basis of such fantasy, and it is finally this basis that, never tamed, compels them to reenact such scenes in their work--an uncanny reenactment of which they often appear more victim than master.

In several short texts from 1911 to 1919, most of which were not published at the time, de Chirico speaks of "revelation"

²⁰ "The enigma is in itself a seduction and its mechanisms are unconscious. It was not for nothing that the Sphinx appeared outside the gates of Thebes before Oedipus's drama began" (Laplanche, New Foundations for Psychoanalysis, trans. David Macey [London, 1989], p. 127).

and "surprise", "enigma" and "fatality".²¹ At the very moment that Freud is at work on "The Uncanny" de Chirico pledges to depict the world as "an immense museum of strangeness," to reveal the "mystery" in insignificant things.²² Clearly his topos is the estrangement that comes of repression and returns as enigma, an enigma which at one point he reluctantly refers to "the great questions one has always asked oneself--why was the world created, why we are born, live and die...."²³ His "metaphysical" terms are thus so many riddles about origins--but to what origin do "surprise" and "enigma" speak? What origin estranges even as it founds? "Art is the fatal net which catches these strange moments," de

²¹ The texts from 1911-15 were written in Paris; unpublished, they remained in the collection of Jean Paulhan and Paul Eluard. The texts from 1919, the most important of which is "Sull'arte metafisica" ("On Metaphysical Art"), were published in Valori Plastici, this one in U, 4-5 (April-May 1919), pp. 15-8. Translated extracts from some of these texts can be found in Soby, Giorgio de Chirico, in Marcel Jean, ed., The Autobiography of Surrealism (New York, 1980), pp. 3-10, and in Herschel B. Chipp, ed., Theories of Modern Art (Berkeley, 1968), pp. 397-402, 446-53.

²² De Chirico as translated in Jean, p. 6. De Chirico did not rehearse the Freudian uncanny; in a sense, he articulated it independently in terms developed from Böcklin, Klinger and Kubin as well as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche (who was also an important influence on Ernst). In "Meditations of a Painter" (1912) he quotes Schopenhauer on moments of revelation when the commonplace appears new and unfamiliar--a quality that he found in the aforementioned artists. Certainly his art is populated by avatars of the Freudian uncanny--mannequins, doubles, spectral father figures--most of which he introduced into the Surrealist repertoire. In "Metafisica et unheimlichkeit" (Les Réalismes 1919-39 [Paris, 1981]) Clair notes the contemporaneity of "On Metaphysical Art" and "The Uncanny".

²³ Ibid., pp. 5-6.

Chirico tells us, and these moments are not dreams.²⁴ What are they then?

In his early texts de Chirico dwells on a memory that is also reenacted in his early paintings (e.g., Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon of 1910 [Fig. 15], to which it is directly referred, and Enigma of the Day of 1912 [Fig. 16]);²⁵ indeed, in some sense it is reenacted in all his work. The first version comes from the 1912 text "Meditations of a Painter":

One clear autumnal morning I was sitting on a bench in the middle of the Piazza Santa Croce in Florence. It was of course not the first time I had seen this square. I had just come out of a long and painful intestinal illness, and I was in a nearly morbid state of sensitivity. The whole world, down to the marble of the buildings and the fountains, seemed to me to be convalescent. In the middle of the square rises a statue of Dante draped in a long cloak, holding his works....Then I had the strange impression that I was looking at all these things for the first time, and the composition of my picture came to my mind's eye [Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon]. Now each time I look at this painting I again see that moment. Nevertheless, that moment is an enigma to me, for it is inexplicable. And I like also to call the work which sprang from it an enigma.²⁴

²⁴ De Chirico, "Meditations of a Painter," translated in Chipp, p. 448. De Chirico was hardly alone in this aesthetic of surprise. His friend Apollinaire, a fellow mentor of the Surrealists, was also concerned with this effect, which he ascribed to "the fatal character of modern things," and as we saw in Chapter Two Breton developed it in both Nadia and L'Amour fou. In "surprise" I want to hear "shock" and "trauma", just as in "enigma" I want to hear "seduction".

²⁵ The latter, owned by Breton for a time, was an originary talisman of Surrealism. A questionnaire in Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 6 (May 15, 1933), devoted to the painting, encouraged fantasmatic speculations about its space.

²⁴ De Chirico, "Meditations", pp. 397-98.

This enigma, however, has a certain logic. The spatial scene of the piazza is transformed by two temporalities that coexist within it: an event of "not the first time" that triggers a memory of "the first time," a structure characteristic of deferred action in primal fantasy. So, too, this scene is traumatic in the sense discussed above, for the enigma comes to de Chirico both from within and without, in the symptom of the intestinal illness and in the guise of the statue of Dante. The illness alone is not enough to render the scene an originary "revelation"; it has this effect because it evokes a primal fantasy through a resisted, retrospective association of sick with sexual, of intestinal with genital. The scene, in short, is a displaced version of a fantasmatic seduction, a hypothesis which figures the statue as the father, the other who initiates the subject into sexuality (another section of this text is titled "The Statue's Desire").²⁷ Here, aided by the logic of the unconscious, de Chirico sublimates a traumatic initiation into sexuality into an origin myth of art.

Yet why is the scene partly seductive, or at least not entirely traumatic? Consider how it is elaborated in the two most relevant paintings. The Stimmung or atmosphere of the

²⁷ No less than trains are statues associated with his engineer father. This association is supported by the further association with Dante, a father of Italian culture, to which de Chirico clings nostalgically in the face of his upbringing in Greece, his formation in Munich and his misadventures in Paris.

1910 Enigma [Fig. 15] is relatively "warm",²² and the statue is sexually ambiguous--acephalic, almost androgynous. De Chirico seems projected in the scene in the proxy of the stump next to the statue--a certain relation in size, a certain phylogeny of form, that suggests an Oedipus complex more negative than positive, i.e., that the subject is more amorous than jealous of the father.²⁷ All this changes in the 1912 Enigma [Fig. 16]. The space now threatens the subject, who is pushed outside the scene by the extreme perspective. In place of the portals of the first Enigma (which are as sexually enigmatic as the signs "Ladies" and "Gentlemen" for a young child) there appears a steeply recessional arcade, "symbol of the intransigent will,"²⁸ which submits our look to the now manifestly phallic statue and stacks that dominate

²² De Chirico, "Meditations", p. 398. Stimmung is another privileged de Chirican term, borrowed from Nietzsche.

²⁷ "One gets the impression that the simple Oedipus complex is by no means its commonest form, but rather represents a simplification or schematization which, to be sure, is often enough justified for practical purposes. Closer study usually discloses the more complete Oedipus complex, which is twofold, positive and negative, and is due to the bisexuality originally present in children: that is to say, a boy has not merely an ambivalent attitude towards his father and an affectionate object-choice towards his mother, but at the same he also behaves like a girl and displays an affectionate feminine attitude to his father and a corresponding jealousy and hostility towards his mother" (The Ego and the Id [1923], trans. James Strachey and Joan Riviere [New York, 1962], p. 23). Freud also discusses the negative Oedipus complex in "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (1925), in Sexuality and the Psychology of Love, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), p. 185.

²⁸ De Chirico, "Meditations", p. 400.

the scene. In the two Enigmas, then, the primal fantasy is replayed first in its seductive (negative-Oedipal) aspect and then in its traumatic (positive-Oedipal) form.

A year later, in his 1913 text "Mystery and Creation," de Chirico restages the fantasy in the anxious terms that become standard in the paintings:

I remember one vivid winter's day at Versailles.... Everything gazed at me with mysterious, questioning eyes. And then I realized that every corner of the place, every column, every window possessed a spirit, an impenetrable soul. I looked around at the marble heroes, motionless in the lucid air, beneath the frozen rays of that winter sun which pours down on us without love.... At that moment I grew aware of the mystery which urges men to create certain forms. And the creation appeared more extraordinary than the creators.

Perhaps the most amazing sensation passed on to us by prehistorical man is that of presentiment. It will always continue. We might consider it as an eternal proof of the irrationality of the universe. Original man must have wandered through a world full of uncanny signs. He must have trembled at each step.²¹

Again a later scene seems to trigger a memory of a prior event, which returns here less as a seductive enigma than as a traumatic threat. Though deeply sublimated, the agent of this provocation is still the father. No doubt at this point this hypothesis seems fully absurd, for where is the father in this fantasy? In the first version he appeared in proxy (the statue), and so he does here. The look of de Chirico in this scene is projected as a gaze back at him (in the guise

²¹ De Chirico, "Mystery and Creation," translated in Chipp, p. 402. In a different version of this text de Chirico adds this thought: "...at that moment it seemed to me that I had already seen this palace, or that this palace had once, somewhere, already existed..." (Jean, p. 9).

of the "marble heroes"), and it is this castrative gaze that represents the father. Endowed with the gaze, objects appear more alive than de Chirico, and they query his lack. His active seeing has reversed into a passive being-seen.³²

It is in this form of the gaze as threat that de Chirico works over his enigma, especially in his still lifes of spectral objects and his cityscapes of paranoid perspectives produced during this time. Such paintings possess a gaze which troubles our own; indeed, perspective is often thrown so violently forward that things appear to see us.³³ If de Chirico revives perspective he does so in a way that disturbs it from within: the subject, its point of coherence, is usually menaced, often decentered--sometimes to the point where this "seer" appears within the scene as a sightless mannequin, a "Medusa with eyes that do not see" [Fig. 17].³⁴

³² This structure is similar to that of the dream of the Wolfman analyzed by Freud in "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (1918), where the gaze is returned as the staring of wolves that conveys the threat of castration. This text is the locus classicus of the fantasy of the primal scene, and it appears to be recalled in the Ernst fantasy.

³³ "In the scopic field," Lacan writes in The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (trans. Alan Sheridan [New York, 1977], p. 109), "everything is articulated between two terms that act in an antinomic way--on the side of things, there is the gaze, that is to say, things look at me, and yet I see them."

³⁴ De Chirico, "Meditations", p. 400. The Seer, sightless, is "seen" by space as figured in the perspectival drawing. Elsewhere in de Chirico the eye, which in Lacan is opposed to the gaze, appears as just another object among objects [Fig. 18]. De Chirico was obsessed by Renaissance treatises on perspective, especially that of Serlio (Tutti

As a result, rational perspective is deranged, and the visual array as such becomes uncanny: a forest not of objective symbols but of enigmatic signifiers that question us about the origins of sexuality, representation and identity. As before, de Chirico almost grasps the significance of his fantasy. Again he senses that origins are at stake, which here he displaces not to his art but to creation as such. As in the primal fantasy according to Freud, he "fills in the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truth."³⁵ That is, he refers his fantasy, his confusion about origins that upset as well as ground the subject, to "prehistorical man": this primal fantasy, its uncanny signs, he suggests, are always already there to seduce and threaten.³⁶

But why see this enigma as a primal fantasy, and, more outrageously, why claim it to be a fantasy of seduction--

l'opere d'architettura, 1537-75), which he seems to have used; however, like Duchamp's his was a "rehabilitation of perspective" that effectively undid it. For more on de Chirico's perspective see William Rubin, "De Chirico and Modernism," in Rubin, ed., De Chirico (New York, 1982), pp. 58-61.

³⁵ Freud, Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (1916-17), S.E., vol. XVI, p. 371. "It seems to me quite possible that all the things that are told to us today in analysis as phantasy...were once real occurrences in the primaeval times of the human family, and that children in their phantasies are simply filling in the gaps in individual truth with pre-historic truth." This is an example of the recourse to the phylogenetic in Freud (e.g., actual castration at the hands of the primordial father).

³⁶ At least this is how de Chirico and indeed Freud would have it. Of course, de Chirico projects his fantasy onto "prehistorical man".

especially when the de Chirico texts, though clearly concerned with origins, scarcely seem sexual? Far from evidence to the contrary, this reticence, this sublimation (if you like), suggests that we are on the right track.²⁷ And in fact de Chirico paintings of this period do evince seduction in two ways at least: in a thematic register of a welcomed seduction in which paternal figures actually appear, and in an enigmatic register of a traumatic seduction whose sublimated signs are everywhere--in the gaze of objects, the corruption of space, the uncanniness of certain symbols and shapes. The first register is most apparent in a theme that de Chirico repeats in different ways: the Return of the Prodigal [Figs. 19, 20]. Here the fantasmatic seduction is perfectly disguised: in this traditional subject the father can be represented as fully ambiguous, a desired persecutor.²⁸ In the first drawing of 1917 the mustachioed figure is partially derobed in petrified drag [Fig. 19] while in the second he is a statue come down from its plinth [Fig. 20]. In both drawings the son is a sightless, armless mannequin, submissive in the first, struggling in the second.

²⁷ His 1924 narrative of a dream (cited below) may well prove it; certainly more evidence can be culled from his 1911-19 texts to support this reading as well. De Chirico frequently privileges "childhood vision", which he never regards as innocent, as the paradigm of his art.

²⁸ There are other instances of this theme. When they are more traditional, i.e., more disguised by tradition, the embrace is more overtly sexual [Fig. 21]. These works influenced Ernst in his "Fiat Mode" lithographs where the figure of the manipulated mannequin reappears.

These identities hold for many other appearances of the statue and the mannequin in de Chirico, and certainly this encounter recurs in displaced forms throughout his work.

The more important enigmatic register of seduction is also more difficult to locate, although its sublimated threat is apparent in the hallucinated objects and the skewed perspectives in the paintings. Breton once suggested that the de Chirican "revelation" concerning "our instinctual life" is effected through a revision of time and space.³⁹ And it is indeed in these terms that his fantasy of seduction is fully folded into the work: according to de Chirico, in the "inhabited depth" that disturbs like a "symptom" the array of his metaphysical painting, or, in our terms, in the psychic time (i.e., the deferred action of primal fantasy) that corrupts his pictorial space.⁴⁰ De Chirico tends to think this strange revision of time and space in symbolic, even iconographic terms. Influenced by Geschlecht und Charackter (Sex and Character), a 1903 text by the Austrian philosopher Otto Weininger that touches on the psychological effects of geometric forms, de Chirico advocates "a new metaphysical psychology of things" that might capture "the terror of lines and angles...[the] joys and sorrows...hidden within a

³⁹ Breton, Les Pas perdus (Paris, 1924), p. 145, and "Giorgio de Chirico," Littérature 11 (January 1920). Breton calls this revelation a "true modern mythology in the making."

⁴⁰ De Chirico, "On Metaphysical Art" (1919), translated in Chipp, p. 451. I discuss this space in more theoretical terms below.

portico, the angle of a street or even a room, on the surface of a table between the sides of a box."⁴¹ Clearly this psychology involves a traumatic vision, one of uncanny signs that both seduce and threaten. And these signs are always associated with the engineer father whose traces (tools, easels, drawings) are everywhere in the work.

The subject doubled by strange figures, surveyed by uncanny objects, threatened by anxious perspectives, decentered by claustrophobic interiors: all these are so many enigmatic signifiers of a sexual trauma, a fantasy of seduction. This reading is supported by the more manifest complexes that govern the oeuvre, paranoia and melancholy, the first associated with de Chirico by the Surrealists, the second evoked by the artist in various titles.⁴² Both underscore the fantasmatic basis of the work.

The fantasy of seduction stirs a sexuality which the subject defends against. According to Freud, paranoia is also a defense against sexuality--homosexuality--a defense in which the subject transforms the loved parent of the same sex

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 452. Elsewhere de Chirico suggests that his psychology is founded on "the troubling connection between perspective and metaphysics" (Soby, p. 83). Freud mentions Weininger in Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905). In Sex and Character, an otherwise intolerant text, Weininger proposes (as of course did Freud) a fundamental bisexuality--a provocative hypothesis in relation to de Chirico.

⁴² Like "The Uncanny", the Freud texts on these subjects are contemporaneous with the de Chirico oeuvre, not prior to it.

into a persecutor.⁴³ This projection may account, at least in part, for the ambiguity of the Surrealist father, split as bad object and good, philistine castrator and benevolent protector, as well as for the ambivalence of the Surrealist son, contemptuous of the father yet obsessed by him (as Ernst, Dalí and Bellmer, to name just a few, all were).⁴⁴

Though more marked elsewhere, this Surrealist topos of

⁴³ For Freud the drives develop from autoerotism through narcissism to object-love. A first love object of the male infant is a narcissistic one, his own body; a first outer love object is a homosexual one, a body with the same genitals, his father. When the child intuits the stake of this love object--that he must be castrated in order to receive it--he sublimates his homosexual desire. Later, if frustrated, he may regress to this point in his passage--the paranoid passed sublimated homosexuality to narcissism. For Freud this point of fixation suggests the motive of the paranoiac: he regresses to narcissism as a defense against homosexual desire. And this defense often takes the form of projection--of an excessive reconstruction of the world. Such reconstruction is necessary to the paranoiac because he regards his withdrawal from the world as the end of the world. Thus "the delusion-formation, which we take to be a pathological product, is in reality an attempt at recovery, a process of reconstruction" ("Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia" [1911], in Three Case Histories, ed. Philip Rieff [New York, 1963], p. 174). Also see "A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Psychoanalytical Theory of the Disease" (1915), in Sexuality and the Psychology of Love, pp. 99, 102. As noted in Chapter One, Lacan published two texts on paranoia in Minotaure in the early 1930s; in effect, the early intimations of de Chirico become the later formulas of Dalí and others.

⁴⁴ Here de Chirico admits to such ambivalence even as he points to its repression: "Despite a deep mutual affection, the relationship between my father and myself was somewhat distant and cold. A certain reticence prevented us from indulging in the demonstrative behavior of the middle classes." To de Chirico his parents were divided between the two sons: "My brother [Alberto Savinio] was 'the handsome one' of the family and our mother was very proud of him" (Soby, p. 14).

paranoia begins with de Chirico; it is he who develops its basic pictorial formulas.⁴⁵ In this regard a very suggestive image is the disguised portrait of the artist as mannequin, doll or dummy (perhaps its most famous appearance is in the 1923 Ernst Pietà, or the Revolution by Night [Fig. 22]).⁴⁶

The paranoid significance of this figure is suggested in "The Uncanny" where Freud discusses the E.T.A. Hoffmann story "The Sandman". In the story the father is split as if by the Oedipal ambivalence of the son Nathaniel into two sets of figures, the one kind and protective, the other castrative and pledged to blind him (this uncanny association between castration and blindness pervades Surrealism). Important here, however, is the desire of the son for the good father, a "feminine attitude" figured according to Freud by the doll Olympia: "Olympia is, as it were, a dissociated complex of Nathaniel's which confronts him as a person, and Nathaniel's enslavement to this complex is expressed in his senseless

⁴⁵ It becomes, of course, programmatic in Dali, but it is also marked in Ernst because the paranoid projection is not moderated by any melancholic introjection as it is in de Chirico. In fact, many of these characteristics of paranoia--insistent narcissism and repressed homosexuality, delusions of persecution and grandeur, hallucinations of the end and of the beginning of the world--are evident in Ernst. In this regard see Beyond Painting, passim.

⁴⁶ Of course the figure of the mustachioed father in Pietà is also derived from de Chirico (The Child's Brain [Fig. 23]); my point is that the Surrealist vocabulary of paranoia is so derived as well. For more on this general connection see Laura Rosenstock, "De Chirico's Influence on the Surrealists," in De Chirico (New York, 1982), pp. 111-30.

obsessive love for Olympia."⁴⁷ Such is the psychologic of this particular Surrealist self-representation. Derived from de Chirico, this figure suggests that the fantasmatic persecution of the father is another form of desired seduction by him. And in de Chirico as in Ernst (who follows him closely here) the two terms are in fact mixed: in some works the paranoid term is dominant (e.g., most famously, The Mystery and Melancholy of a Street [Fig. 24] and Two Children Are Threatened by a Nightingale [Fig. 25]), while in others the seductive term is paramount (e.g., The Child's Brain [Fig. 23] and Pietà [Fig. 22]). Though apparently opposite representations of the father, both terms actually represent a disguised love for him.

This reading is supported by the third psychic trope that governs the de Chirico oeuvre: melancholy. In certain ways the melancholic incorporation of the dead father overcodes the other two scenarios of welcomed seduction and paranoid projection. From "surprise" and "enigma" de Chirico passes to "nostalgia" and "melancholy": from scenarios of seduction and persecution he moves to compulsively repeated homages to the dead seducer. Evariste de Chirico died in 1905 when Giorgio was seventeen. The son was devoted to the father, but de Chirico never referred the melancholy of his

⁴⁷ Freud, "The Uncanny", in Studies in Parapsychology, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963) pp. 38-39. The correlation in Freud as well as in Surrealism between "feminine" and "passive" is very problematic, but, as we will see, it is a correlation that Ernst recodes.

oeuvre to this loss. He assigned it to other terms (which the critical literature has simply reiterated): a nostalgia for the Italian homeland, the neoclassical style, the old master tradition, and so on. Certainly these lost objects--in the form of ruined references and failed recoveries--pervade the work; psychically, however, they are so many representatives of the dead father.⁴⁶

For the melancholic the lost love object is partially unconscious. Unable to give it up, he clings to it "through the medium of a hallucinatory wish-psychosis" in which memories are extremely cathected and obsessively repeated.⁴⁷ Along with the sublimation of seduction, this condition informs the uncanny nature of de Chirico scenes, hallucinatory and reiterative as they are; it also compounds the ambivalence which they register. For just as the subject of the fantasmatic seduction is ambivalent vis-à-vis the father, so too is the melancholic vis-à-vis the lost object. As the melancholic de Chirico internalizes his lost object, he also internalizes his ambivalence for it, which is now

⁴⁶ This paternal loss was compounded by cultural dislocations, and de Chirico, I believe, associated the two. In this way repetitions of cultural emblems are so many attempts to work through the paternal loss. The best example is the train, which in a sense is to de Chirico what the spool is to the fort/da child: a compulsively repeated image-action that attempts to figure and so master loss. In a 1913 drawing significantly titled Joy the train appears as a toy [Fig. 26].

⁴⁷ Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), in A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. John Rickman (New York, 1957), p. 166. That the object is unconscious and internalized is what distinguishes melancholy from mourning.

turned round on the subject.²⁰ This ambivalence for both subject and object is most apparent in de Chirico, and for a time he sustains it. However, the (self)destructive impulse comes to dominate the work, as de Chirico comes to identify with images of the dead (dead father, traditionalist motifs, old master methods), as in the Self-Portrait (1924; fig. 27). Here melancholy passes completely into masochism.

All these processes fascinate: the working over of seduction, the paranoid projection of persecution, the melancholic repetition of loss. Certainly they fascinated the Surrealists, at least for a time.²¹ However, they variously renounced de Chirico when he declared a classicist program in which transgressive desire surrendered to instinctual regression.²² In 1926 Breton wrote: "It took me, it took us, five years to despair of de Chirico, to admit that he had lost all sense of what he was doing."²³ But did he really

²⁰ Ibid., p. 172. This is how Freud understands the "self-torment of melancholics" (at least at the time of the essay on melancholy): as "sadistic tendencies" toward the object "turned around upon the self." "Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, so that the latter could henceforth be criticized by a special mental faculty like an object, like the forsaken object..." (p. 172). Is it too literal (i.e., too iconographic) to suggest that shadows function similarly in de Chirico?

²¹ Breton and company reproduced some of his works in every issue of La Révolution surréaliste.

²² This was announced as early as 1919 in the text "The Return to Craft."

²³ Breton in his third article on "Le Surréalisme et la peinture," La Révolution surréaliste 7 (June 15, 1926). Here he intuits the de Chirican uncanny: "... for a few years

lose this sense, or was he finally overcome by it? That is, was his necrophilic repetition (first of historical motifs, then of his own images) a willed break in bad faith, or an involuntary development of an uncanny psychologic? As Breton knew with Nadja, a disruptive subject fascinates, but a truly defusive one repels, and so it was de Chirico and the Surrealists. Compulsive repetition was always the motor of his obsessional work. For a time he was able to recoup it as a mode of art, to make a muse of uncanny returns, as he did in The Disquieting Muses (1917; fig. 28). Finally he could not inflect it further, and his art petrified in melancholic repetition, as evident in the many versions made of this painting [Fig. 29].²⁴ As petrification became its condition rather than its subject, his art came to express, as Freud wrote of melancholy, "a pure culture of the death instinct."²⁵

Chirico engaged a rare faculty of discrimination that exacted itself on the most disquieting aspects of external appearances, particularly all those things around us that share simultaneously the characteristics of life and death" (Surrealism and Painting, p. 16).

²⁴ If The Disquieting Muses (unheimlich is often translated inquiétant) represents this first moment when the uncanny return of the repressed is inflected, its repetitions represent the second moment when its compulsive mechanism takes over. The Warhol reprise of this image is thus most appropriate [Fig. 30]: the contemporary master of deathly repetition repeats the image in the modernist canon most emblematic of the compulsion to repeat.

²⁵ Freud, The Ego and the Id (1923), S.E. vol XIX, p. 53.

In 1924 in La Révolution surréaliste 1 de Chirico was asked to recount his most impressive dream:

I struggle in vain with the man whose eyes are suspicious and very gentle. Each time I grasp him, he frees himself by quietly spreading his arms which have an unbelievable strength, an incalculable power....It is my father who thus appears to me in my dreams....

The struggle ends with my surrender: I give up: then the images become confused....⁸⁴

In effect this dream conflates the fantasy of seduction with the primal scene. No longer returned as a gaze from the scene, the look becomes a projection into it, as the subject literally assumes a "feminine attitude" to the father. Yet this relation is overcoded by the traumatic schema of seduction, so that the father remains a menace as well. In this way images of seduction and struggle, desire and anguish are indeed "confused". In Ernst such confusion regarding sexuality, representation and identity is programmatic; he consciously puts into play the trauma of the primal scene (in which a similar fantasmatic relation to the father is suggested) in order "to hasten the general crisis of consciousness due in our time" (BP 25).

In 1927 in La Révolution surréaliste 9/10 Ernst published "Visions de demi-sommeil." This short text is the

⁸⁴ De Chirico, La Révolution surréaliste 1 (December 1, 1924). In Hebdomeros, his 1929 novel that recaptured some Surrealist favor, this glance returns--in the body of a woman: "All at once, Hebdomeros saw that this woman had his father's eyes; and he understood... 'Oh Hebdomeros,' she said, 'I am Immortality....'" (Hebdomeros, trans. Margaret Crosland [New York, 1988], p. 132).

origin of his 1948 book Beyond Painting, a case history cum art treatise (with similarities to the Freud studies of Leonardo, the Wolfman and Judge Schreber) in which Ernst deploys infantile scenarios, family romances and screen memories, many of which appear in his art.²⁷ The title text, "Au-déjà de la peinture" (1936), has three parts; the first, titled "History of a Natural History," opens with a vision of half-sleep dated "from 5 to 7 years":

I see before me a panel, very rudely painted with wide black lines on a red ground, representing false mahogany and calling forth associations of organic forms (menacing eye, long nose, great head of a bird with thick black hair, etc.).

In front of the panel, a glossy black man is making gestures, slow, comical and, according to my memories of a very obscure epoch, joyously obscene. This rogue of a fellow wears the turned-up moustaches of my father. (BP 3)

Menacing eye, long nose, great head of a bird, obscene gestures, rogue father: this is an obvious chain of associations--a first encounter with painting cast in terms of the primal scene. In a classic example of deferred action this screen memory layers three moments: 1) "the occasion of

²⁷ In fact, Beyond Painting cites, even narrates many specific works. The book includes a title text ("Au-déjà de la peinture," 1936), a draft of this text ("Comment on force l'inspiration," Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 6, 1933), and a psycho-autobiography ("Some Data on the Youth of M.E. as told by himself," View, April 1942). "Visions de demi-sommeil" appeared in the same issue of La Révolution surréaliste as an extract from The Question of Lay Analysis. Clearly Ernst knew the Freud study of Leonardo (1910, translated 1927) at the very least. Regarding his awareness of Freud see Werner Spies, Max Ernst, Loplop (New York, 1983), pp. 101-09, and Elizabeth M. Legge, Max Ernst: The Psychoanalytical Sources (Ann Arbor, 1989), pp. 17-29.

my own conception" (BP 4), the fantasy of the primal scene which is the retrospective origin of the vision; 2) the encounter with the father-painter (in the period of latency) which both evokes the primal scene as sexual and represses it as such; and 3) the act of memory ("at the age of puberty" [BP 4]) in which the first two scenes are recoded as an artistic initiation.⁵⁸ Yet this artistic origin or identity is refused, as the father as figure of academic art is made to appear ridiculous and repressive.⁵⁹ It is only, however, as such a figure that he is rejected; Ernst is actually ambivalent about the father (the primal scene, it is important to recall, is also a seduction).⁶⁰

However contrived, this primal scene is traumatic for Ernst, for he elaborates it many times over in his text--to reduce its charge, to master its affect, to rework its

⁵⁸ That Ernst was obsessed with origins is made clear in "Some Data on the Youth of M.E. as told by himself."

⁵⁹ Ernst senior was in fact a Sunday painter. In "Some Data..." under the year 1897 (age six) the scene is reported in its castrative aspect: "First contact with hallucination. Measles. Fear of death and the annihilating powers. A fever-vision provoked by an imitation-mahogany panel opposite his head, the grooves of the wood taking successively the aspect of an eye, a nose, a bird's head, a menacing nightingale, a spinning top and so on. Certainly little Max took pleasure in being afraid of these visions and later delivered himself voluntarily to provoke hallucinations of the same kind...." (BP 28) The last sentence suggests an aesthetic repetition of trauma in order to master it.

⁶⁰ The paranoid trope that is so active in Ernst suggests his ambivalence regarding the father. In short, this scene might be designed as a screen--to screen out homosexual desire. For the more conventional Oedipal reading see Legge, *passim*.

meaning. Significantly in the text the memory is followed by a reference to Leonardo, analyzed by Freud as an artist who, troubled in his sexuality as in his vision, also works over a traumatic fantasy in his art.*¹ Specifically Ernst refers to the exemplum cherished by the Surrealists that anything, a stain on a wall, might serve as a source of pictorial invention (here again creation is seen as recognition). If the first artistic origin via the father was rejected by Ernst, this revision as a form of self-invention is embraced by him:

On the tenth of August, 1925, an insupportable visual obsession caused me to discover the technical means which have brought a clear realization of this lesson of Leonardo. Beginning with a memory of childhood (related above) in the course of which a panel of false mahogany, situated in front of my bed, had played the role of optical provocateur of a vision of half-sleep, I was struck by the obsession that showed to my excited gaze the floor-boards upon which a thousand scrubblings had deepened the grooves. I decided then to investigate the symbolism of this obsession. (BP 7)

This investigation takes the form of the first frottages or rubbings (published in a 1926 portfolio Natural History), to which Ernst responds: "I was surprised by the sudden intensification of my visionary capacities and by the

*¹ The fantasy concerns a vulture that lashed the baby Leonardo on his mouth. Ernst recalls this fantasy generally in the figure of "Loplop" (and specifically in a collage in the 1934 collage novel Une Semaine de bonté [New York, 1976], p. 140). This first vision in Beyond Painting is followed immediately by another, postdated to "the age of puberty," of a procession in which "the women pass to the right, the men to the left" of his bed (BP 4). This suggests that in this primal scene Ernst also fantasizes castration, i.e., that he intuitively grasps the basis of sexual difference as well.

hallucinatory succession of contradictory images superimposed, one upon the other, with the persistence and rapidity characteristic of amorous memories" (BP 7). Here again the visionary develops out of the voyeuristic, indeed the scopophilic; here again artistic identity is framed in terms of a primal scene (hallucinatory, contradictory, amorous). In this case, however, the primal scene is sublimated into an aesthetic invention, one which redeems the original event even as it is rooted in it--in its excited gaze, in its sexual rubbing.⁴² According to Freud the original rubbing in the primal scene is only apparently that of the parents; it is actually that of the child whose fantasy is designed to "cover up" this autoerotic activity--to "elevate" it in fact. The frottage technique reprises this hypothetical moment: it is an artistic origin in which fantasy, sexuality and representation (art) are all bound together, at once covered up and elevated.

In the first scenes Ernst does not simply reject painting as paternal and traditional; rather, in this scene he turns to other modes (frottage, collage, grattage and decalcomania) as more effective ways to work through trauma,

⁴² In "Some Data on the Youth of M.E.," under the year 1897 (age six), Ernst writes, "When someone would ask him: 'What is your favorite occupation?' he regularly answered, 'Looking'. An analogous obsession conducted Max Ernst later to search for and discover some technical possibilities of drawing and painting, directly connected with the processes of inspiration and revelation (frottage, collage, decalcomania, etc.)." (BP 28)

indeed to recoup it as a general theory of aesthetic practice. "It is," he writes, "as a spectator that the author assists...at the birth of his work....[T]he role of the painter is to...project that which sees itself in him" (BP 9). A complicated formula, this nonetheless suggests why the primal scene is so important to Ernst, for it allows him to think the artist as both active creator (of his artistic identity) and passive receiver (of his automatist work). Like the subject in the fantasy "A Child is Being Beaten," the Ernstian artist is both a participant inside and a voyeur outside the scene of his art. More importantly, he is not fixed in any one position: hypothetically at least, the usual oppositions of subject and object, active and passive, masculine and feminine, heterosexual and homosexual, are suspended. But how exactly is this done? What is the psychic mechanism at work here?

Ernst focused his first memory of the primal scene on an active, even sadistic object: the father-painter (the child often interprets parental sex as the aggression of the father). In the second scene, however, there is a "turning round" from the object to the subject and a "reversal" from active to passive: a move from an active seeing almost to a passive being-seen (as occurs in de Chirico). For Freud sexuality and fantasy first emerge precisely in this turn to the autoerotic, and it is this original turn that Ernst wants to recapitulate, even to recover, in his art. It is a moment

that, recovered, suspends all the oppositions noted above that constrain subsequent identity. In Instincts and Their Vicissitudes (1917) Freud defines this in-between state in this way: "The active voice is changed, not into the passive, but into the reflexive middle voice."⁴³ Although it is understood here as a linguistic position, this stage is eminently visual and tactile, and it is in these terms that Ernst suggests it as the basis of his art: in the reflexive moment of looking (of scopophilic fantasy), in the autoerotic sense of touching. If de Chirico swings between seeing and being-seen, Ernst privileges the stage in-between--when one is indeed caught up in the sequence of fantasmatic images, "surprised and enamored of what I saw," as he writes, "wishing to identify with it all" (BP 9). For Ernst this is the ideal condition of art--to be "engrossed in this activity (passivity)" (BP 8), to be suspended in a sentience disruptive of identity. It is a condition that the Surrealists intuitively prized above all others: in its benign form they called it disponibilité, in its anxious form "critical paranoia" (BP 8).⁴⁴

In this way the first section of "Beyond Painting" is both case history and art treatise; so is the second section

⁴³ Freud, Instincts and Their Vicissitudes, in A General Selection, p. 78.

⁴⁴ To call it paranoia (as Ernst and Breton, after Dalí, did) is not mistaken: the projections of paranoid fantasy also involve "turning round" and "reversal".

in relation to collage (its title, "The Placing Under Whiskey-Marine," was that of his 1920 show of Dadaist collages). "One rainy day in 1919...I was struck by the obsession which held under my gaze...an illusive succession of contradictory images...peculiar to love memories and vision of half-sleep" (BP 14). Obsession, gaze, contradictory images, visions of half-sleep: once again Ernst frames an aesthetic discovery in terms of an infantile one, the visual fascinations and (pre)sexual confusions of the primal scene. This association determines not only his definition of collage ("the coupling of two realities, irreconcilable in appearance, upon a plane which apparently does not suit them" ([BP 13; italics added]), but also his understanding of its purpose: like the primal scene collage disturbs "the principle of identity" (BP 19), even "abolishes" the concept of "author" (BP 20).⁴⁵ Not just another rehearsal of Lautréamont, this definition is absolutely fundamental to Surrealism, for it implicitly characterizes the Surrealist image as a transvaluation of Dadaist collage. In Surrealism collage is less a transgressive montage of heterodox social materials (i.e., of high art and mass cultural forms) located in the world as it is in Dada, and more a disruptive montage of heterodox psychic signifiers (i.e., of fantasmatic scenarios and enigmatic events) referred to the unconscious.

⁴⁵ Technically these couplings need not be collages; they are often in fact overpaintings on found illustrations. As Ernst liked to say, "Ce n'est pas la colle qui fait le collage."

To the social reference of Dadaist collage the Surrealist image adds the unconscious dimension: the image becomes a psychic montage that is temporal as well as spatial (in its deferred action), endogenous as well as exogenous (in its sources), subjective as well as collective (in its significations). In a profound sense the Surrealist image has the structure of the symptom: it is an enigmatic signifier of a psychosexual trauma.⁴⁴ As we saw with convulsive beauty, Surrealism again emerges here as an attempt to think symbolization as symptomatization.

Again for Ernst the primary trauma is the primal scene; it is this coupling which his collages recapitulate, this trauma which his art as a whole works over. As with de Chirico, this working over is not only thematic; it occurs primarily at the level of process and form--if only, finally, to disperse the first and to undo second. Most painting (modernist included) is pledged to "the principle of identity"; in order to transform identity Breton was compelled to move "beyond painting". It is in these other practices that his operation of psychic coupling and his notion of convulsive subjectivity are best traced. Here I offer just a few early examples to suggest how "primal" these concerns are. The Master's Bedroom (1919; fig. 31) alludes to

⁴⁴ I develop this formulation below, but it is important to stress here that this image is not limited to the psychic or the sexual; its field is social too. Nor is it limited to images; objects too may serve as such signifiers. "Collage has crept slyly into our common objects" (BP 17).

the primal scene thematically, but it is in the construction of the scene that the trauma is worked over and the subject decentered--in its contradictory scale, anxious perspective and mad juxtaposition (table, bed, panel, whale, sheep, bear). Together these procedural elements produce the de Chirican effect of a returned gaze that positions the spectator both in and out of the picture, that makes him (like the eponymous child) both master and victim of the scene.⁴⁷ Other early collages also allude to such trauma, sometimes to conflate it with military shock (Ernst was injured, not seriously, in the war). In one work (untitled, 1920; fig. 32) part of a female body is coupled with part of a biplane; in another (The Swan in Very Peaceful..., 1920; fig. 33) putti extracted from a Nativity scene gaze on a swan identified with a rape (i.e., with Jupiter and Leda). Here again it is in the juxtaposition of the elements, the temporal spacing, that the trauma is treated, the charge released from the subject, the punctum inscribed in the viewer: in the first collage, this occurs in the juxtaposition of sexual scene and wounded soldier; in the second, in the juxtaposition of angels, swan and plane.

Such couplings are repeated in collages, frottages, grattages and decalcomanias; in fact, no less than Beyond Painting are all these techniques, indeed the entire oeuvre,

⁴⁷ For a more extensive analysis of this work along the lines developed in this chapter, see Rosalind Krauss, "The Master's Bedroom," Representations 28 (Fall 1989), pp. 55-76.

driven by trauma and structured in repetition.⁴⁰ On the one hand, this is an unconscious compulsion; on the other hand, it has a conscious end: to transform the principle of identity. As suggested, these technical couplings are intended to deconstruct oppositions--to produce through fantasy a mobile subjectivity, a convulsive identity. In the last section of "Beyond Painting" called "Instantaneous Identity", Ernst speaks of this identity in the very language of the primal scene: "he displays"--note here as elsewhere the split in personal reference--"two attitudes (contradictory in appearance but in reality simply in a state of conflict) that...are convulsively fused into one" (BP 19). Here trauma is indeed recouped in the production of a convulsive identity. And it is precisely in the shock of the collage work, of the Surrealist image in general--in the "exchange of energy" (BP 19) between its psychic signifiers--that this is momentarily achieved, as is glimpsed in the two war collages noted above [Figs. 32, 33]. In each collage two primal scenes, two forms of trauma, are in effect coupled: "the occasion of [his] own conception" and his baptism by fire in the war. And in this coupling of two scenes, in this deferred action of fantasy, identity is both convulsed and transformed.

⁴⁰ Not only does Beyond Painting repeat certain traumas as the bases of formal procedures, but the procedures as such are also based in repetition; they involve a deforming of the object as well as a regressing of the subject.

Such a disruptive subjectivity, however, is difficult to sustain. And rather than a reflexive, middle voice Ernst often swings between active and passive modes, sadistic and masochistic scenes. Indeed, his work is governed by scenarios of domination and submission, delusions of grandeur and insignificance--all paranoid fantasies. Ernst refers these ambivalent visions to his life in "Some Data on the Youth of M.E. as told by himself," a 1942 text replete with sexual theories, screen memories and obsessive speculations about birth and death. Here Ernst writes that "he came out of the egg which his mother had laid in an eagle's nest" and that "he was sure he was little Jesus Christ."⁴⁹ Both fantasies are related family romances, i.e., stories that reconfigure the family in ideal terms. The first fantasy of the egg displaces the father, but the second fantasy suggests that this is less a denial than an apotheosis: little Max as Christ positions the father as God.⁷⁰ In his art Ernst figures this ambivalence in Loplop, the famous persona

⁴⁹ In Chapter Four I discuss another Ernst family romance, a fantasy of machinic self-creation.

⁷⁰ The Christ-God delusion is a classic paranoid construction of repressed homosexuality (Schreber thought he was God's bride, destined to renew mankind, and in fact in Une Semaine de bonté a figure appears called the "Celestial bridegroom"). As a male body in sacrifice, the Christ identification fits neatly with the other homosexual historical and mythological identifications of Ernst and his Loplop--Leonardo and his vulture and Prometheus and his eagle (see La Femme 100 têtes [Paris, 1929], translated by Dorothea Tanning as The Hundred Headless Woman [New York, 1981], p. 77).

represented as a man-bird and/or male-female hybrid. Resonant with the Leonardo figure of the vulture, Loplop appears as an object of both love and hate: in effect, he is the desired father projected as "menacing bird". However, this projection as persecutor is only the first step; the appellation "Bird Superior", the vocation "my private phantom" (BP 29), even the castrative onomatopoeia all suggest that Loplop is also the father introjected as the superego; in other words, he represents the "positive" Oedipal passage of Ernst.⁷¹ This is supported by his identification with another prominent Ernst figure, "Perturbation ma soeur, la femme 100 têtes," the protagonist of the 1929 collage novel La Femme 100 têtes: both the paternal Loplop and the soeur sans tête personify the threat of castration. In effect, Ernst passes from the situation of the homosexual paranoiac (i.e., in the Freudian literature, Judge Schreber) to the position of the neurotic heterosexual (i.e., the Wolfman). This allows Ernst to assume a more conventional position--i.e., to be "perturbed" about castration and to identify "voluntarily" with the father-role (BP 29). And yet this is to become fixed in a way that his own aesthetic theory and ethical principle implicitly argue against. Ernst is finally no more mobile in his subject positions than the usual Oedipus; and after the early collages his work illustrates more than enacts a convulsive

⁷¹ In Beyond Painting Ernst writes apropos of Loplop: "I felt a calm and ferocious joy....Enter, enter, have no fear of being blinded" (BP 11).

identity.⁷²

If de Chirico refers the origin of his painting to an enigmatic seduction and Ernst that of his art to a primal scene, then Giacometti refers the origin of his objects to a fantasy of castration. For Freud artistic invention stems from our sexual inquiries made as children, two of which he stresses: where do I come from? And what distinguishes the sexes, i.e., which one am I? If Ernst elaborates on the first question, Giacometti works over the second. Like Ernst, he poses this riddle in a way that troubles sexual difference, that places conventional subject positions in doubt. However, unlike Ernst, Giacometti appears truly troubled by this riddle. In Chapter Two we related his objects to the lost object and to the fetish, i.e., to an attempt to overcome separation from the mother and/or to disavow recognition of

⁷² This is hardly without interest. In his collage novels in particular, La Femme 100 têtes (1929), Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au carmel (1930), and Une Semaine de bonté (1934), Ernst constructs primal scenes [Fig. 34], castration fantasies [Fig. 35], paranoid projections [Fig. 36], and other such fantasmatic scenarios that inform our fragile identities. "These archaic moments of disturbed visual representation," Jacqueline Rose writes, "these troubled scenes, which expressed and unsettled our groping knowledge in the past, can now be used as theoretical prototypes to unsettle our certainties again" (Sexuality in the Field of Vision [London, 1987], p. 227). This is exactly what Ernst does, over 50 years avant la lettre, in the best of these collages. "They are reminiscences of my first books," Ernst told Siegfried Giedion, "a resurgence of childhood memories" (Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command [New York, 1948], p. 363). I consider the outmoded aspect of the collage novels in Chapter Five.

lack; here the fantasy of castration will be seen to structure his Surrealist work as such. Some of his objects attempt to suspend castration or at least to render sexual reference ambiguous; others disavow castration fetishistically, while still others punish its female representative sadistically. After Giacometti the Surrealist fetish quickly became a cruel cliché; however, for a time Giacometti was able to sustain his psychic ambivalence and to recoup it aesthetically as a symbolic ambiguity.⁷⁹

Three texts by Giacometti will guide us in our reading. The first is the last in date, the statement regarding The Palace at 4 A.M. published in Minotaure 3-4 (December 1933). Here Giacometti writes that his objects come to him "entirely completed" like so many psychic readymades that, if modified

⁷⁹ Although Freud discusses fetishism in Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905), he only develops it in terms of the castration and Oedipus complexes in texts of the 1920s such as "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (1925) and "Fetishism" (1927). For Michel Leiris the Giacometti objects suggest a more curative fetishism, one which treats "that affective ambivalence, that tender sphinx we nourish, more or less secretly, at our core," in a way that questions not only sexual identities but also cultural conventions, "our moral, logical and social imperatives." Leiris also describes these moments of ambivalence in traumatic terms as "moments when abruptly the outside seems to respond to a call we send it from within...." See "Alberto Giacometti", Documents 1, 4 (1929), pp. 209-10, translated by James Clifford in Sulphur 15 (1986), pp. 38-40. My psychoanalytical reading of Giacometti is specific to the Surrealist work; for a more general psychobiographical account see Reinhold Hohl, Alberto Giacometti (London, 1972).

at all, are totally lost.⁷⁴ Though automatist in bias, this remark also suggests the fantasmatic basis of his work, which Giacometti elsewhere describes in terms of "projection".⁷⁵ And in fact his favored formats of the cage, the gameboard and the fetish do project a fantasmatic space between the actual and the virtual. That the fantasies in question are traumatic is implied in the Minotaure text: "Once the object is constructed, I tend to find in it, transformed and displaced, images, impressions and facts that have moved me profoundly (often unknown to me), and forms that I feel to be very close to me, although I am often incapable of identifying them, which make them all the more disturbing to me."⁷⁶ The test case here is the The Palace at 4 A.M., which appears to be a reprise of a dream or screen memory concerning a traumatic scene [Fig. 37]. For Giacometti the work centers on three principal figures: a skeletal tower, a female figure which Giacometti associates with his mother, and a small round object with which he identifies (again the subject is in the fantasmatic scene). Within the Oedipal triangle these figures are indeed "displaced", for here the

⁷⁴ Alberto Giacometti, "Le Palais de quatre heures," Minotaure 3-4 (December 1933), p. 49.

⁷⁵ Here, too, there is the symptomatic confusion as to the source of these objects: from within or without? Giacometti had these objects produced by others "so I could see them all done, like a projection." See "Entretien avec Alberto Giacometti," in Charles Charbonnier, Le Monologue du peintre (Paris, 1959), p. 156.

⁷⁶ Giacometti, "Le Palais", p. 49.

paternal term, the tower, is phallicly impoverished, "unfinished" or "broken", and the mother produces "fear and disarray" with her long black dress.⁷⁷ Yet this displacement reveals more than conceals the castrative scenario of the piece; its fetishistic stake is even figured in the "dorsal fin" that hangs, like some phallus dentatus, at once cut and whole, from a string. That the fantasy is not simply scripted (the charge leveled by Breton against such objects as Dali's)⁷⁸ is clear from the fact that it is both generally unconscious and genuinely disarticulative--not only obscure in meaning but layered in time. In short, as in the primal fantasy, the scenario of Palace is constructed through the deferred action of traumatic fantasy.

Giacometti intuits this operation in an earlier text published in Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 3 (December 1931), the same issue in which Dali proposes his typology of the Surrealist object (that credits "the object of symbolic function" to Giacometti, specifically his Suspended Ball).⁷⁹ The text presents seven drawings, most of which were executed, under the title "Objets mobiles et muets" [Fig. 38]; included are several sketches of his most

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ See Breton, Les Vases communicants (Paris, 1955), pp. 69-70.

⁷⁹ Here Dali also suggests that these "objects of symbolic function ... correspond to clearly characterized erotic fantasies and desires." See "Objets surréalistes," Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 3 (December 1931).

important works: Cage (1931; fig. 39), Suspended Ball (1930-31; fig. 40), the two Disagreeable Objects (1931; figs. 41, 42) as well as Project for a Square (1931; fig. 43). The drawings carry an automatist caption that runs together different memories in a delirious cadence: "All things...near, far, all those that passed and the others, in front, moving; and my lady friends--they change (we pass, very near, they are far away); others approach, ascend, descend...."⁸⁰ In this verbal dislocation, which is clearly meant to disorient us, spatial juxtaposition comes to represent temporal spacing, and it is out of this layering of scenes in time that Giacometti constructs his objects. Here, however, there is no indication of what the ur-scene or primal fantasy might be; this comes only a year and a half later, after most of the relevant objects were in fact made.

In Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 6 (May 15, 1933) Giacometti published the text "Hier, sables mouvants" (Yesterday, Quicksand); it presents several memories dated, as was the case with Ernst, from latency to puberty. The first one begins:

As a child (between four and seven), I saw only the objects of the external world that I could use for my delight....[D]uring two summers at least I had eyes only for one big stone. It was a golden monolith, its base opening on a cave; the whole bottom was hollow as a result of the action of water....I considered this stone a friend at once...like someone whom we knew and loved a long time ago and whom we met again with infinite joy

⁸⁰ Giacometti, "Objets mobiles et muets," Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 3 (December 1931), pp. 18-9.

and surprise....I was overjoyed when I could crouch in the little cave at the bottom; it could hardly hold me; all my wishes were fulfilled....⁸¹

Clearly the story suggests a primal fantasy of intrauterine existence, the cave as maternal womb. The mother in Giacometti is as fully ambiguous as is the father in de Chirico or Ernst: in The Invisible Object, for example, she is the desired lost object, while in The Palace at 4 A.M. she is the feared agent of this loss, this castration.

Conventionally these Oedipal roles of desired object and feared castrator are divided between maternal and paternal terms. And indeed the fantasy of intrauterine existence, of reunion with the mother, must be seen as a response to a prior fantasy of castration, of interdiction by the father. For it is only upon this interdiction that the desire for the mother is repressed; and it is only this repression that renders any return of the maternal, such as the memory of the cave here, uncanny.⁸² The castration fantasy, in short, determines the intrauterine fantasy; however, in this screen memory it follows it:

⁸¹ Giacometti, "Hiers, sables mouvants," Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 5 (May 15, 1933), p. 44.

⁸² Here "The Uncanny" should be recalled: "'Love is a homesickness,' and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, still in the dream, 'this place is familiar to me, I have been here before,' we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body. In this case, too, the unheimlich is what was once heimisch, homelike, familiar; the prefix 'un' is the token of repression" (p. 51). In the memory it is in fact the father who shows Giacometti the cave.

One time, I don't remember by what chance, I walked further than usual and found myself on a hill. Just below in a bunch of bushes there rose a huge black rock in the shape of a sharp narrow pyramid. I can't express the bewilderment and resentment I felt at that moment. The rock struck me as a living thing, hostile, menacing. It threatened everything: us, our games, our cave. Its existence was intolerable and I knew right away that, unable to make it disappear, I would have to ignore it, forget it, tell no one about it. I approached it nonetheless, but with a feeling of surrendering myself to something secret, suspicious, reprehensible. With fear and revulsion I scarcely touched it. I walked around it, trembling to find an opening. No trace of a cave, which made the rock all the more intolerable. But then I felt a certain satisfaction: an opening in this rock would have complicated everything, and already I felt the loneliness of our cave....I fled this rock, I never spoke about it to the other kids, I ignored it and never returned to look at it.³³

Here the castration fantasy comes through the screen memory as transparently as did the intrauterine fantasy, but two things are not so clear: how do the two fantasies work together, and how does Giacometti deploy them? For Freud the paternal threat alone does not convince the little boy of castration; this requires the sighting of the maternal genitals as well.³⁴ In this light the cave may figure not

³³ Giacometti, "Hier, sables mouvants," p. 44. As experienced in this memory, the uncanny has an auratic aspect, one which figures the desire of the mother, as here with the cave, and a anxious aspect, one which signals the risk if this desire is acted upon, as here with the rock. I develop the relation between aura and anxiety in Surrealism further in Chapter Six.

³⁴ "A threat of castration by itself need not produce a great impression. The child will refuse to believe in it, for he cannot easily imagine the possibility of losing such a highly prized part of his body. A sight of the female genitals, on the other hand, might convince him of that possibility" ("Splitting of the Ego in the Defensive Process" [1938], in Sexuality and the Psychology of Love, ed. Philip Rieff [New York, 1963], p. 221).

only the intrauterine mother but also the castrated one. This is more in keeping not only with the split significance of the feminine in the Giacometti oeuvre (e.g., the regenerative spoon woman versus the castrative praying mantis) but also with its extraordinary ambivalence regarding sexual difference. According to Freud, the threat of castration typically dissolves the Oedipus complex for the little boy: he surrenders the mother as love object, introjects the father as superego, and accepts a conventional heterosexual identification and desire. Giacometti, however, retains a certain ambivalence, which he recoups symbolically in his art. Like Ernst he refers his work to a fantasmatic memory, to the critical moment when the child foregoes infantile sexuality and responds to cultural renunciation. He returns to this critical moment to disturb the subject positions that are first fragilely posed there--to render them ambivalent again. This ambivalence is as difficult to sustain as is the reflexivity prized by Ernst; and just as that reflexivity is often simply the point between active and passive modes, so is this ambivalence often merely the movement between sadistic and masochistic impulses. Nevertheless, when it is sustained, such ambivalence produces an extraordinary "oscillation of meaning."²²

²² I borrow this term from Rosalind Krauss, who addresses a similar question through the Bataillean concept of alteration: for her Giacometti is involved in an indeterminacy of formal difference, whereas I stress an ambivalence of sexual difference, an ambiguity of sexual

In order to grasp this oscillation of meaning, this ambivalence regarding difference, we must come to terms with fetishism. For Freud the fetish is a substitute for the apparently absent (maternal) penis, a substitute which carries the threat of castration that such absence signifies for the little boy (the case of the little girl is more ambiguous). The fetish is thus precisely an ambivalent structure in which the subject simultaneously recognizes and disavows castration: "Yes...but...." This structure tends to a certain splitting of the ego, which, if disavowal becomes total, leads to psychosis. It also effects a certain splitting of the object, which may also become ambivalent.²⁴ After all, the fetish is as much a "memorial" to castration as a "protection" against it. That is, both recognition and disavowal are often evident in the object (Freud gives the example of the fig leaf that might be taken either to reveal or to conceal an absence underneath it), and both contempt and reverence are often apparent in its treatment (here he offers the example of the bound feet of Chinese noblewomen). This ambivalence is fundamental to the Giacometti objects; as it ultimately invokes the conflict between erotic and

reference. See her "Giacometti", in William Rubin, ed., "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art, vol. 2 (New York, 1984), pp. 503-33.

²⁴ This phrase is actually more Kleinian than Freudian. For Melanie Klein the object may be ambivalent to the extent that it is introjected by the subject as split, e.g., the "good" breast versus the "bad" breast.

destructive drives, it is also important to our reading of Surrealism in general.

Giacometti designates seven objects "mobile and mute"; at least five were executed, while the other two suggest scenarios of sex and/or sacrifice similar to that of Man and Woman (1928-29; fig. 44) or Cage [Fig. 39], that is, scenarios in which desire and death are bound up with one another in a conundrum now clearly crucial to Surrealism. Cage images the praying mantis, a familiar favorite of the Surrealists for the way in which the female devours the male (represented again by a ball) during or after copulation: here sex is in extremis. As discussed by Roger Caillois and developed by Rosalind Krauss, this figure dedefines the order both of life and death and of reality and representation, for among other things it is able, when dead, to imitate death (this alone renders it an avatar of the uncanny).²⁷ More importantly here, the praying mantis also reverses the usual opposition of passive female and active male in a way that deconstructs any strict binarism of erotic and destructive, or sadistic and masochistic, drives.

Suspended Ball [Fig. 40] figures a related ambivalence, here regarding sexual object rather than drive. If the mantises in Cage represent desire consumed, the sphere in Suspended Ball that scarcely touches its wedge counterpart

²⁷ See Caillois, "Le mante religieuse," Minotaure 5 (February 1934), and Krauss, "Giacometti," p. 517-8.

represents desire frustrated.²⁶ Yet, as Krauss has argued, the piece has as much to do with an indeterminacy of sexual reference: neither object is simply active or passive, masculine or feminine; such terms become unfixed.²⁷ It is thus in sexual evocation that both objects are "mobile and mute." The same holds true here for the subject who, as in fantasy, can identify with either term or both. (In fact, paradoxically, his or her identification may come to rest, if at all, only with the motion of the piece.) Now for Krauss the objects not only cross each other in sexual reference but also suggest two series of signifiers (e.g., for the ball: testicles, buttocks, eye...) in a way that she likens to the series of ocular forms in the Bataille novel Histoire de l'oeil (1928).²⁸ These series of signifiers have no fixed beginning or end; they are opened to the play of difference in language. Yet the "round phallicism" of Suspended Ball is equally pledged to the Bataille project of a collapse of difference in form. It is in this paradox--in difference both opened in language and blurred in form--that the symbolic ambiguity of the piece lies. As for its psychic ambivalence,

²⁶ This was recognized immediately by Dalí and recounted later by Maurice Nadeau (Histoire du surréalisme [Paris, 1945], p. 176, translated by Richard Howard as The History of Surrealism (New York, 1965). Both objects are hellish in an almost Dantean way, as if the medieval image of damnation and the psychoanalytical figure of desire were somehow combined.

²⁷ Krauss, "Giacometti," pp. 512-14.

²⁸ Or rather to the Roland Barthes reading of this story; see his "La Métaphore de l'oeil," Critique 196 (1963).

this affect stems as well from its continual oscillation between the erotic and the autoerotic, the sadistic and the masochistic--an oscillation which, if posed in language, is as conundral as this question: who or what strokes or strikes whom or what? Here the paradox concerns not only a "round phallicism" but also a suspended motion or a mobile suspension--a "convulsive beauty" that in Chapter Two we referred to the sadomasochistic sexuality posed by the death drive theory.

Again this ambivalence is difficult to sustain. In the two Disagreeable Objects, also of 1931 [Figs. 41, 42], Giacometti considers ambivalence in its fetishistic form; indeed, both objects are structural simulacra of the sexual fetish. Here the two elements that signify the two genders are not disconnected but rather combined, and the effect is less an indeterminacy of sexual reference and an oscillation of subject position than an immobile contradiction of both terms. If Suspended Ball represents "normal" desire frustrated, suspended in motion, then the Disagreeable Objects represent "perverse" desire displaced, fixed in fetishistic substitutes. They are labeled "disagreeable" not out of any ethical (much less feminist) scruple, but because each object evokes castration even as it defends against it. In the first Disagreeable Object [Fig. 41] the wedge from Suspended Ball is now clearly phallic, but in its penetration

of the convex board it is also cut.⁷¹ The second Disagreeable Object [Fig. 42] is more complicated in its castrative allusion: here the phallic wedge has become an embryonic body replete with eyes, a body which, like the suspended ball, suggests its own chain of signifiers (penis, feces, baby...); a chain in fact analyzed by Freud in terms of both separation or loss and its fetishistic defense (appropriate here to the female subject as well). Recognition of castration is here literally inscribed on the phallic substitute in the form of several spikes: in this way "hostility" for the fetish is indeed mixed with "affection", the narcissistically disagreeable (the castrative) with the perversely desirable (the fetishistic).⁷²

It is a mistake to celebrate psychic disturbance in art, just as it is to condemn it (the first position on the left

⁷¹ A 1935 version of this piece is called Object without Base. For Krauss the Surrealist objects of Giacometti perform a rotation to the horizontal that becomes crucial to postwar sculpture. Could it be that this turn to the ground, to the baseless, was partly permitted by a turn to the materiality, to the structure, of the tribal fetish?

⁷² These little spikes also allude to a tribal fetish, and in fact both Disagreeable Objects are associated with Oceanic objects (see Krauss, "Giacometti", p. 522): the first with a Marquesan ear ornament, another sort of fetish; the second with an Easter Island club in the shape of a fish, which, though utilitarian, might also be totemic. Moreover, the subtitle of the first "to be disposed of" suggests not only the ambivalence but also the transience of the tribal ritual object. And the drawing of the second [Fig. 38] includes a hand that barely touches it--as in the prohibition against touching that Freud regarded as essential to the totem, a taboo that belies a desire to touch...the penis. See Totem and Taboo (1913; translated into French 1924), trans. James Strachey (New York, 1950).

regarding "transgression" often mirrors the second on the right concerning "regression"). The fantasies which drive the work of many Surrealists are frequently sadistic, and in this regard Giacometti is prototypical. In the "objets mobiles et muets" he is able to recoup fetishistic ambivalence as symbolic ambiguity, but again this is difficult to sustain. Already in Project for a Square [Fig. 42] the ambivalence is pulled apart, as it were, and the ambiguous signifiers of sexual difference are disarticulated. Indeed, in this gameboard piece the genders are opposed in more conventional, even iconographic ways--negative, hollowed volumes versus positive, phallic forms. And in the work that immediately follows the "objets mobiles et muets" it is as if the fetishistic structure had divided into its constituent parts, the sexual drive into destructive impulses--sadistic and masochistic. Some works such as Hand Caught (1932; fig. 45) and Point to the Eye (1932; fig. 46) figure castration threat alone; others such as Woman with Her Throat Cut (1932; fig. 47) appear as symbolic acts of sadistic vengeance exacted on the figure of woman as representative of castration. Indeed, this splayed scorpion woman is the psychic complement of the devouring mantis of Cage: here the threat of castration is returned as a "horror of the mutilated creature or triumphant contempt for her."⁷³

⁷³ Freud, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (1925), in Sexuality and the Psychology of Love, p. 187.

It is in fact with such a fantasy that "Hier, Sables mouvants" (1933), the text that places fetishistic ambivalence at the center of the work, ends:

I remember that for months, while a schoolboy, I could not go to sleep at night unless I imagined first that I had gone through a thick forest, at nightfall, and that I had reached a great castle rising in a most secluded and unknown place. Then I killed two defenseless men...[and] raped two women, first the one who was thirty-two...and then her daughter. I killed them too, but very slowly.... Then I burned the castle, and satisfied, I went to sleep.

Clearly this contempt for the feminine knows no bounds (mother, daughter...), but, as the fantasy suggests, it is a contempt that begins at home. That is, it is a contempt for a lack in the masculine subject that the feminine subject only represents (it is Giacometti who was thirty-two in 1933). In short, the sadism here is largely a turning round of a primary masochism. This is how the ambivalence in Giacometti ultimately breaks down: with the difficulty of desire (as seen in Chapter Two) compounded by the volatility of sexuality, he finally rejects the psychic as the source of his art; from the fantasmatic he turns back to the mimetic--obsessively. "I worked with the model all day from 1935 to 1940."⁷⁴ A masochist like de Chirico, he too is overcome by petrification.

⁷⁴ Giacometti, "Letter to Pierre Matisse" (1947), Alberto Giacometti (New York, 1948), n.p. Ironically, Giacometti is said to have repudiated his Surrealist work as "masturbation". See Marcel Jean, Histoire de la peinture surréaliste (Paris, 1959), p. 227.

In sum, fantasy is not simply a descriptive term for Surrealist art; it is its structural principle. It informs the "symptomatic" depth of de Chirico paintings, the psychic "coupling" of Ernst images, the affective ambivalence of Giacometti objects, and it is by no means limited to these oeuvres (Dali, for example, wrote explicitly of the "traumatic nature of images").⁷³ In Chapter Two we offered a definition of the Surrealist object in terms of the metonymic structure of desire; here we arrive at a complementary definition of the Surrealist image in terms of the metaphoric structure of the symptom: the Surrealist image is an enigmatic signifier of a psychosexual trauma.⁷⁴ Of course, the Surrealist image is not simply a direct trace of trauma or fantasy, any more than the Surrealist object is simply a direct representation of the lost object. Unconscious as they are, these terms cannot be intentional referents or origins of this art; rather, they help us to think its structure. In this light we can now understand the contradictory nature of the Surrealist image: it is an effect of a repetitive working over of fantasmatic scenes by a mobile subject, a working

⁷³ Dali, "L'Ane pourri", Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution, July 1930; translated as "Stinking Ass" in This Quarter 5, 1 (September 1932), p. 52, and reprinted in Lucy R. Lippard, ed., Surrealists on Art (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), p. 99; also quoted by Ernst in Beyond Painting, p. 13.

⁷⁴ For the Lacanian discussion of metaphor and symptom see "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason since Freud," écrits, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1977), p. 166. For its revisionary relation to the Surrealist definition of the image as juxtaposition, see pp. 156-7.

over which is never purely involuntary and symptomatic or controlled and therapeutic.

However, we have not yet fully accounted for the other essential aspect of the Surrealist image: its simulacral quality, its paradoxical status as a representation without a referent in the real. To refer this hallucinatory effect to any restaging of fantasy or psychic reality is not adequate, for it is simply not present when this restaging is scripted (again, the charge levelled against Dalí and others), i.e.; when subjectivity is precisely not mobile or, as Ernst says, when "identity" is not "convulsive."⁷⁷ Rather, the difference has to do with the very nature of Surrealist representation. Conventionally Surrealism is associated with the general return to representation in modern art of the 1920s, and for all its call to disorder, much work that goes under the name of Surrealism is implicated in this generally regressive restoration of mimesis.⁷⁸ However, in Surrealist work worthy of the name representation becomes other, fantasmatic: it is as if, once repressed in modernism, it returns in Surrealism in an uncanny way, profoundly changed. Michel Foucault points

⁷⁷ For in this case certain devices of representation, weighted by the ego, are then called back into play.

⁷⁸ See, for example, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression," October 16 (Spring 1981), pp. 39-68.

to this transformation in his 1963 essay on Magritte."⁷⁷ For Foucault the privileged terms of traditional representation are affirmation and resemblance (or similitude): in such art an affirmation of the reality of the referent is made through the iconic resemblance of the image to it. In modernism this paradigm is eroded in two fundamental ways, which Foucault associates respectively with Kandinsky and Magritte.¹⁰⁰ In his abstractions Kandinsky frees the affirmation of the real from any necessary resemblance to it: resemblance or similitude is abandoned, but reality, now located beyond resemblance (as spiritual or Platonic), is still affirmed; and this fact renders such abstraction far less subversive to transcendental aesthetics than is conventionally thought. In his simulations Magritte does the more radical converse: he frees resemblance from affirmation. Resemblance or similitude is here maintained, but no reality is affirmed: the referent, its reality, evaporates--significantly, for us, through devices of calligrammatic doubling and rhetorical repetition. As Foucault writes, "Magritte allows the old space of representation to prevail, but only on the surface...;

⁷⁷ Michel Foucault, Ce n'est pas une pipe (Paris, 1963), translated as This Is Not a Pipe (Berkeley, 1984). For Foucault Roussel (whom the Surrealists of course embraced) performs a complementary transformation in writing; see Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel (1963), trans. Charles Ruas (New York, 1986).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. Foucault tends to credit Kandinsky with a similar goal to that of Magritte. I disagree: the referent may be eclipsed but reality is affirmed.

underneath, there is nothing."¹⁰¹ In such Surrealist art, then, representation only seems to reappear; in fact, it returns uncannily as simulation. And it is this simulation which fully subverts the representational paradigm: in its cancelation of representation abstraction simply preserves it, whereas simulation unfounds it, pulls out the referent from underneath it. Indeed, simulation confounds the entire dialectic of representation and abstraction conventionally considered to control modern art.¹⁰²

But what does Surrealist simulation have to do with Surrealist fantasy? Both confound origins, and both are repressed within modernism (so concerned as it is with origins) for doing so. In fact, it is precisely in the despised realm of fantasy that our Platonic tradition has long imprisoned simulation--that is, until its modern release in Surrealism. For Plato images were divided between proper claimants and false claimants to the idea, between good iconic copies that resemble the idea and bad fantasmatic simulacra that insinuate it. As Gilles Deleuze has argued,

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 16. Significantly in his 1962 seminar Lacan uses the "window paintings" of Magritte to illustrate the structure of fantasy. See David Macey, Lacan in Contexts. (London, 1988), p. 45.

¹⁰² See my "The Crux of Minimalism," in Howard Singerman, ed., Individuals (Los Angeles, 1986). "For between the destruction which conserves and perpetuates the established order of representations, models, and copies, and the destruction of models and copies which sets up a creative chaos, there is a great difference..." (Gilles Deleuze, "Plato and the Simulacrum," trans. Rosalind Krauss, October 27 [Winter 1983], p. 56).

the Platonic tradition repressed the simulacrum not simply as a false claimant, a bad copy without an original, but because it challenged the very order of original and copy, the very notions of idea and representation--the very principle of identity, we might say after Ernst.¹⁰³ In repression the fantasmatic simulacrum assumed a daemonic quality as well. Indeed, Deleuze describes it in terms similar to our "uncanny" definition of Surrealist fantasy, especially in de Chirico and Ernst:

The simulacrum implies great dimensions, depths, and distances which the observer cannot dominate. It is because he cannot master them that he has an impression of resemblance. The simulacrum includes within itself the differential point of view, and the spectator is made part of the simulacrum, which is transformed and deformed according to his point of view. In short, folded within the simulacrum there is a process of going mad, a process of limitlessness....¹⁰⁴

The subject is in the simulacrum, as it were, just as he is in the fantasy; but the similarity does not end there. Like the fantasy, the simulacrum is comprised of at least two different terms or series or events (as Deleuze writes, "it interiorizes a dissimilitude"),¹⁰⁵ neither of which can be fixed as original or copy, first or second. In a sense, the simulacrum is also produced out of a deferred action, and it is precisely this instability that contests the Platonic order of representation. More importantly for us, it is

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

precisely this instability that renders the fantasmatic art of Surrealism simulacral.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Surrealist photography is also involved in this advent of simulation, for it less affirms than derealizes the real. It does so, as Foucault suggested in relation to Magritte, through processes of doubling and repetition, the processes stressed by Krauss in her discussions of Surrealist photography.

Chapter Four
EXQUISITE CORPSES

In the last two chapters we saw that crucial Surrealist definitions and practices revolve around the uncanny as so many signs of a confusion between life and death, a compulsion to repeat, a return of repressed desires or fantasmatic scenes. In the next two chapters we will consider this Surrealist uncanny in terms of specific social images and historical processes--to suggest, among other things, that it concerns the shocks of industrial capitalism as well as the traumas of individual experience.¹ In Chapter Two I discussed the Surrealist interest in the uncanny confusion between the animate and the inanimate in psychic terms; in this chapter I want to think this Surrealist interest in social terms.

In the "Manifesto", we noted in Chapter Two, Breton presents two cryptic examples of this marvelous confusion: the modern mannequin and the romantic ruin. In part such emblems interested the Surrealists because they figured two uncanny changes wrought upon bodies and objects during this time. On the one hand, the mannequin evokes the remaking of the body as machine and commodity, the two representative

¹ This will involve a partial shift in theoretical sources, too, essentially from Freud and Lacan to Marx and Benjamin, who (as suggested in Chapter One) saw in history a certain uncanny compulsion to repeat.

forms of industrial capitalism--specifically of a mass production that was first dominant, and a mass consumption that was first extensive, in French urban life only in the 1920s.² On the other hand, the ruin evokes the displacing of old cultural forms by this general regime of machine-production and commodity-consumption--in a word, the outmoded. (I borrow the term from Walter Benjamin, for whom 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..."--objects which Benjamin elsewhere describes as "the wish-symbols of the previous century," "the ruins of the bourgeoisie.")³

Two points should be stressed here. First, as the Breton pairing of mannequin and ruin suggests, the mechanical-commodified and the outmoded are dialectically related; the

² In Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History (London, 1948), Siegfried Giedion dates "the time of full mechanization" to 1918-1939, a period which Surrealism all but spans; "around 1920, mechanization involves the 'domestic sphere' as well" (p. 42). For developments in consumption during this time see, for example, Stuart Ewen, Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture (New York, 1976).

³ Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" (1929), in Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York, 1978), p. 181; and "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (1935), in Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, trans. Harry Zohn and Quintin Hoare (London, 1973), p. 176.

first condition produces the second through displacement, and the second in turn defines the first as central--and, if deployed critically, contests it as such.⁴ Second, the mechanical-commodified and the outmoded, the mannequin and the ruin, are both uncanny but in different ways: the first in a demonic register, the second in an auratic register. The demonic reception of machine and commodity has a long history; disruptive of traditional social practices, they were often seen as infernal forces.⁵ But the very nature of these forms is also demonic, for both machine and commodity evoke an uncanny confusion between life and death. It is precisely this confusion that fascinated the Surrealists, obsessed as they were by the strange (non)human character of the mannequin, the automaton, the wax figure, the doll--all avatars of the uncanny and all players in the Surrealist

⁴ As for the first instance: "The impression of the old-fashioned can only come to be where, in a certain way, it is effected by the most contemporary" (Benjamin, Das Passagen-Werk, ed. Rolf Tiedemann [Frankfurt am Main, 1982], B 3, 6 [hereafter PW]). As for the second instance: "All these products [i.e., the outmoded] are on the point of entering the market as commodities. But they still linger on the threshold" (Benjamin, "Paris--Capital of the Nineteenth Century," p. 176). Also see Susan Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), pp. 67, 116.

⁵ An anthology of this reception was assembled by an English associate of the Surrealists, Humphrey Jennings, in Pandaemonium: The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers, 1640-1886, eds. Mary-Lou Jennings and Charles Madge (New York, 1985). This infernal reading is the dialectical other of the utopian reception, which the Surrealists, unlike other machine-age figures, mostly refused. For a demonic reception of the commodity see Michael T. Taussig, The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America (Chapel Hill, 1980).

repertoire. The outmoded is uncanny in another way: as once-familiar images and objects made strange by historical repression, as heimlich things of the 19th century returned as unheimlich in the 20th century.

Since they define each other, the mechanical-commodified and the outmoded cannot always be distinguished (e.g., the old automatons cherished by the Surrealists may belong to both categories). Nevertheless, bound to different productive modes and social formations, the figures which evoke them do produce different affects. Provisionally we might see this difference as that between the aura of the crafted object in which human labor and desire are still inscribed, and the fascination of the fetishistic machine or commodity in which such production is either incorporated or effaced.⁶ Clearly this dialectical relation between the outmoded and the mechanical-commodified in Surrealism echoes that between aura and shock in Baudelaire as read by Benjamin. In fact, just as Baudelaire according to Benjamin reflects on "the disintegration of aura [i.e., ritual elements in art] in the experience of shock [i.e., perceptual modes in industrial-capitalist society],"⁷ so the Surrealists, involved as they

⁶ Marleen Stoessel writes of "the forgotten human dimension" of labor and desire effaced in commodity fetishism in Aura, das vergessene Menschliche: Zu Sprache und Erfahrung bei Walter Benjamin (Munich, 1983).

⁷ Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939), in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1969), p. 194.

are in this Baudelairean tradition, attempt to redeem the outmoded and to contest the mechanical-commodified.

Like other Surrealist activities not often regarded as political (e.g., collections of tribal artifacts), the deployment of such images and figures serves as a rhetorical détournement of the high-capitalist order of things-- specifically of the projected totality of industrial production and consumption, of the becoming machine and/or commodity of the human body and the object world.⁹ Often in Surrealism mechanical-commodified figures parody the capitalist object with its own ambitions, as when the body is rearticulated as a machine or a commodity [Fig. 48]. So, too, outmoded images implicitly challenge the capitalist object with images either outside its purview or repressed in its past, as when an exotic or old object, redolent of a different productive mode, social formation and structure of feeling, is recalled, as it were, in protest. This double contestation of the high-capitalist order is intimated in Breton texts on the Surrealist object from the 1924 "Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality" to the 1936 "Crisis of the Object." In "The Paucity of Reality"

⁹ The most famous example of such détournement was the 1936 exhibition of Surrealist objects at the Charles Ratton Gallery. These instances of the marvelous, whether assemblages or exhibitions taken as a whole, not only contest rational causality (as suggested in Chapter Two) but also challenge capitalist reason. In this regard see the Breton preface to the Ratton show "Exposition surréaliste d'objets" (Paris, 1936).

the Surrealist object (only emergent in 1924) is conceived precisely along the lines of the mechanical-commodified and the outmoded: on the one hand Breton calls for "idle machines of a very specific construction," "absurd automaton perfected to the last degree,"⁷ and on the other hand for such objects as a fantastically crafted book found in a dream. "I would like to put into circulation certain objects of this kind...", Breton writes, "to throw further discredit on those creatures and things of 'reason'."¹⁰ And in "Crisis of the Object" the useless, singular Surrealist object (pervasive by 1936) is posed specifically against the efficient, serial commodity.¹¹

In our discussion two apposite examples of the outmoded and the mechanical-commodified are already in circulation: the flea-market objects of L'Amour fou, the auratic slipper

⁷ André Breton, "Introduction sur le peu de la réalité" (1924), translated as "Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality," in What is Surrealism? Selected Writings, ed. Franklin Rosemont (New York, 1978), p. 26.

¹⁰ Ibid. Breton sees such objects as "gifts"--which suggests a whole other form of exchange than that of commodities. The great Marcel Mauss essay on the gift, Essai sur le don, forme archaïque de l'échange, which was so important to Bataillean Surrealists, was published in 1925.

¹¹ Breton, "Crise de l'objet," Cahiers d'Art (Paris, 1936), translated as "Crisis of the Object" in Lucy R. Lippard, ed., Surrealists on Art (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), p. 53. This challenge to utility is crucial to Surrealist collections of objects as well. For Benjamin to collect was to liberate the object from the merely useful; so too for the Surrealists.

spoon "of peasant fabrication"¹² and the demonic military mask of industrialized war [Figs. 11, 12]. In the next chapter I will attend to the auratic outmoded set of figures and affects; here I will focus on the demonic mechanical-commodified set. One final prefatory remark needs to be made. Surrealism hardly engages mechanization and commodification as directly as does Constructivism or Dada. Yet whereas the first often celebrates more than challenges this process, the second does not fully address its psychic effects. Surrealism, on the other hand, captures these effects of the mechanical-commodified, and it does so in the critical register of the uncanny--which significantly here assumes a social guise. However, this guise remains mostly obscure, even to the Surrealists. Thus we will have to search for it in places rather marginal to the familiar terrain of Surrealist art: in the use of machinic figures in the proto-Surrealist work of Picabia, Ernst and others, in the deployment of automatons and mannequins in several Surrealist photo-essays, and finally in the development of the Poupées of Hans Bellmer.

Freud specifies as particularly uncanny only certain objects: "wax-work figures, artificial dolls and automatons."¹³ This

¹² Breton, L'Amour fou (Paris, 1937), translated by Mary Ann Caws as Mad Love (Lincoln, 1987), p. 30.

¹³ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919) in Studies in Parapsychology, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), p. 31.

affect is attributed to a primordial confusion about the (in)animate and the (non)human produced by such figures as well as to an infantile fear of blindness, castration and death that they somehow recall.¹⁴ In Chapter Three I touched on the connection made in Surrealism between blindness and castration; here it is the status of these forms as deathly doubles that interests me. In the phylogenetic thought of Freud (who, again, follows Otto Rank here), the double or Doppelgänger is a primordial protector of the ego which, repressed, returns as a present harbinger of death. Such an uncanny doubleness is possessed by both the machine and the commodity--or so the Surrealist fascination with the automaton and the mannequin suggests.¹⁵ In his definition of commodity fetishism Marx argues that people and products trade semblances: social relations take on "the phantasmagoric form of a relation between things," and

¹⁴ Freud is somewhat critical of the first notion advanced by E. Jentsch in a paper titled "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen," but this critique mostly serves to clear space for his own conceptions, in which the indistinction between the animate and the inanimate remains important precisely as an uncanny reminder of compulsion and death.

¹⁵ As will become clear, I use these two figures as types to represent the different reflections on the mechanical and the commodified in Surrealism. The Surrealists were fascinated by automatons and mannequins as such, but they also adapted these figures in different ways. The many Surrealists that developed the mannequin form alone include Bellmer, Dalí, Dominguez, Ernst, Jean, Masson, Miro and Man Ray. The 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris included an entire row of such figures.

commodities assume the active agency of people.¹⁶ In effect, the commodity becomes our uncanny double, evermore vital as we are evermore inert. As for the machine, I noted its reception as demonic or infernal; also pertinent here is the ironic inversion that occurs in its technical history. In the premodern instance the machine mimics the organic movements of the human (or animal) body that is its model (e.g., the early train as "the iron horse"); in the modern instance, however, the machine becomes the model, and the body is disciplined to its mechanistic specifications. The machine thus becomes not only an uncanny double but a demonic master. Like the commodity, it is uncanny both because it assumes our human vitality and because we take on its deathly facticity.¹⁷ Insistent on the disruptions of the unconscious and the body alike, the Surrealists resist this double reification even as they explore its psychic effects--hence the Surrealist interest in the mechanical-commodified, especially in automaton and mannequin figures.

This interest, these figures, are not without

¹⁶ Karl Marx, Capital, vol. 1 (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 165.

¹⁷ This machinic discipline of the body is fully realized in theory in the late 19th century in Taylorism, i.e., "scientific management" or time-motion studies of the body in its labors, and in practice in the early 20th century in Fordism, i.e., assembly-line production. As is well known, this instrumental reconfiguration of the body was abetted in certain practices, especially Muybridge and Marey, that influenced art greatly at the end of the century. For this connection see Giedion (who, however, draws it too directly), pp. 18-30.

typological precedents and artistic sources. Two prior ciphers of the mechanical-commodified in modern art are the prostitute and the ragpicker, ciphers which, central to Baudelaire, Manet and others, are still active in the Surrealist imaginary, especially in writing and photography that narrates urban dérives and describes derelict spaces. (For example, of the four Atget photos selected by the Surrealists for La Révolution surréaliste in 1926-27, one is of a prostitute in a Versailles street [Fig. 49], and another is of a Paris shopwindow filled with corseted mannequins [Fig. 50]--scenes that proliferate in the work of Brassai and others.¹⁶ And in a photo-essay concerning mechanization published in the surrealist Belgian journal Variétés in 1929, the final two images are of refuse collection [Fig. 51].) "The ragpicker fascinated his epoch,"¹⁷ Benjamin writes in his 1938 study of Baudelaire, and so did the prostitute. Whereas the first marked "where the limit of human misery lay,"¹⁸ the second posed provocative questions concerning sexuality and class, objectification and exploitation. Sphinxes of the social, ciphers of property and propriety,

¹⁶ The Atget photographs were selected by Man Ray. For Brassai see Paris de nuit (Paris, 1933) and The Secret Paris of the 30's, trans. Richard Miller (New York, 1976).

¹⁷ Benjamin, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," in Charles Baudelaire, p. 19.

¹⁸ Ibid.

they were threats, enticements, doubles to the modern artist.²¹ This problematic association went beyond social marginality. On the one hand, like the ragpicker, the artist was often concerned with "refuse", with the culturally despised.²² On the other hand, like the prostitute, the artist had fully come onto the marketplace, "as [he] thought, to observe it--but in reality it was already to find a buyer"; thus his ambivalent identification with the whore as "seller and commodity in one."²³

In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936) Benjamin poses this new regime of "artistic function" and "exhibition value" against the old

²¹ "Everyone who belonged to the bohème could recognize a bit of himself in the ragpicker" (Ibid., p. 20). Just as Freud on the uncanny presupposes a masculinist subject, so does Benjamin in his remarks on the ambivalent identification of the artist with the prostitute.

²² "The refuse concerns both," Benjamin writes, and both emerge at a time "when the new industrial processes had given refuse a certain value" (Ibid., pp. 80, 19). In a sense, the artist reclaims structures of feeling cast aside by industrial bourgeois society--reclaims them for this society.

²³ Benjamin, "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," pp. 170-71. In "Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" Benjamin quotes an early poem addressed to a prostitute: "Pour avoir des souliers, elle a vendu son âme;/ Mais le bon Dieu rirait si, près de cette infâme,/ Je trenchais du tartufe et singeais la hauteur,/ Moi qui vends ma pensée et qui veux être auteur" (p. 34). For an important discussion of the sexual as well as social implications of these identifications, see Susan Buck-Morss, "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering," New German Critique 39 (Fall 1986), pp. 99-140.

order of ritual function and cult value.²⁴ Under capitalism everything is potentially a commodity: in order to be exchanged images, objects, even people come to be perceived as indifferent. This indifference penetrates art with Baudelaire and Manet at least; at that time artist began to recoup the disruptions of the marketplace in new rhetorical forms and procedural practices. By the moment of Surrealism the (ir)rationality of commodity exchange can no longer be mediated solely within traditional forms of art, and the (ir)rational juxtapositions of Surrealist images and objects can be seen as partial attempts to come to terms with this new capitalist (sur)reality.²⁵ In the process the position of the artist is no longer simply one of ambivalent empathy with the commodity as figured in the prostitute, or of ambiguous identification with industrial ruins as figured in the ragpicker. It also concerns an actual reification and fragmentation of the body--a condition addressed by the Surrealists not only in their political rejection of mass

²⁴ Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), in Illuminations, p. 225.

²⁵ Of course, the modern subversion of subject matter cannot be reduced to this economic process, but neither should it be seen entirely apart from it, as the Surrealists knew. For example, in La Révolution surréaliste 12 (December 12, 1929) André Thirion published a short text "Note sur l'Argent" which argued the abstractive power of money as "instrument de bouleversements inouïs des conditions d'existence de l'homme" (p. 24).

production and consumption (e.g., their refusal of work,²⁶ their embrace of the outmoded) but also in their critical deployment of such uncanny doubles as the automaton and the mannequin.

This becoming machine and/or commodity of the body is not often represented in Surrealism simply or as such; in fact, a becoming animal is much more common in its image-repertoire (e.g., the praying mantis or the minotaur).²⁷ This becoming animal means different things to different Surrealists: for the Bataille contingent such hybrids concern a redefining of the human in terms of the base, the material, the heterological--a materialism with its own anti-idealist, anti-Bretonian agenda. However, for others these grotesques also bespeak the mechanizing and/or commodifying of the body. This is one reason why so many Surrealists see Grandville (1803-47) as a precursor, the great illustrator who used animal-human combinations and inversions to reflect on the incipient commodification of social life 100 years before Surrealism [Fig. 52].²⁸ But the Surrealists also deploy such

²⁶ Indeed, its refusal of any institution of bodily discipline. For one example see the declaration "Ouvrez les prisons, licenciez l'armée" in La Révolution surréaliste 2 (January 15, 1925).

²⁷ This is especially true of Ernst, who dwells on a becoming machine in his Dadaist work but a becoming animal in his Surrealist work. Yet even in his Surrealist work there is, at the level of technique, an automatist mechanicity.

²⁸ "Grandville's fantasies transmitted commodity-character onto the universe," Benjamin writes in "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (p. 166); in this regard

hybrids directly to reflect on the modern mechanization of the body, as in certain insectoid images of gas-masked men [Fig. 53].²⁷ Indeed, the soldier-subject of World War I is the epitome of this traumatic becoming machine and/or commodity of the body. As such this subject is the prototype of the mechanistic grotesques that Surrealism develops, after Dada, partly to contest the modernist cult of the machine--a cult promulgated not only in technophilic Constructivism, Purism and the middle Bauhaus but also in the everyday ideologies of the industrial state. For the Surrealists, in short, the modern order of the mechanical-commodified does not produce a new rational man; it creates an uncanny hybrid beast.²⁸

also see Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing, pp. 154-5. Grandville illustrations were frequently published in Surrealist journals; see Dawn Ades, Dada and Surrealism Reviewed (London, 1978), p. 246.

²⁷ In a Documents article on masks Geroges Limbour privileged the gas mask as specifically modern: "...the general standardization of our age requires that we all wear the same one" ("Eschyle, le carnaval et les civilisés," Documents 2, 2nd year [1930], pp. 97-102). Rosalind Krauss discusses these images in terms of Bataille's basseesse in "Giacometti," in William Rubin, ed., "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art (New York, 1984), vol. 2, pp. 515-6.

Outside the Surrealist milieu this becoming machine was often celebrated--sometimes in primitivist terms as a becoming black, as in the figures designed by Léger for the Milhaud ballet La Création du monde. Then as now the two most ideological figures of this mechanical-commodified body are the professional athlete and the movie star; in this regard see John Willett, Art & Politics in the Weimar Republic: The New Sobriety 1917-1933 (New York, 1978), pp. 91, 102-3, 147.

²⁸ Berlin Dada, partly influenced by Constructivism, was more conflicted than Surrealism about this cult. For example, within one year Hausmann could do work that both ridicules

Of course, such grotesques in Surrealism--mechanical, commodified or animalistic--also address a redefining of the human in terms of sexual drives and unconscious conflicts. Yet this psychological redefining cannot be separated from these social transformations. Indeed, in Surrealism the two are often expressed in terms of each other: the unconscious as an autonomous machine, the sexual as a mechanistic act, the commodification of sexuality figured as the sexualization of the commodity, the difference between male and female projected as the difference between the human and the machinic, an ambivalence concerning women (as castrated/castrative) as an ambivalence regarding machines and commodities, and so forth.²¹ In this regard as in many others, the high Dadaist works of Duchamp and Picabia are clearly the crucial precedents. Breton, for example, celebrates "the mechanistic, cynical interpretation of the

the machine age (The Spirit of Our Time, 1919) and celebrates it (Tatlin at Home, 1920). The same is true of Grosz. When ambivalence was not the response, regression often was. For example, Benjamin Buchloh reads the appearance of such figures as the clown and the puppet in the art of the 1920s in these allegorical terms: "If the first icon appears in the context of the carnival and the circus as the masquerades of alienation from present history, the second appears on the stage set of reification" ("Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression," October 16 [Spring 1981], p. 53).

²¹ In Chapter One I noted the use of the automaton as a figure of the automatist unconscious. In Surrealism there is always an ambiguity in the term, for the automatic suggests both spontaneity and mechanicity--a mechanicity in the spontaneity. My argument here is not only that mechanization reconfigures the body as a machine but also that it prepares the reading of the unconscious and the sexual as machinic--as repetitive, inorganic, etc.

phenomenon of love" of the first,³² while Ernst literalizes the machinist devices of the second. Indeed, in both Duchamp and Picabia sexuality is cast in terms of machinic conjunctions, separations and repetitions, in terms of machines célibataires. As traced by Michel Carrouges, the entire genealogy of "the bachelor machine" is important to Surrealism: the dysfunctional devices of Roussel, Jarry, Lautréamont, Verne, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, Poe as well as the Dadaists.³³ However, it is only in its Surrealist manifestation that the bachelor machine achieves its ultimate form, for it is only there, as an unholy coupling of deathly machine and commodity, uncanny automaton and mannequin, that its essential function becomes apparent: "to transform life into a mechanism of death."³⁴

In any case, the art-historical lineage of the Surrealist figures of the mechanical-commodified is not at

³² Breton, "Phare de la mariée," Minotaure 6, 2nd year (Winter 1934-35). Breton refers here to The Large Glass, of which his was the first significant study.

³³ See Michel Carrouges, Les machines célibataires (Paris, 1954); also Junggesellenmaschinen/Les machines célibataires (Venice, 1975). (Carrouges also lists the machines in Kafka, but he was probably not known to the Surrealists at this time.) A crucial question must be posed if not answered here: what does it mean for the Surrealists (after Duchamp and Picabia) to see the unconscious and the sexual as a bachelor machine?

³⁴ Carrouges, Junggesellenmaschinen/Les machines célibataires, p. 21. This unholy coupling repositions the paradigm of the Surrealist image, the Lautréamont juxtaposition of sewing machine and umbrella. I return to the Surrealist bachelor machine below in relation to Bellmer.

issue here. As is well known, Ernst develops the mannequin type from de Chirico in such series as Fiat Modes, Pereat Ars (1919; fig. 54), just as he develops the mechanomorphic conceit from Picabia in such works as Self-Constructed Small Machine (1919; fig. 55). What is at issue is the psycho-social logic of such figures, the transformation of the body which they work through--and here again our model of Surrealist art as a repetition of trauma holds true. In its very title Fiat Modes, Pereat Ars announces that bodily repetition and fragmentation in fashion is now more culturally determinant of the human form than any fiction of a transcendental or total art--a becoming commodity that several subsequent works by Ernst recapitulate in expressly fetishistic terms [Fig. 48]. So, too, Self-Constructed Small Machine, which is thematically related to the Picabia Girl Born without a Mother [Fig. 56], reflects on a becoming machine of the body at its very threshold--at birth. Both these images are perverse family romances in which a machine dream substitutes for a biological origin, in which a patriarchal fantasy of technological creation outside the mother is ambivalently expressed.²⁵ Long before Warhol, Ernst takes the machine as a persona ("Dadamax", the self-

²⁵ Paul Haviland describes the machine as a "daughter born without a mother" in a text published in 291 7/8 (September-October 1915). On this fantasy in general see Andreas Huyssen, "The Vamp and the Machine: Fritz Lang's Metropolis," in After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism (Bloomington, 1986), pp. 70-72.

constructed small machine), just as his fellow Cologne Dadaist Alfred Gruenwald identifies with the commodity ("Baargeld", ready money).³⁶ In such personas and pictures these artists assume a general reification in order to delineate its psycho-physical effects--in order, moreover, to deploy these effects against the very order which produced them.

Other examples of the mechanical-commodified can be extracted from Surrealist art proper, but the most important Surrealist meditation on this uncanny process is eccentric to the canon: several series of essayistic photographs that feature automatons and mannequins published in Variétés in 1929-30. The photographs, most of which are anonymous, are by artists and nonartists alike; not every image is pertinent, but the editorial complexes (which are never credited) certainly are.³⁷ In the early 1929 spreads a proposition about

³⁶ Again, Ernst received a head wound in the war, for which he also received the nickname "the man with the iron head." See John Russell, Max Ernst: Life and Work (London, 1970), p. 38.

³⁷ Some of the artists were Surrealists or Surrealist associates (e.g., the Belgian E.L.T. Mesens, Kertesz); others were not (e.g., Germaine Krull, Herbert Bayer). Described as an "illustrated monthly review of the contemporary spirit," Variétés was edited in Brussels by P.-G. van Hecke from May 1928 to April 1930. A vanguard-chic journal as interested in fashion as in art, it published poetry and prose as well as paintings, portraits and film stills. However, its signal feature was its bizarre photo-complexes. At about the same time Documents also delighted in perverse juxtapositions of diverse images; the Variétés complexes fall somewhere between them and the pedagogical arrangements of, say, Le Corbusier

fetishism emerges, one implicit in both Marxian and Freudian accounts: that we moderns are also fetishists; more, that our machine and commodity fetishes irrationalize us, even reritualize us.³⁶ For example, in "Le Surréalisme en 1929," a special issue of Variétés edited by Breton and Aragon, one finds under the rubric "Fétiches" a female automaton juxtaposed with a Pacific Northwest totem figure [Fig. 57].³⁷ In another 1929 series (March 15) this fetishism of the body as machine is developed in terms of the body as commodity. Here two photographs, one of "a mannequin-man of fashion in the Paris streets," another of two "sandwichmen at the Leipzig fair," are juxtaposed with two photographs of masks, one from the Belgian Congo (used by priests who perform circumcisions), another apparently from a Greek tragedy [Fig. 58]. The primary initiations in high-capitalist society, the spread suggests, involve the sacrificial rites of the

in Vers une architecture (1923).

³⁶ Like Marx and Freud the Surrealists qualified the evolutionist-imperialist implications of "fetishism" somewhat. Thus, for example, in Variétés (October 15, 1929) a photo-complex of jewelry is captioned "Fétichisme Aujourd'hui". A more significant instance is the little exhibition, organized by Aragon, Eluard and Tanguy, to counter the infamous Colonial Exhibition of 1931; here too a display of modern ritual objects was labeled "Fétiches européens". The reritualization of modern society was often discussed in Bataille circles, especially in the face of fascism; see The College of Sociology 1937-39, ed. Denis Hollier (Minneapolis, 1988).

³⁷ Here the two forms are identified; elsewhere in Surrealism (e.g., in collections of Oceanic and Northwest Coast art) they are implicitly opposed--as commodity to gift or ritual object.

commodity: to become a social being is to accede to its condition, literally to assume its character.⁴⁰ A later 1929 photo-essay (October 15) makes a similar point in relation to the machine, specifically medical apparatuses and technological prostheses. In one spread a modern woman behind an optometrical device is paired with a Tibetan dancer in a horrific mask [Fig. 60]; in another spread a deep-sea diver in a dry-suit is placed beside an Expressionist ghoul in a metallic stove-pipe hat [Fig. 61].

The captions of these photographs frequently stress the term "masquerade", which suggests that such identities are performed--not naturally given but socially constructed. However, that the disciplines of commodity and machine are not simply voluntary is underscored by several images. In one set of photographs the face of a modern woman is usurped by a collaged advertisement and paired with a prettified doll (October 15; fig. 62); in another image the heads of two people have become photographic apparatuses (December 15; fig. 63). In the first image the commodity is no longer simply supported or announced by the female body; it is inscribed on her very face, once the sign of individual

⁴⁰ For Benjamin the sandwichman is "the last incarnation" of the flâneur--a human become commodity who, like the prostitute, "takes the concept of being-for-sale itself for a walk" (PW, V, 562; also see Buck-Morss, "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore," p. 107). This may also be the condition of the artist even when he resists its regime. In the 1920 Dada Festival in Paris Breton assumed this status to advertise a Picabia statement: the avant-gardist as sandwichman [Fig. 59].

subjectivity. In the second image the machine is no longer only a technical prosthesis; it becomes an organ substitute--modern vision as photographic gun. Just as the first image is hardly a proto-Pop embrace of the modern commodity world, so the second is scarcely a Bauhausian celebration of a technological New Vision. Once again in these images the uncanny underside of the commodity and the machine is exposed, and the world-views that might celebrate them are ridiculed.⁴¹

Only in two Variétés photo-essays (January 15, 1930) is modernist art specifically related to machine and commodity forms. (Surrealism is not represented here; its place is in the juxtaposition of all the other images.) In both essays the determinant form is explicitly the mechanical-commodified body. The principal complex of the first essay includes three modernist figures: an abstracted puppet by Man Ray (a recurrent figure in his work), the primitivist Child (or First Step) by Brancusi, and the toylike Soldiers by Sophie Taeuber-Arp. All three images are referred to a fourth: an industrial robot, "a steel automaton who performs

⁴¹ The first image by Mesens does, like Pop, associate the commodity with the woman. Its caption "Masque servant à injurier les esthètes" suggests the parodic impulse behind many of these spreads. Though often brutal, this parody must be distinguished from the sadism of (proto)fascist vision. In this regard see Ernst Jünger, "Photography and the 'Second Consciousness'" (1934), in Christopher Phillips, ed., Photography and the Modern Era: European Documents and Critical Writings, 1913-1940 (New York, 1989), pp. 207-10.

human movements on command" [Fig. 64].⁴² Here the paradigm of the modernist object is the worker-become-machine; the more customary reference to tribal, folk or childhood objects elsewhere in Variétés only underscores the uncanniness of this new type.⁴³

The second photo-essay not only addresses this ur-form of modernist figures but also evokes the very relationship of different modernisms to the machine. Titled "Aboutissements de la mécanique," it begins with three photographs of human-machinic hybrids (noted above): two figures in gas masks, a third masked by an optometrical device [Fig. 53]. Mordantly captioned "the protection of men," these images suggest that technology, often defined as an extension of bodily limbs and senses, also constricts these very properties. This aboutissement nuances the constellation of four images that follow: a photograph of Léger on the laboratory set of the L'Herbier film L'Inhumain (1923), the stage apparatus designed by Lyubov' Popova for the Meierkhol'd production of The Magnanimous Cuckold (1922), and the painting Usine de mes

⁴² On the chestplate of this figure are emblazoned the letters R.U.R., an allusion to the 1921 play by the Czech Karel Capek, R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots), concerning the extinction of the human race at the hands of an artificial one. The play popularized the term "robot" in the 1920s.

⁴³ The first spread of this essay juxtaposes the Man Ray puppet with a monumental Buddha under the caption "L'Académie des fétiches"--as if to suggest that the referencing of modernist forms to exotic or primitive figures was precisely academic by 1929.

pensées (1920) by Suzanne Duchamp, all of which are referred to a photograph of several military dirigibles captioned "Trafic" [Fig. 65]. The three modernist images triangulate the machinic aspect of modernism; that is, they suggest a partial map of cultural responses to technological modernity. This modernity is represented by the dirigibles, a modernist symbol of new forms of mobility, of visuality and spatiality, of an apparent freedom of the body that is actually grounded to a militaristic, capitalist base--the trafic of weapons, products, people.

But what sort of map of machinic modernism is this?⁴⁴ The position of Suzanne Duchamp, close to that of Picabia, might be termed aristocratic-parodic. The image deploys a machinist idiom; indeed, its title, Usine de mes pensées, declares a mechanization of artistic craft as well as of (un)conscious thought. But this is done to mock traditional representation and modernist expressivity rather than to embrace industrial production as such. However paradigmatic in Dadaist writing, the machine is parodic in Dadaist work, and the parody remains within the given code of its object, here painting, and so affirms the social order whose cultural

⁴⁴ That is, apart from the fact that these images represent three different versions of the becoming industrial of the arts: mechanical drawing in painting, Constructivist design in theater, avant-garde film.

manifestations it otherwise derides."⁴⁵ In this regard the Duchamp painting is opposed to the Popova construction, a position which might be called proletarian-materialist. The opposite of a parody, this Constructivist stage set is an affirmative sketch of the socialist habitat to come, a partial model of a different industrial order, which the actor according to the Meierkhol'd method evokes with biomechanical gestures. Here the artist works not to subsume industry thematically into art but to do the reverse--"to translate the task from the aesthetic plane to the Productivist plane."⁴⁶ The Léger position, which might be termed critical-spectacular, differs from both the Duchamp and the Popova: rather than a subsumption of the aesthetic into a communist industrial order, Léger proposes a popular aesthetic derived from the beauty of the capitalist machine and "manufactured object."⁴⁷ Early on at least, Léger assumed capitalist processes as the motive force of modernism: art became properly abstract under the demands of

⁴⁵ On parody in Paris Dada see Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Parody and Pastiche in Picabia, Pop and Polke," Artforum (March 1982), pp. 28-34.

⁴⁶ Popova quoted in Christina Lodder, Russian Constructivism (New Haven, 1983), p. 173.

⁴⁷ See Léger, "The Machine Aesthetic: The Manufactured Object, the Artist and the Artisan" (1924), in Functions of Painting, ed. Edward F. Fry, trans. Alexandra Anderson (New York, 1973), p. 52-61.

"specialization".⁴⁶ And his own film Ballet mécanique (1924), a celebration of machine-vision, montages the fragmented female body directly with machine parts.⁴⁷ Léger celebrates modern "spectacle" and industrial "shock"; or, more precisely, he argues the need to recoup these forms and affects, to "renew the man-spectacle mechanically."⁴⁸

This is where his position differs most clearly from the Surrealist one, the implied fourth term in this grouping of dialectical pairs. And indeed if Dada and Constructivism form one such pair, so too do the dysfunctional devices of Surrealism and the machinic models of Léger, Le Corbusier and the middle Bauhaus. Whereas Dada parodies the institution of autonomous art only to affirm its individualist practices, Constructivism seeks to transcend this institution in the collective production of cultural life. And whereas Léger and company insist on the rational beauty of the capitalist object, Surrealism stresses the uncanny repressed of this

⁴⁶ Léger, "The Origins of Painting" (1913), in Functions of Painting, p. 10.

⁴⁷ Here the association of female and mechanical is most extreme: "The thighs of fifty girls, rotating in disciplined formation, shown as a close-up--that is beautiful and that is objectivity" (Léger, "Ballet mécanique" [c. 1924], in Functions of Painting, p. 51). For Léger the body was simply another object, one which interested him mostly as a fragment. His interest in the mechanical-commodified extended to its psychic-perceptual effects.

⁴⁸ Léger, "The Spectacle: Light, Color, Moving Image, Object-Spectacle," in Functions of Painting, pp. 37, 35, 36.

modern rationality: desire and fantasy.²¹ "The utilitarian object," Caillois writes in a 1933 Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution, "always overflows the instrument...in every object [there is] an irrational residue...."²² It is this uncanny residue that the Surrealist gaze seizes upon, as it does here with the dirigibles. Far from a technophilic object of a Constructivist camera-eye, the dirigibles are to the Surrealist gaze so many fantastic fish, harmless bombs, inflatable penises, impossible breasts--part-objects of desire rather than mass-produced paradigms of objectivity. The Surrealist gaze saves the modern object before it becomes purely functional, i.e., before the body and its traces are totally incorporated or effaced; and it does so in order to free the object from its function--to find in the irrational

²¹ "To encompass Breton and Le Corbusier," Benjamin writes in the Passagen-Werk, "that would mean drawing the spirit of present-day France like a bow and shooting knowledge to the heart of the moment" (Konvolut N 1a, 5; translated by Leigh Hafrey and Richard Sieburth as "N [Theoretics of Knowledge; Theory of Progress]," The Philosophical Forum XV, 1-2 [Fall/Winter 1983-84], p. 4). Other dialectical figures might be substituted (e.g., the divergent positions on spectacle of Léger and Naville, both articulated in 1924) or, for that matter, other movements (e.g., Surrealism and the middle Bauhaus).

²² Caillois, "Spécification de la poésie," Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 5 (May 15, 1933). The Surrealists detected this modern dialectic of reason and unreason in the everyday object, "the irrational knowledge" of which they examined collectively in inquiries, texts and exhibitions; see, for example, "Recherches expérimentales," Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 6 (May 15, 1933). In the 1930s almost every Surrealist group show implicitly involved such an inquiry into the (ir)rationality of the object.

residue of the object "subjectivity itself, 'liberated' in the phantasm."³³ It is this uncanniness that the Surrealist gaze also finds in the emblematic figures of the mechanical-commodified, the automaton and the mannequin.

The final images of both these photo-essays appear incongruous, to say the least: the robot spread concludes with two images of "underwater life", a sea anemone and an octopus [Fig. 66]; the dirigibles suite ends with two photographs of "refuse" [Fig. 51]. Yet both conclusions possess an uncanny logic. Just as in the first photographs of "Aboutissements de la mécanique" the technological menaces more than protects the body, so in these final photographs of refuse the underside of modernist productionism is exposed to be simple waste, destruction, death: this condition is not the other of the mechanical-commodified but its outcome.³⁴ The same holds true for the images of underwater life. They

³³ Jean Baudrillard, "Design and Environment, or How Political Economy Escalates into Cyberblitz," in For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, ed. Charles Levin (St. Louis, 1981), p. 194. Conversely, if it takes up the modern object after it has become purely functional, it pushes this functionality to an irrational extreme--once again to release its "subjectivity". Also note this remark by Adorno: "Surrealism recaptures what functionalism denies to man; the distortions demonstrate what the taboo did to the desired" ("Looking Back on Surrealism," in Irving Howe, ed., The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts [New York, 1967], p. 224 [translation amended]).

³⁴ As Bataille argues, a culture is defined by how it expends. See "The Notion of Expenditure" (1933), in Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939, ed. and trans. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis, 1985), pp. 116-29. This is the first formulation of the "general economy" derived from Mauss that Bataille develops in La part maudite (1954).

are not simply opposed to the robotic images as the organic to the mechanistic; rather, their primordial uncanniness underscores the uncanny deathliness of such mechanical-commodified forms. In the two essays, then, the "drive" of technological modernity is referred, on the one hand, to a present waste and, on the other, to a primordial state--to a modern destructiveness that belies any machine-age utopia and to an instinctual regression that conduces to an ever-given death. In short, in these Surrealist photo-essays modernism is implicitly associated not only with the dynamic of (capitalist) industry, but also through this dynamic with the death drive.

Obviously more is at issue in these Surrealist image-complexes than an uncanny theme or motif. A satirical reading is intimated not only of the different relationships within machinic modernism, but also of the dialectical connection of the avant-garde to technological modernity, a dialectic which the image-complexes critique through exposés of its repressed--the becoming machine and/or commodity of the body.²² That the Surrealists understand this process historically is suggested by a 1933 Minotaure photo-essay on

²² On this dialectic see Manfredo Tafuri, Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development, trans. Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), pp. 50-103; Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca, 1981), pp. 95-98; and my Recordings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics (Seattle, 1985), pp. 144-49.

automaton and the mannequin by Benjamin Péret. This text, "Au paradis des fantômes," is essentially a satire of the human in terms of the mechanical (as is fairly typical of the genre) with a cast that includes automaton-makers from Alexandria through the Enlightenment.²⁶ Péret sees automatons as fantômes, more marvelous and irrational than mechanistic and rational: "These mobile sphinxes," he concludes, "have not yet ceased to propose enigmas to men, the solution of which in turn calls up a new enigma."²⁷ However, the image sequence of his text relates these irrational phantoms to modern rationalization--which implies that they are enigmatic, indeed uncanny, precisely because they resemble men and women under industrial capitalism.

Most of the images are drawn from the 1928 book Le Monde des automates by Eduoard Gelis and Alfred Chapuis, an extraordinary compilation that attests to a general interest in this subject at the time.²⁸ As the Péret juxtaposition of old and modern automatons suggests, these figures attract the Surrealists for two opposite reasons: on the one hand they are outmoded curiosities, on the other they are the very ur-

²⁶ See Hugh Kenner, The Counterfeiters (Garden City, N.Y., 1973), pp. 1-29.

²⁷ Péret, "Au paradis des fantômes," Minotaure 3-4 (December 14, 1933), p. 35.

²⁸ A. Chapuis and E. Gelis, Le Monde des automates: étude historique et technique (Paris, 1928). Also see A. Chapuis and E. Droz, Les Automates: Figures artificielles de l'homme et d'animaux (Neuchâtel, 1949).

forms of the machine age. The first page presents four examples of the automaton from its greatest era, the late 18th century [Fig. 67]. Three of the four satirize class positions and gender relations in this revolutionary period: a monkey dressed as a marquis playing "La Marseillaise"; a submissive women wheeling a pompous man in a barrow; and a tableau of different professional types (cobbler, shepherd, physicist) and sexual positions (a male-female automaton, a coital couple). The primary figure, however, is the famous Young Writer (ca. 1770) constructed by the Swiss Pierre Jacquet-Droz, the most prominent automaton-maker after the French Jacques Vaucanson [Fig. 1]. This uncanny figure so cherished by the Surrealists could actually write the word merveilleux--as if to confirm the primary definition of the marvelous as that which escapes manifest causality.⁵⁷ Yet in his presentation Peret foregrounds the mechanism of the Young Writer: with eye and arm devices exposed, the automaton is a patently mechanical figure, a figure of mechanistic man. This is also suggested by the image sequence on the second page: two more courtly automatons (a smoker and a trumpet-player) juxtaposed with three modern automaton-mannequins (a man in evening clothes, another in safari uniform, a woman smoking) and, most importantly, a robot [Fig. 68]. Here, it is implied, the automaton is the historical prototype of modern men and women.

⁵⁷ See Chapter Two.

This historical relation, elliptically posed here, requires a digression. During the Enlightenment, with inventors like Vaucanson (1709-82) and Jacquet-Droz (1721-90), the automaton was in fact used to represent the new mechanistic model of man, and the connections between this 18th-century philosophic conception and its 19th-century industrial embodiment are in turn quite close.⁴⁰ In 1748 Julien Offray de la Mettrie, a French doctor, published L'Homme Machine, an early systematic treatise of man as a machine governed by mechanical laws like any other.⁴¹ This materialist account was developed by Encyclopaedists like Diderot and d'Alembert from Descartes, who wrote that "the human body may be considered as a machine."⁴² This materialist rationalism was not only a riposte to metaphysics; it was a challenge to the metaphysical claims on which feudal and clerical institutions of the ancien régime

⁴⁰ Heretofore automatons were indeed "marvelous", other to man, demonic (according to the Church, which nonetheless deployed them), or they were curiosity pieces, useful toys at best. For this premodern history see Michael Camille, The Gothic Idol (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 244-58.

⁴¹ La Mettrie is included in one Surrealist list of favorite authors, the 1931 "Lisez/Ne Lisez Pas". I discuss these lists in Chapter Five.

⁴² Descartes, The Meditations Concerning First Philosophy, VI, in Descartes: Philosophical Essays, trans. Laurence J. Lafleur (Indianapolis, 1964), p. 138. For Diderot and D'Alembert see Select Essays from the Encyclopedy (London, 1772), pp. 148-69. In Treatise of Sensations (1754) Condillac also deploys a "statue" to exemplify the development of senses from sensations. In this brief historical summary I am indebted to the aforementioned texts of Giedion, Kenner and Huyssen.

were based. Eventually, however, this mechanistic model simply legitimated the substitution of new, more rational and reticulated disciplines of the body from the old, more arbitrary and immediate subjections of absolutist power: "La Mettrie's L'Homme-machine is both a materialist reduction of the soul and a general theory of dressage, at the centre of which reigns the notion of 'docility', which joins the analysable body to the manipulable body."⁴³ This docile body, broken down to be reconstructed for different functions, was formed in many institutions--in armies, hospitals, schools and prisons--but its behavior was most generally learned in industries and most ideally represented in automatons.

In Vaucanson the two terms, automaton and industry, are directly related. The young Vaucanson aspired to construct actual simulacra of human bodies (to be used, for example, to explain surgical operations) but decided upon arrival in Paris to produce "some machines that could excite public curiosity."⁴⁴ In 1738 he presented three automatons to the Académie Royale des Sciences: a flutist, a drummer and, most

⁴³ Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1977), p. 136. "Not the automaton, but the concept of counterfeitable man, was the age's characterizing achievement," Kenner argues. "On such a man--man only empirically known--rationality is impressed from all directions, from his language, from his work, from his machines. He is installed not amidst a Creation but in a system: in many systems, simultaneous systems" (The Counterfeiters, p. 27).

⁴⁴ Vaucanson as quoted in K.G. Pontus Hulten, The Machine as seen at the end of the mechanical age (New York, 1968), p. 21.

famous of all, a duck, all of which were soon taken up to support the new materialist theories (la Mettrie and Voltaire as well as Diderot and d'Alembert cited and celebrated Vaucanson). His story, however, does not end there. In 1741 Vaucanson was named Inspector of the Silk Manufactures, in which capacity he worked to mechanize the production of fabrics (his mechanical loom was the basis of the famous Jacquard loom). In 1756 he designed a silk factory near Lyons; wholly rationalized in plan and power (all the machines were driven by a single overshot waterwheel), this was the first modern industrial plant. Even in the single figure of Vaucanson, then, the relation between the automaton and the mechanized worker is not simply symbolic or accidental: the automaton or machine-as-man is the historical figure that announces the modern factory, the central site where man-as-machine, worker-as-automaton, is in turn produced. This relation was not lost on 19th-century commentators, both reactionary and radical. For Andrew Ure in The Philosophy of Manufactures (1835) the ideal factory was "a vast automaton composed of various mechanical and intellectual organs."⁴⁵ Conversely, for Marx in Capital (1867) the automaton was the very image of the capitalist subjection of the worker to the machine whereby, in an

⁴⁵ Andrew Ure, The Philosophy of Manufactures (London, 1835), p. 13. In Capital Marx calls Ure "the Pindar of the automatic factory" (Capital, vol. 1 [New York, 1977], p. 544).

uncanny reversal, the worker had to assume "the uniformly constant movements of an automaton."⁴⁶

However, it is only in the period of Surrealism--when automatons were outmoded but automation had become structural to production and even emergent in consumption--that the full effects of the industrial process were thought. In 1922, at the very moment of the rise of Surrealism, Georg Lukács wrote that "the 'natural laws' of capitalist production [i.e., fragmentation of both subject and object] have been extended to cover every manifestation of life in society."⁴⁷ And in 1939, at the effective end of Surrealism, Benjamin argued that the fragmented rhythm of such production, of repetitive shock and reaction to shock, had become the perceptual norm in the capitalist city, that even the simplest acts (lighting a match, making a telephone call, taking a photograph) were mechanically automatic.⁴⁸ This holds for psychic mechanisms

⁴⁶ Marx as quoted in Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," p. 175. See Capital, vol. 1, pp. 544-53.

⁴⁷ Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," History and Class Consciousness, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 91-2. "[I]n the first place, the mathematical analysis of work-processes denotes a break with the organic, irrational and qualitatively determined unity of the product....This destroys the organic process with which interrelated special operations are unified in the end-product....In the second place, this fragmentation of the object of production necessarily entails the fragmentation of its subject...the human qualities and idiosyncracies of the worker appear increasingly as mere sources of error...." (pp. 88-90).

⁴⁸ Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," p. 175. Though hardly pervasive, such reflections were not absent from Surrealist journals (see note 23). For a provocative account of

as well as physical routines, for at this time, Giedion wrote, mechanization "impinged upon the very center of the human psyche, through all the senses."⁶⁷ It is precisely this process whereby modern rationality produces the irrational, indeed the uncanny, that Surrealism limns, especially with its automatons and mannequins. As Giedion argued, Surrealism alone "has given us keys to the psychic unrest" produced by modernization.⁷⁰

There are social as well as ideological reasons why Surrealism was positioned to do this. Surrealism was coeval with the socioeconomic crises of the 1920s--at least two cycles of booms and busts--after a war which cost France 1.7 million lives and consumed 30 percent of its national wealth.⁷¹ In this era French capital was split not only by the different demands of city, province and empire (which began to fall apart at this time)⁷² but also between industrial production and craft manufacture--a contradiction

the ways in which modernism is not a passive reflection but a compensatory critique of these processes of abstraction, see Jameson, The Political Unconscious, pp. 62-3.

⁶⁷ Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command, p. 42.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

⁷¹ Michel Beaud, A History of Capitalism, trans. Tom Dickman and Anny Lefebvre (New York, 1983), p. 148. I draw most of the information in this paragraph from this text.

⁷² E.g., revolts in Tunisia in 1920-21, in Morocco in 1925-26 which the Surrealists openly supported (see "La Révolution d'abord et toujours," La Révolution surréaliste 5 [October 15, 1925]), at Yen Bay and in Indochina in 1930-31.

which the Surrealist interest in the mechanical-commodified and the outmoded addresses. Nevertheless, the rate of growth of production was high throughout the decade (5.8 percent per year), a growth based on labor productivity (which doubled between 1920 and 1938). This productivity in turn depended on new techniques of rationalization: mechanization of labor, standardization of products, work planning, assembly-line manufacturing, organization of offices, etc. Despite some compensations, French labor saw even before the war that such Taylorist and Fordist practices represented the reduction of the laborer to "a machine without a soul," a "front-line soldier" in the economic war; or as one labor activist wrote in a 1913 Vie Ouvrière: "Intelligence is chased away from the workshops and factories. What remains are only arms without brains and robots of flesh adapted to the robots of iron and steel."⁷³ It is this robotizing of the producing body that Lukács details in his 1922 essay "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat."⁷⁴ The same process governs

⁷³ Merrheim and other French labor activists as quoted by Beaud, p. 147. Of course, the capitalist position was that only through such technologization could the conflict between labor and capital be resolved.

⁷⁴ "Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man appear as the authentic master of the process; on the contrary, he is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system..." (Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," pp. 88-89). Modernist art history has still not developed the insights of this significant, problematic text--especially its remarks on "the contemplative stance" produced in the industrial process, which, according to Lukács, "reduces space and time to a common denominator and degrades time to the dimension of space."

consumption (after all, the *raison d'être* of Fordism is to produce automatic consumers as well as productive automatons), and it is in turn this robotizing of the consuming body that Benjamin describes--how rituals of consumption come to assume much the same mechanicity as routines of production.⁷⁰

From these Marxian accounts the uncanniness of the machine is clear. The machine is the body objectified as an autonomous thing with its own force; in it the body returns as uncanny. This uncanniness complements that of the commodity, for the commodity also effaces the body in such a way that it too appears as an independent being with its own power. Both machine and commodity thus draw out human labor and will, animation and autonomy, and return them in alien forms; both are thus other yet not-other, strange yet familiar. This uncanniness is perfected in automatons and mannequins, for there the machine and the commodity actually assume bodily form, and they do so most fetishistically (i.e., the mechanisms of the body are concealed or excised). Under Surrealism, however, this fetishization is made excessive and reflexive: in its automatons and mannequins bodily reification and fragmentation are underscored as uncanny, as perverse. Surrealism insists on these uncanny, perverse aspects of mechanization and commodification; more, it exploits them to critical ends. Indeed, this constitutes

⁷⁰ See Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," pp. 176-80.

its primary cultural politic (and its neglected lesson for cultural Marxism): to oppose to the rationalization of the objective world its other face, the irrationalization of the subjective world.

Thus suspicious of the modernist celebration of the mechanical-commodified, the Surrealists tap the old ambivalence about the machine and the commodity that we inherit from our capitalist ancestors.⁷⁴ Again, this ambivalence is inscribed in the very reception of these forms. For example, only in its Enlightenment instance does the automaton represent rational, mechanistic man. As soon as this ideal becomes actual in industry, the automaton is seen in a very different light--not as a rational paragon of enlightened society but as an uncanny "threat to human life."⁷⁷ In romantic literature at the turn of the 19th century, these mechanical figures become demonic doubles of psychic danger and death (Hoffmann is only one of many

⁷⁴ In a 1924 text, for example, Aragon describes his "feeling of panic" before the annual displays of technical inventions at the Concours Lepine (to which he nonetheless compulsively returns). Aragon, "L'Ombre de l'inventeur," La Révolution surréaliste 1 (December 1, 1924), pp. 23-4. Aragon urges that this uncanniness of the machine be exploited in objects that "escape all reasoning." For more on this particular anxiety see Wolfgang Schivelbusch, The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century (New York, 1977), p. 129-32. (Incidentally, the Concours Lepine is where Duchamp displayed his roto-reliefs.)

⁷⁷ Huyssen, "The Vamp and the Machine: Fritz Lang's Metropolis, p. 70. A Metropolis film still published in Variétés (October 15, 1929) is captioned "la femme mécanique."

examples). Moreover, as Andreas Huyssen argues, as soon as they are coded as demonic, they are also gendered as female. In this way a social ambivalence regarding machines--dream of mastery versus anxiety about loss of control--is expressed as a patriarchal ambivalence--desire and fear--regarding women.⁷⁰ The same holds true throughout the 19th century for the commodity, indeed for mass culture generally, both of which are often associated with women.⁷¹ This gender identification is not fixed in Surrealism or, for that matter, in Dada (e.g., the automaton worker-soldier is male), but certainly ambivalence regarding both machine and commodity is figured in this way: in terms of feminine allure or threat, of the woman as erotic [Fig. 69] or castrative, even deathly [Fig. 70].

It is in this register of ambivalence that two figures in particular are repeated in Surrealism: the mannequin and the prostitute. In Le Paysan de Paris Aragon often relates the two: mannequins are seductive "simulacra", prostitutes are "living corpses".⁷² And in Nadja the two figures are literally conflated in a wax figure of a whore which strikes

⁷⁰ This formula no doubt elides a third term, a social referent--the industrial proletariat associated by the bourgeois masculinist ego with the machine and the feminine alike as a threat. This is a classic instance of overdetermination.

⁷¹ In this regard also see Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman," After the Great Divide, pp. 44-62.

⁷² Louis Aragon, Le Paysan de Paris (Paris, 1926), translated by Simon Watson Taylor as Paris Peasant (London, 1971), pp. 54, 66.

Breton more strongly than any human figure ("the only statue I know of with eyes," he writes, "the eyes of provocation, etc.") [Fig 71].⁸¹ The female body in fashion or for hire provokes desire in the patriarchal Surrealist subject, but it is a fetishistic desire mixed with dread, the uncanny allure of the inanimate, "the sex appeal of the inorganic."⁸² In the commodified female body of the mannequin model-prostitute, then, no less than in the mechanized male body of the automaton worker-soldier, the living body is prostituted to the inorganic world, and this uncanny process both attracts and repels the Surrealists.

Though clearly involved in this fetishistic desire, the Surrealists do not simply indulge it; as we have seen, they attempt to exploit it critically, especially its psychic connection to death. In this regard the Surrealist position is the dialectical other not only to the cult of the machine in Léger, Le Corbusier and the middle Bauhaus, but more

⁸¹ Breton, Nadja (Paris, 1928), trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1960), p. 152. The Musée Grévin, a wax museum, was haunted by the Surrealists, especially Breton. In his reflection here we see the connection intuited between the figure and the gaze, desire and threat.

⁸² Benjamin, "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," p. 166. Also see Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing, p. 101, and Rey Chow, "Benjamin's Love Affair with Death," New German Critique 48 (Fall 1989), p. 85: "...the figure of woman...is the ultimate figure of death. The beauty of woman is the surreal beauty of an organ which is severed, embellished, and only thus 'enlivened'. In the elaborate way in which the prostitute is invested with attention, a process of labor is involved: that of re-organizing the dis-organized."

importantly to the fascist celebration of the social body as war machine, a position for which Marinetti may speak here: "War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metalization of the human body."³³ I want to conclude with a Surrealist oeuvre in which this connection among the mechanical-commodified, fetishism and the death drive is drawn most complexly, in which automaton and mannequin come together in an ultimate bachelor machine that apparently participates in fascist desire but actually exposes its mechanisms: the Poupées of Hans Bellmer.³⁴ His work involves complexities that can barely be noted here; suffice it to say that it is a grim summa of many of the aspects of Surrealism delineated thus far: uncanny confusions between animate and inanimate figures; ambivalent conjunctions of castrative and fetishistic images; compulsive repetitions of fantasmatic scenes; and, most of all, difficult intricacies of sadism and

³³ Marinetti as quoted in Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," p. 241. For a provocative analysis of such fantasies in the (proto)Nazi imaginary, see Klaus Theweleit, Male Fantasies, vol. 2, trans. Erica Carter and Chris Turner (Minneapolis, 1989).

³⁴ There are two social counterparts of Surrealist automatons and mannequins that I have not yet mentioned: the mechanical-commodified masses that comprised both cast and audience of fascist as well as Hollywood spectacles in the 1930s. Just as European fascism had begun to devise an aestheticized politics based on war, so had American capitalism begun to develop an aestheticized politics based on fashion. More than any other Surrealist work, the Poupées suggest the psychic mechanisms of such pathological patriarchal orders.

masochism, of desire, defusion and death.²²

The first Poupée inspired many of the Surrealist mannequins of the 1930s. It was published in 18 photographs in Minotaure 6 (Winter 1934-5) under the title "Variations sur le montage d'une mineure articulée" [Fig. 72]. In 1933 the Péret photo-essay had suggested a certain historical trajectory of automatons and mannequins; a year later the Poupée displayed the psychic resonance of such figures, at least for the patriarchal subject. This resonance hardly begins in Bellmer, but his biography does suggest why he was such a sensitive medium for it. As a young man Bellmer was sent by his father first to work in a steel mill and a coal mine, then to train in engineering at the Berlin Technische Hochschule (where he met Grosz and others in his milieu). Bellmer soon rejected this dictated profession to work in book design and publicity (with his first wife Margarete); thus his early experience spanned both industrial and consumerist realms, the mechanical and the commodified. When the Nazis came to power he repudiated publicity, too, lest he assist the regime in any way. It was then that he turned to his Poupées, which he apparently saw as an attack on fascist

²² There is even a textual intersection between the Bellmer dolls and the Freud "Uncanny". The Poupées were partly inspired by the 1932 Max Reinhardt production of Offenbach's Tales of Hoffmann, specifically by the episode based on "The Sandman", the story treated by Freud. (In the operetta Olympia is renamed Coppelia--as if to assume the even more manifestly castrative position of Coppellius as well.)

father and state alike--an attack compulsively played out on the (dis)articulated image of a young female body, of this body as fetishistic doll, as fragmentary automaton--mannequin.⁶⁴

The first doll (1933-34), made of wood, metal and plaster, consists precisely of fragments: a naturalistic head, a broken torso, two jointed legs and one jointed arm. In Die Puppe (1934), its first publication, Bellmer writes of the doll as an object created out of ambivalence--as a "solution" of joy, ecstasy and fear.⁶⁷ Clearly this ambivalence is of a fetishistic sort, as the second doll (begun 1935), even less anatomical, makes even more manifest [Fig. 73].⁶⁸ Here Bellmer (dis)articulates the female body excessively; as photographed in different positions, each new version of the Poupée is a "construction as dismemberment"⁶⁹ that simultaneously signifies castration (in the disconnection of body parts) and its fetishistic defense (in

⁶⁴ A bitter prose poem of Bellmer's, "The Father", supports this reading. In this regard see Peter Webb (with Robert Short), Hans Bellmer (London, 1985), p. 33.

⁶⁷ Hans Bellmer, Die Puppe (1934), translated by Robert Valencay as La Poupée (Paris, 1936), n.p.

⁶⁸ The second series of doll photos were accompanied by a suite of Eluard poems titled "Jeux vagues de la poupée" and published first in Messages (Paris, 1939) and then as Les Jeux de la poupée (Paris, 1949).

⁶⁹ Krauss, "Corpus Delicti," in L'Amour fou: Photography & Surrealism (Washington and New York, 1985), p. 86. Also see my review-essay, "L'Amour faux," Art in America (January 1986).

the multiplication of body parts as phallic substitutes).⁷⁰ This reading is not discouraged by Bellmer. In Die Puppe he speaks of the dolls as a means to recover "the enchanted garden" of childhood, a trope for a desire to recapture a pre-Oedipal wholeness before castration, before difference.⁷¹ Moreover, in a later text Bellmer locates desire specifically in the bodily detail, which is only real, he argues, if desire makes it artificial--that is, if it is fetishized as an overvalued object of a displaced sexual aim. Such is "the monstrous dictionary of the image," according to Bellmer, "a dictionary of analogues-antagonisms."⁷²

Yet the Poupées involve more than fetishism. The very notion of a "dictionary of the image" suggests a shifting of desire more than its fetishistic fixing (as in the Freudian

⁷⁰ See Freud, "Medusa's Head" (1922), in Sexuality and the Psychology of Love, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), p. 212. For Freud this is the paradoxical logic of Medusa's Head: to represent both castration (decapitation) and fetishistic defense (mitigation of the castrative threat through the multiplication of the phallic snakes). In La Poupée Bellmer suggests this "confusion" of female body and phallic signification: "But confusion was complete when those legs grew suddenly stiff...." Freud interprets Medusal petrification as sexual arousal: erection provides further assurance against castration.

⁷¹ Bellmer, La Poupée, n.p. This trope was also used in the same sense by Breton in L'Amour fou (see Chapter Two). The very first version of a doll was actually made of objects from an old childhood trunk given Bellmer by his mother.

⁷² Bellmer, Anatomie de l'image (Paris, 1957), p. 35.

account).⁷³ So, too, the production of the dolls, especially the first, is revealed more than fetishistically concealed (as in the Marxian account); in fact, the photographs in Die Puppe detail its construction explicitly. Moreover, the sex of the doll is not effaced or disguised: rather than a disavowal of sexual difference, the doll is subjected to an intensive investigation. Like the little Hans analyzed by Freud, Bellmer manipulates the doll as if to ascertain the signs of difference and the mechanics of birth.⁷⁴ Finally, not only are the dolls excessively broken up rather than fetishistically made whole, but they are also posed in fantasmatic scenes suggestive of rape and murder rather than sightings of castration.

In short, the Poupées are more sadistic than fetishistic--although these two perversions are hardly opposed here. Regarding his sadistic manipulations, Bellmer writes openly of his drive to master both body and thought of his "victims",⁷⁵ and to this end the dolls are posed very voyeuristically indeed. In the second Poupée this mastering

⁷³ Bellmer also spoke of the dolls as "plastic anagrams...like a sentence that invites us to rearrange it" (quoted in Webb, p. 38). This anagrammatic shifting is akin to the story of the eye in the Bataille novel of that title, the 1940 edition of which Bellmer illustrated.

⁷⁴ See Freud, "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy" (1909), in The Sexual Enlightenment of Children, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963). Freud calls this gesture a "brilliant symptomatic act."

⁷⁵ See Bellmer, La Poupée and Anatomie de l'image.

gaze acts through the various mises-en-scène of the doll [Figs. 74, 75]. In the first Poupée this gaze is actually made internal to the doll: its interior (its sexual part?) is filled with miniature panoramas intended to represent "the thoughts and dreams of a young girl."⁷⁴ (An illustration in Die Puppe connects this mechanism directly to voyeurism [Fig. 76]). Involved here, then, is the patriarchal fantasy of control not only over creation but over sexuality as such. Bellmer claims that the "desires" of the doll are also figured, that the posings are based on her "seductions", but it is obvious who the desiring subject is here, who the mastered object.⁷⁷

But what exactly is this desire? And is it actually masterful? "I wanted to help people lose their complexes," Bellmer said in retrospect, "to come to terms with their instincts as I am trying to do."⁷⁸ Here we must take him at his word, for, on the one hand, the dolls are attempts to

⁷⁴ At least two or three of these panoramas were made: a boat sinking through North Pole ice and a handkerchief with the spit of a young girl--tableaus of the deathly and the abject made of "little objects, diverse material and coloured images of bad taste" (Bellmer as quoted in Webb, p. 34). Such panoramas are also developed in certain works of Duchamp and Cornell.

⁷⁷ Bellmer speaks of his "erotic liberation" (as quoted in Webb, p. 34) as hers as well: a "breaking down [of] the wall separating woman and her image" (Anatomie de l'image). But for feminists it is precisely this presumed proximity of the woman to her body that is problematic. In any case, the price of his liberation is her subjection.

⁷⁸ Bellmer as quoted in Webb, p. 38.

work through "complexes" (at least of the patriarchal subject) while, on the other hand, they are also attempts to understand "instincts"--ultimately, the struggle between binding and defusive impulses, erotic and destructive drives. This struggle lies at the heart of the "mad love" of Bellmer no less than that of Breton: "the innumerable integrating and disintegrating possibilities according to which desire fashions the image of the desired...."⁹⁷ However, within this struggle there is a tension that Bellmer reveals more clearly than Breton or any other Surrealist: that between the sadistic and the masochistic, between the sexuality that emerges in these drives and the death to which they are ultimately pledged.

For Freud, we should recall, the death drive is deflected away from the subject to the object--to the drive to master, to destroy; and in this movement the sexual is mixed with the sadistic. But there is always a remainder left within the subject--what Freud calls "original erotogenic masochism."¹⁰⁰ It is this relation among masochism, sexuality and sadism, between life and death drives, that the Poupées evoke. For in his sadistic scenes Bellmer leaves behind masochistic traces; in his destruction of the dolls he

⁹⁷ Bellmer, exhibition catalogue for "Le Surréalisme en 1947" at the Galerie Maeght, as quoted in Ades, p. 296 (italics added).

¹⁰⁰ Freud, "The Economic Problem of Masochism," in General Psychological Theory, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), p. 194; also see Chapter One.

expresses a self-destructive impulse. In short, Bellmer sets up the female body to enact his own desire, only to display its defusive deathliness---which the dispersed body of the young woman is made to represent. In previous chapters we saw that Breton attempted to sublimate this sadomasochism in a new notion of beauty, and de Chirico, Ernst and Giacometti in new types of images, objects and techniques. In Bellmer such sublimation is minimal, and the sadomasochistic nature of sexuality, indeed of Surrealism, stands revealed. (This is why Bellmer is marginal to the literature on Surrealism: not because his work is eccentric to it but because it is all too central.) Convulsive, precisely explosive-fixed, the Poupées expose Surrealist beauty for what it is: a bachelor machine of desire coupled with death, an uncanny invocation of the death drive tinged with eroticism. In his work the Surrealist struggle between the binding and the defusive, the erotic and the thanatonic is most blatantly played out--and most blatantly its theater is the image of the female body. In this sense the dolls go far beyond fetishistic ambivalence: in the drive to master the female body, the male subject confronts its greatest fear--its own fragmentation, disintegration and dissolution.

Yet what does this have to do with the mechanical-commodified and with fascism? Here a remark of Benjamin provides a clue:

Exposure of the mechanistic aspects of the organism is a persistent tendency of the sadist. One can say that the

sadist sets out to substitute for the human organism the image of machinery.¹⁰¹

If Sade (as Benjamin further remarks) was the child of an epoch that delighted in automatons, so the Surrealists, the modern disciples of Sade, are children of an epoch that turn people into automatons--industrial workers, consumers, soldiers, etc. But, again, they do not simply celebrate this sadistic mechanizing of the body; indeed, they seek to contest it on its own terms. It is in this regard that Surrealism must be opposed to fascism, to its embrace of the "metalization of the body." As Klaus Theweleit argues, this metalization is crucial to the fascist ethos of the 1920s and '30s: "the body machine" becomes an ideal associated with the masculine.¹⁰² For Theweleit this fascist armoring is developed against the other of the male ego--whether this is seen as a soft interior (emotions, desires) or a weak exterior (the masses, the Jews). Its purpose is to fix the boundaries of this ego against the fragmentary and the fluid, the dispersed and the dissolute, which, again, the feminine is made to represent. This is a psychic key to fascist sadism, for the male ego can only be confirmed absolutely in

¹⁰¹ Benjamin, PW, V, p. 466. This seems intuited by Bellmer in this statement: "However close or far it may be positioned and swing in the confusion between animate and inanimate, it will always be a question of the personified, mobile, passive, adaptable and incomplete object; it will finally be a question of the mechanical factor of its mobility, of the joint" ("La Jointure à boule," p. 13).

¹⁰² See Klaus Theweleit, Male Fantasies, vol. 2, pp. 159-62.

violence against its other--this other which ultimately is "the female self within."¹⁰³

To develop this account further, we must add that "this female self within" is nothing else than the masochistic aspect of the psyche (which is problematically described by Freud as feminine): in this instance the fear of the feminine within is the fear of this defusive or destructive drive within. And this is where the Bellmer dolls and the fascist imaginary must be distinguished, for in the Poupées this fear of the defusive is made manifest and reflexive, as is the attempt to overcome it in sadistic violence against the feminine other--that is the scandal but also the lesson of the dolls.¹⁰⁴ Bellmer manifests the erotic violence of the sadistic but reveals its psychic basis in the masochistic, and in this way his dolls are exposés of the fascist psyche (indeed, in his 1937 doll Machine Gunneress this exposé is all but explicit [Fig. 77]). In fascism, on the other hand, the fear of the defusive is straitened in an embrace of the body machine, in the war machine; and in this embrace the regime of the mechanical-commodified, fueled by both sadistic desires and destructive drives, truly does become dominant.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ "If the origin of my work is a scandal, it is because, for me, the world is a scandal" (Bellmer as quoted in Webb, p. 42).

Chapter Five
OUTMODED IMAGES

In Chapter Four I read the two Bretonian emblems of the Surrealist marvelous, the modern mannequin and the romantic ruin, as dialectical figures of the same social process: a modernizing of bodies, objects and spaces that is also an outmoding of prior conditions of these things. I also argued that these two aspects, the mechanical-commodified and the outmoded, fascinate the Surrealists because each evokes a different uncanniness, the first demonic, the second auratic, which they seek to deploy critically. This second uncanniness, that of the outmoded, concerns me here, but I want to project a larger argument too: that the uncanny return of past states discussed in individual terms in Chapter Three also occurs in a social register, that Surrealism performs a repetition of historical as well as psychic material. In these historical repetitions the uncanny is often recouped, and the return of the repressed becomes a process of recovery that is at once transformative and therapeutic.

First, however, we need to specify the term outmoded and the Surrealist interest in its affect. Again, I derive the notion from Walter Benjamin whose own historical practice as a dialectical montage of past and present was profoundly influenced by Surrealism. To extend the quotation cited in

Chapter Four: according to Benjamin, Bretonian 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 had 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. 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....They bring the immense force of 'atmosphere' concealed in these things to the point of explosion.¹

Two aspects of this insight should be noted immediately. The first point concerns the paradoxical inscription of the temporally outmoded in spatial forms like old buildings and interiors. And in fact my three principal examples of the Surrealist deployment of the outmoded all concern 19th-century architectures: the Passage de l'Opéra described by Aragon in Le Paysan de Paris (1926), the images of bourgeois interiors in the Ernst collage novels (1929-34), and the Art

¹ Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" (1929), in Reflections, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York, 1978), pp. 181-2. Benjamin thought of his Arcades Project, the Passagen-Werk, as "the philosophical utilization of Surrealism" in which "the montage principle [is carried] over into history" (Passagen-Werk, ed. Rolf Tiedemann [Frankfurt am Main, 1982], p. 575; PW hereafter). Two figures that fought over his soul both disapproved of this influence: as noted in Chapter Two, Adorno regarded Surrealist art as reified, fetishistic, undialectical, and Brecht argued that it does "not return back again from estrangement." At times Benjamin also worried about his "fatal proximity" to Surrealism. See Susan Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute (New York, 1977), p. 128.

Nouveau architecture celebrated in several Dali texts (early 1930s).² The second point is that in this extraordinary list of outmoded things Benjamin does not distinguish between the truly archaic and the simply démodé--that is, between objects of an ur-capitalist mode of production and objects "of five years ago" that have fallen out of fashion. The Surrealists do make such a distinction. On the one hand, they see an aura in outmoded objects, such as the decayed arcade detailed by Aragon, which they seek to recover. On the other hand, they are also interested in démodé objects, such as Art Nouveau architecture, but for a different reason--because they are "anti-aphrodisiacal" reminders of a just-past that scandalizes current taste.³

These different deployments still beg the question of how the outmoded can be radical or "destitution" be transformed into "revolutionary nihilism". Conventionally, of

² As intimated in Chapter Three, one might also consider the de Chirican spaces in these terms, imbued as they are with this auratic "atomosphere".

³ Benjamin: "Every generation experiences the fashion of the most recent past as the most thorough anti-aphrodisiac that can be imagined" (PW 3, 9, 1). There are many instances of the Surrealist démodé; two convenient examples are found in Minotaure 3-4 (December 14, 1933). As we will see, in "De la beauté terrifiante et comestible, de l'architecture modern'style," Dali celebrates such figures as Guimard and Gaudi--a celebration which flies in the face of the high Parisian taste for a vanguardist modernism already become somewhat chic and academic. In a more risqué vein, "Les plus belles cartes-postales," an assemblage by Eluard of naughty postcards from the turn of the century, mocks the very notion of a proper modernist collection (let alone of a high art canon) [Fig. 78].

course, the traditional and the modern, aura and shock, are held to be opposed terms; the Surrealists, however, suggest that the auratic can be explosive. How exactly is this thought? Benjamin is gnomic on this count; he simply credits the Surrealists with "the substitution of a political for a historical view of the past."⁴ Clearly for the Surrealists as for Benjamin this view is Marxian if not Marxist. The very term outmoded is keyed to mode in the sense not only of fashion but also of mode of production. Yet no more than Benjamin do the Surrealists see art, fashion or culture in general as a superstructural expression of an economic base (indeed, the Surrealist insistence on the relative autonomy of both art and subjectivity was a perennial point of conflict with the French Communist Party).⁵ Rather, they attempt to exploit the tension between cultural objects and socioeconomic forces, between mode as fashion and mode as means of production. In effect, the Surrealist outmoded poses the cultural detritus of a past moment in capitalism against the cultural complacency of its present moment. "Balzac was the first to speak of the ruins of the bourgeoisie," Benjamin writes in his 1935 Passagen-Werk exposé "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century."

⁴ Benjamin, "Surrealism", p. 182.

⁵ On this issue see, for example, Maurice Nadeau, Histoire du Surréalisme (1944), translated by Richard Howard as The History of Surrealism (New York, 1965), pp. 127-82, and Herbert S. Gershman, The Surrealist Revolution in France (Ann Arbor, 1969), pp. 80-116.

But only Surrealism exposed them to view. The development of the forces of production has turned the wish symbols of the previous century into rubble even before the monuments which represented them had crumbled....All these products are on the point of entering the market as commodities. But they still linger on the threshold. From this epoch stem the arcades and interiors, the exhibitions and the panoramas. They are residues of a dream world.⁶

It is to such "residues" of the 19th-century bourgeoisie that the Surrealists are drawn.

However, they are also attracted to the archaic forms which the commodity system of this bourgeoisie had effectively ruined. Hence the classic site of the Surrealist dérive, the flea market, where the temporally outmoded comes to rest in the spatially marginal. "I go there often," Breton writes of the Saint-Ouen market in Nadja (1928), "searching for objects that can be found nowhere else: old-fashioned, broken, useless, almost incomprehensible, even perverse...yellowed nineteenth-century photographs, worthless books, and iron spoons" [Fig. 79].⁷ Of course, it is there in 1934 that he finds the slipper spoon described in L'Amour

⁶ Benjamin, "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism, trans. Harry Zohn and Quintin Hoare (London, 1973), p. 176; translation amended.

⁷ André Breton, Nadja (Paris, 1928), trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1960), p. 52. The outmoded has a historicity too; in L'Amour fou Breton speaks of "the constant and deep transformation" of the flea market" (Mad Love, trans. Mary Ann Caws [Lincoln, 1987], p. 26; noted as AF hereafter in the text). I return to this point at the end of the present chapter.

fou. To retrieve this object "of peasant fabrication" (AF 30), clearly made for personal use rather than for abstract exchange, is not only a response to a private desire (as it was discussed in Chapter Two). It is also a gesture of social critique whereby the dominant system of capitalist commodity exchange is symbolically challenged with a fragile relic of the supplanted order of feudal craft relations. In this redemption there is a brief historical illumination of a past productive mode, social formation and structure of feeling--an uncanny return of an historically repressed moment of direct manufacture, simple barter and personal use, a return that is both therapeutically redemptive and critically disruptive. As suggested in Chapter Four, these little disruptions of the capitalist order of things constitute an essential part of the Surrealist cultural politic, one complementary to the momentary derangements of representation and language in its art and writing. In the case of objects such as the peasant spoon, the Surrealists exploit the very effects of an expansive capitalism--not only artisanal objects rendered outmoded by industrialization but also tribal objects rendered dépaysés in imperialization--against its own system of commodity exchange, a system which of course extends to art. In this way they confront the bourgeois order with tokens of its repressed past (the outmoded) as well as its exploited outside (the "primitive").

Yet such precapitalist things make up only a small part

of the Surrealist reflection on the outmoded. As Benjamin suggests, this gaze focuses on "the situation of the middle class at the moment it shows its first signs of decline"⁸--on bourgeois forms at the moment when they begin to crumble as "wish symbols", that is, when the middle class begins to forego its own progressive values and utopian projections. To recover such outmoded forms is thus to suggest a twofold immanent critique of bourgeois culture (as distinct from a more transcendental critique made via precapitalist, artisanal or tribal, objects). On the one hand, this use of the outmoded relativizes bourgeois culture, denies its pretense to the natural and the eternal, opens it up to its own history and historicity. On the other hand, the outmoded challenges this culture with its own forfeited dreams, tests it against its own compromised values of collective progress and the like. In this regard it may release the utopian energies which, never realized, are trapped in these historical forms--may release them for other political purposes in the present. Here we can begin to see how the Surrealist deployment of the outmoded might be subversive, how cultural destitution might become revolutionary nihilism.

⁸ Benjamin, PW, *Konvolut N 1*, 11, translated by Mark Ritter as "N [Theoretics of Knowledge; Theory of Progress]," The Philosophical Forum, vol. XV, 1-2 (Fall/Winter 1983-84), p.3. For Benjamin as for Marx this moment was marked by "the Eighteenth Brumaire" of Louis Bonaparte, i.e., the forfeiture, on the part of the bourgeoisie, of its own parliamentary forms and public processes. For more on this forfeiture see my Recordings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics (Seattle, 1985), pp. 160-65.

What does all this have to do with the uncanny? "Aragon," Benjamin writes in a Passagenwerk note pertinent to Surrealism in general, "persistently remains in the realm of dreams, but we want here to find the constellation of waking....Of course, that can only happen through the awakening of a knowledge of the past that is not yet conscious."⁷ Informed by Surrealism, Benjamin here resists its influence, for this image of history as a dialectic of dreaming and waking is thoroughly Surrealist; in fact, it is as descriptive of the Surrealist practice of history as it is of his own project. More importantly, it describes the Surrealist outmoded precisely as a deployment of the historically uncanny--as an awakening of a not-yet-conscious past. Of course, to extrapolate a psychic category into a historical one is problematic, but it is an extrapolation made by the Surrealists as well as by Benjamin.¹⁰ And clearly the Surrealist concern with the uncanny--with the return of familiar images made strange by repression--is related to the Marxian concern with the outmoded or the nonsynchronous--with the persistence of old cultural forms superceded in the uneven development of new social formations and productive

⁷ Ibid., N 1, 9, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰ Like Benjamin, Bretonian Surrealists partially subscribed to a notion of a collective unconscious that allowed this extrapolation.

modes.¹¹ In the "Manifesto" Breton points to this connection between the marvelous or the uncanny and the outmoded or the nonsynchronous: "The marvelous is not the same in every period: it partakes in some obscure way of a sort of general revelation only the fragments of which come down to us...."¹² And for the Surrealists generally the two affects are related; as we will see, they regard the outmoded precisely as "residues of a dream world" that possess disruptive, even critical potential.¹³

For the Surrealists as for Benjamin this dream of history has a demonic as well as an auratic aspect. In "The Uncanny" Freud notes that the gods of one religion frequently return as the demons of the next religion.¹⁴ So, too, when the Surrealists recall past images to the present they often assume a hellish guise. For Aragon the old arcade is full of

¹¹ In the famous "Preface" to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859) Marx proposed his model of uneven development and structural contradiction between productive forces and social relations. This model is the basis of the notion of the outmoded--as well as that of the nonsynchronous (Ernst Bloch), the residual and the emergent (Raymond Williams), cultural revolution (Fredric Jameson), etc. I discuss these notions in relation to modern and contemporary art in "(Dis)Agreeable Objects", in Brian Wallis, ed., Damaged Goods: Desire and the Economy of the Object (New York, 1986).

¹² Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924), in Manifestoes of Surrealism, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor, 1969), p. 16.

¹³ Dalí, for example, saw Art Nouveau in this way--as a "dream" in which all other historical styles reappear.

¹⁴ Freud, "The Uncanny", in Studies in Parapsychology ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), p.

"sirens", "sphinxes" and other ciphers of desire and death, and the 19th-century interiors of the Ernst collage novels are inhabited by monsters and demons of all sorts [Fig. 80]. In these Surrealist juxtapositions of 19th and 20th centuries, however, the present is also recalled to the past, in which case the outmoded images assume an auratic character, especially in the instance of childhood things. This is a familiar trope in Surrealism: "One day, perhaps," Breton writes, "we shall see the toys of our whole life, like those of our childhood, once more."¹⁵ We already remarked how fundamental this search for the lost object is to Surrealism; it is no less crucial to its concern with the outmoded. "The 'out-of-date'...speaks from our childhood," Benjamin remarks; in Surrealism, we must add, it speaks with a maternal voice.¹⁶ Indeed, at least in its auratic register, the Surrealist outmoded seems to recall a maternal memory of psychic intimacy and bodily unity--thus again its attraction for the Surrealists.

¹⁵ Breton, Surrealism and Painting, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York, 1972), p.

¹⁶ Benjamin, PW, V, p. 1214; also quoted by Susan Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), p. 261. As we will see, the period which attracted the Surrealists most deeply is that not only of their childhoods but of their mothers before them. As Roland Barthes writes, "That is what the time when my mother was alive before me is--History (moreover, it is the period which interests me most, historically)" (Camera Lucida, trans. Richard Howard [New York, 1981], p. 65). In "Looking Back on Surrealism" (1954) Adorno speaks of its "attempt to uncover childhood experiences by blasting them out."

This psychic affect of the outmoded can be related to its social preconditions precisely through the Benjaminian notion of aura, which possesses a subjective as well as a historical dimension. On the one hand, according to Benjamin, an object is auratic if it appears to return our gaze, and the prototype of this returned gaze is the gaze of the mother. On the other hand, an object is also auratic if it bears the "traces of the practiced hand"¹⁷--that is, if it retains the marks of human labor. (As suggested in Chapter Four, this human sign distinguishes the outmoded from the mechanical-commodified: its presence renders the former benign just as its absence makes the latter appear maleficent.) Both these qualities are active in the outmoded--the memory of the gaze as well as the mark of the hand--and they intersect in the mystery of the body, that "forgotten human dimension"¹⁸ which is related in the psychic register

¹⁷ Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1969), p. 186. As I will argue in Chapter Six, the Benjaminian definition of aura recalls the Marxian definition of commodity fetishism precisely in order to oppose the alienated distance of the latter with the maternal intimacy of the former.

¹⁸ Marleen Stoessel, Aura, das vergessene Menschliche: Zu Sprache und Erfahrung bei Walter Benjamin (Munich, 1983). Fredric Jameson points to this intersection in these terms: "Thus what prepares these [outmoded] products to receive the investment of psychic energy characteristic of their use by Surrealism is precisely the half-sketched, uneffaced mark of human labor, of the human gesture, on them; they are still frozen gesture, not yet completely separated from subjectivity, and remain therefore as mysterious and expressive as the human body itself" (Marxism and Form [Princeton, 1971], p. 104).

to the maternal and in the historical register to the artisanal. In many of the things cherished by the Surrealists (again the slipper spoon is a convenient example) these two terms, the object as a psychic token of a part or lost object and the object as a social relic of an artisanal mode of labor, converge in a libidinal overdetermination, one which does much to explain the Surrealist attraction to outmoded things in general and to old toys, dolls, children's books and the like in particular.¹⁷

However, this psychic affect does not explain why the Surrealist interest in archaic objects arises in the 1920s and '30s. The process of outmoding is continual in capitalism: why does it come into focus at that moment? The conflict between industrial and semi-industrial modes informs the entire generation of the Surrealists; indeed, the period which they span--from the 1890s to World War II--is now regarded as the long wave of the second technological revolution, a revolution defined technically by the spread of

¹⁷ Old toys (which some Surrealists collected) might be taken as a paradigm of the Surrealist object in both its psychic-uncanny and social-outmoded registers. For Breton the toy could evoke the maternal unity of childhood, while for Caillois it possessed an auratic "brilliance" opposed to the perverse animation of the commodity: "Far from economic concepts is the concept of treasure. It is their precise negation" ("Secret Treasures in Childhood," View 1 [June 1942], p. 7). For more on this opposition see Benjamin, "Russian Toys", appendix to Moscow Diary, ed. Gary Smith (Cambridge, 1987). The Surrealist interest in such outmoded things as old toys involves not only an uncanny return of infantile subject-object relations, but also a historical redemption of a past productive mode, social formation and structure of feeling.

electric and combustion engines and stamped culturally by new forms of transportation and reproduction.²⁰ As these techniques penetrate everyday practices in the 1920s and '30s, it is only natural that the dialectical relation between the mechanical-commodified and the outmoded (or, as Benjamin terms it, between industrial "drill" and craft "practice") would be thought.²¹ Crucial here, however, is that this relation is thought in the milieu of Surrealism. In fact, according to Benjamin this insight whereby an old cultural image is grasped as such only at the moment of its eclipse by a new social formation is specifically Surrealist: "To cite an observation of Aragon that constitutes the hub of the problem: that the passages are what they are here for us is due to the fact that they in themselves are no longer."²²

This observation occurs early in Le Paysan de Paris (whose very title is an oxymoron of different social orders) when Aragon first describes the decrepit passages:

²⁰ Ernst Mandel, Late Capitalism, trans. Joris de Bres (London, 1975), pp. 120-21.

²¹ Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," p. 176. As noted in Chapter Four, French capitalism was torn between industrial methods and craft work at this time.

²² Benjamin, *PW*, V, p. 1215; also quoted in Buck-Morss, p. 159. Benjamin: "[T]he impression of the old-fashioned can only come to be where, in a certain way, it is effected by the most contemporary" (*PW*, B 3, 6; IV, p. 2). The notion that a historical formation is known only at the moment of its eclipse runs throughout Benjamin, as indeed it does throughout Marx and Hegel.

Although the life that originally quickened them has drained away, they deserve, nevertheless, to be regarded as the secret repositories of several modern myths: it is only today, when the pickaxe menaces them, that they have at last become the true sanctuaries of a cult of the ephemeral, the ghostly landscape of damnable pleasures and professions. Places that were incomprehensible yesterday, and that tomorrow will never know.²³

This ruination is not only a physical process of the pickaxe; it is also a particular vision of history, as Aragon later suggests: "Everything is crumbling under my gaze" (P 61).

This historical gaze is not simply melancholic; the passages, old Paris or the 19th century in general are not so many objects to which the Surrealists obsessively cling. Far from conservative in this sense, the Surrealist gaze is both destructive and redemptive, crumbling and penetrating. ("His gaze," Ernst writes in La Femme 100 têtes, "will penetrate the debris of dried-up cities" [Fig. 81]).²⁴ It is a gaze which ruins the past as an historicist continuum but redeems it as a repressed experience. It is a gaze, moreover, which rescues the past from the very regime that renders it outmoded--rescues it precisely so that it might be deployed

²³ Louis Aragon, Le Paysan de Paris (Paris, 1926), translated by Simon Watson Taylor as Paris Peasant (London, 1971), pp. 28-29; hereafter P. This observation is hardly unique to Aragon in the Surrealist milieu; in Paris de nuit (1933) Brassai sees it as a basis of his photographic project: "Could I otherwise have torn these few images from the strange Parisian nights of the thirties before they sink into nothingness?"

²⁴ Ernst, La Femme 100 têtes (Paris, 1929), translated by Dorothea Tanning as The Hundred Headless Woman (New York, 1981), p. 161.

against this regime.²⁵ If we can grasp this gaze as both crumbling and penetrating, this dialectic of ruination as both redemption and resistance, we will grasp the most important aspect of the Surrealist practice of history.

In this regard a short late text by Benjamin Péret titled "Ruines: Ruine des Ruines" and published in Minotaure 12-13 (May 1939) is most suggestive. At first glance Péret seems simply to extrapolate his concept of nature as an uncanny process of death rather than life (intimated in his short text "La nature devore le progrès et le dépasse" published in Minotaure 10 [Winter 1937] and discussed in Chapter Two) into a concept of history as an uncanny process of ruination rather than innovation: "one ruin," he writes, "drives out the preceding one and kills it."²⁶ But this ruination, Péret suggests, is not the Surrealist use of history; it is more akin to the fascist-totalitarian abuse of

²⁵ To suggest that the new and the outmoded are dialectically related is to suggest not only that the first produces the second but also that the second articulates the first. This for Benjamin was the purpose of the "ritual elements" that Baudelaire mixed with the modern effects in his poetry: to fathom the very loss of such structures of feeling ("On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," p. 181). This, too, is one of the functions of the outmoded in Surrealism: to register the penetration of the mechanical-commodified in psychic and social life--and to resist it. "It is important to strengthen at all costs," Breton writes in "The Crisis of the Object" (1936), "the defenses which can resist the invasion of the feeling world by things men use more out of habit than necessity" ("Crise de l'objet, Cahiers d'Art 1-2 [1936], p. 24).

²⁶ Benjamin Péret, "Ruines: ruine des ruines," Minotaure 12-13 (May 1939), p. 58.

history. It is typified by the way that Mussolini celebrates ancient Rome the better to betray its values, or that Stalin remembers Lenin the better to bury his ideals. A remembering that represses, such history is opposed to the Surrealist concept of history as a remembering that redeems precisely through an active return of the repressed.²⁷

Péret underscores the uncanniness of this Surrealist concept with photographs not only of ruins and grottoes but also of the Paris Bourse (1808-27/1902-3), Opera House (1861-74) and Eiffel Tower (1889) as so many fossils [Figs. 82, 83]. These images by Raoul Ubac fit the Benjaminian description of the Surrealist historical gaze exactly: "In the convulsions of the commodity economy we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 58-9. This ruinous historicism can be opposed to the redemptive history outlined by Benjamin in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940) written just a year after the Péret text. Opposed to the example of Mussolini who remembers Rome so as to repress its values stands the Benjaminian example of Robespierre for whom "Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history" ("Theses", in Illuminations, p. 261). The fascist embrace of ruinous historicism is articulated by Albert Speer in Theory of the Value of Ruins (1938), published a year before the Péret text, where he argues that architecture must encompass its own destruction in order to secure ruins which, thousands of years later, "will inspire as many heroic thoughts as the models of Antiquity do today" (quoted in Paul Virilio, War and Cinema: the Logistics of Perception, trans. Patrick Camiller [London, 1989], p. 55). I return to the relation between Surrealist and fascist (ab)uses of history below.

before they crumbled."²⁶ Péret and Ubac also regard these monuments--all contradictory expressions, at once historicist and technological, of the bourgeoisie--as zoological remains; indeed, they appear in the photographs arrested in time as if by natural catastrophe. In this Surrealist vision, then, the historicity of the bourgeois regime is imaged through an accelerated archaism of its forms: its transcendental ambitions are contested through the very presentation of its wish symbols as ruins. Here in a gesture of defamiliarization also practiced by Benjamin, the modern is seen as the primal, and cultural history is recast as natural history--literally as a fossil.²⁷ But again this fossilization of bourgeois monuments is not intended to ruin these ruins all the more (à la Mussolini or Stalin); it is meant to redeem as well to transform them. Thus the importance of what Breton calls "the fair hyphen" by which "the ruins of the past were joined to the ruins to come."²⁸ This hyphen represents the dialectic of past and present elements that constitutes the Surrealist image of the historical. And in this dialectic the present is also critically revealed as a ruin, one which must be redeemed as well. As Aragon writes, "Future mysteries will

²⁶ Benjamin, "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," p. 176; translation amended. Might this be another form of convulsive beauty?

²⁷ On this trope in Benjamin see Buck-Morss, The Dialectics of Seeing, pp. 58-77.

²⁸ Breton as quoted in Jean Starobinski, "Day Side and Night Side," in Focus on Minotaure (Geneva, 1987), pp. 39-40.

arise from the ruins of today's"; and as Peret asks, "What ruins will be left to the exaltation of poets of another era?"³¹

To recapitulate the Surrealist concept of history as developed thus far, it is, as Benjamin suggests, a "political view", a deployment of the outmoded, the nonsynchronous, the untimely. It should not be conflated with the narcotic historicism of the rappel à l'ordre of the 1920s, for it is not antimodernist or traditionalist in any conventional sense. However, it is opposed to the emergent academy of modernism, which it mocks with the démodé. Medievalist interests in magic and mediums aside, Surrealism is not involved in any simple nostalgia for a preindustrial order, but its historical retrievals are pledged against the presumed totality of an industrial modernism, of a modern machine age. This helps to explain the great paradox of the Surrealist interest in the outmoded--why artists and writers committed to future emancipation should be involved in historical reclamation, why sometime members of the Communist Party might be concerned with "bourgeois ruins". We already suggested one part of the answer: that this reclamation relativizes the bourgeois order of things, opens it up to

³¹ Aragon, Paris Peasant, p. 29; Péret, "Ruines", p. 59. Perhaps at the late date of the Péret essay this includes the ruin of Surrealism too.

cultural revolution.²² The other part is that this reclamation symbolically fulfills aspects of the past repressed in this order, in its official history. In this way the Surrealist repetition of such historical material is undertaken both to disrupt the present and to complete the past, both to redefine the 20th century and to work through the 19th century. It is in this sense that the Surrealist outmoded recoups the uncanny for therapeutic ends, for it is deployed not only to defamiliarize bourgeois subjectivity but also to refamiliarize other damaged subjectivities--to repair them, as it were, symbolically.

This reading may illuminate the otherwise obscure remark of Benjamin that "Surrealism is the death of the last century through comedy."²³ In the famous first lines of The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852) Marx paraphrases Hegel to the effect that all great events and characters are apt to occur twice--the first time as tragedy,

²² For my use of the term see Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca, 1981), pp. 95-98. Jameson defines cultural revolution as "that moment in which the coexistence of various modes of production becomes visibly antagonistic, their contradictions moving to the very center of political, social, and historical life....The concept of cultural revolution, then--or more precisely, the reconstruction of the materials of cultural and literary history in the form of this new 'text' or object of study which is cultural revolution--may be expected to project a whole new framework for the humanities, in which the study of culture in the widest sense could be placed on a materialist basis."

²³ Benjamin, "N [Theoretics of Knowledge; Theory of Progress]," 5a, 2, p. 13.

the second time as farce.²⁴ But in an early manuscript of 1844 he intimated a third, comedic moment; and to the rhetorical question of what purpose (beyond a cruel ironization of all human ambition) is served by this movement from tragedy through farce to comedy Marx replied: "So that humanity can part from its past gaily."²⁵ This comment introduces the Benjamin remark concerning Surrealism as the comedic death of the 19th century, and it allows us to decipher it. Surrealism is the metaphorical death of the 19th century in the sense that it breaks with it--its dominant values concerning art, politics and sexuality. But Surrealism breaks with it through comedy, a rhetorical mode of collective as well as individual reintegration, so it is also the metaphorical completion of the 19th century--a partial redemption of its history of broken political promises, suppressed social movements, frustrated utopian desires, etc.²⁶ Thus if Surrealism repeats certain images of the 19th

²⁴ Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, in Political Writings, vol. 2 ("Surveys from Exile"), ed. David Fernbach (New York, 1974), p. 146. It is unlikely that Hegel actually said this.

²⁵ Marx, Introduction to "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" as quoted by Benjamin, "N [Theoretics of Knowledge; Theory of Progress]," 5a, 1, p. 13. In Karl Marx, Early Writings (New York, 1963), T.B. Bottomore translates this same passage: "Why should history proceed in this way? So that mankind shall separate itself gladly from its past" (p. 48).

²⁶ On the comedic as the rhetorical form of reintegration see Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, 1957), pp. 163-85, and Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe

century, it is to work through these repressed moments: to complete them precisely so that they can be broken with, so that the 20th century can be awoken from the dream of the 19th century (or, as Benjamin puts it, the spell which commodity capitalism cast over it) into a transformed 20th century. The Surrealist repetition of historical representations is thus both critical and comedic. In Chapter Three we saw that Surrealist practice is concerned to work through psychic trauma by means of images that juxtapose different scenes or space-times. Here we may see that this practice is also concerned to work through historical trauma, to recoup historical repression, and that it does so through similarly dialectical images of juxtaposed past and present elements. In his introduction to La Femme 100 têtes Breton almost suggests as much: he calls the Ernst collages "slits in time" that produce "illusions of true recognition" "where former lives, actual lives, future lives melt together into one life."³⁷

To what historical moments are the "slits" or "hyphens"

(Baltimore, 1973), pp. 94-7, 115-23, 167-9.

³⁷ Breton, "Foreword" (1929) to The Hundred Headless Woman, pp. 8, 11. This definition of the Surrealist image is very close to the Benjaminian definition of the dialectical image: "It isn't that the past casts its light on the present or the present casts its light on the past; rather, an image is that in which the past and the now flash into a constellation. In other words, image is dialectic at a standstill" ("N [Theoretics of Knowledge; Theory of Progress]," 2a, 3, p. 7; also see 10a, 3, p. 24). However, for Benjamin contra Breton the goal is precisely not resolution or reconciliation.

of the Surrealist image connected? What are the patterns of reclamation, the periods of attraction? From the start the Surrealists seek out peripheral or suspect writers and artists in lists and questionnaires of all sorts. Most of these enthusiasts hardly appear radical today: they revise the canon within given definitions of literature, philosophy and art that are broadened but not broached, and they do not contest it at all in the name of oppressed subjects (regarding race, class or gender)--although there is a certain appreciation of popular authors (especially gothic and detective novels). Nevertheless, these lists surely struck contemporaries of Surrealism as perverse historical fixations. The two principal lists are "Erutaretti!" (or littérature backwards) published in Littérature 11-12 (October 1923) and "Lisez/Ne Lisez Pas" printed on a 1931 catalogue of José Corti publications [Fig. 84].²² Some of the elect are to be expected: Sade, Hegel, Marx, Freud (who is sometimes replaced by Charcot), etc. More suggestive are the literary favorites, in particular the Romantics, English Gothics (e.g., Mathew Gregory Lewis, Ann Radcliffe, Edward Young), Poe, Baudelaire, Nerval, and, above all, Lautréamont and Rimbaud. Like the preferred artists of the Surrealists

²² Other examples include the inquiry "Qui sont les meilleurs romanciers et poètes méconnus de 1895 à 1914?" in L'Éclair (September 23, 1923), the list published by Ernst in Beyond Painting as well as the pantheon noted in "Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924). Canonicity is more radically broached by the Bataille circle around Documents.

(e.g., Bosch, Grünewald, Piranesi, Uccello, Fuseli, Goya, Moreau, Böcklin), most of these figures are taken as precursors of the fantastic; but some also suggest a ritualistic conception of art and so prepare a project to which, as noted in Chapters Two and Four, Surrealism is committed: the reenchantment of a rationalized world.

However, more than artistic empathy or ideological rapport is involved in these enthusiasms, as the special attraction to Lautréamont and Rimbaud makes clear. Of the famous Surrealist recovery of the neglected Lautréamont, Breton remarks in a 1952 interview: "A great sign of the times seemed to us to reside in the fact that until that time his hour had not come, whereas for us it sounded with utmost clarity."³⁷ Earlier, in What is Surrealism? (1934), Breton considered this sudden resonance.

1868-75: it is impossible, looking back upon the past, to perceive an epoch so poetically rich, so victorious, so revolutionary, and so charged with distant meaning....It is not an idle hope to wish to see the works of Lautréamont and Rimbaud restored to their correct historical background: the coming and the immediate results of the war of 1870. Other and analogous cataclysms could not have failed to rise out of that military and social cataclysm whose final episode was to be the atrocious crushing of the Paris Commune; the last in date caught many of us at the very age when Lautréamont and Rimbaud found themselves thrown into the preceding one, and by way of revenge has had as its consequence--and this is the new and important fact --the triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution.⁴⁰

³⁷ Breton, Entretiens (Paris, 1952), p. 48.

⁴⁰ Breton, "What is Surrealism?" (London, 1936), in What is Surrealism? Selected Writings, ed. Franklin Rosemont (New York, 1978), p. 112-3.

Two important points are suggested here. First, a general relation, neither causal nor fortuitous, is posed between political and poetic "cataclysms"--a relation crucial to the very possibility of "Surrealism in the service of the revolution." Second and more significant for us, a specific sense of historical correspondence is claimed not only between Lautréamont and Rimbaud and Surrealism, but also between the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune on the one hand and the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution on the other. In this vision history indeed becomes a slit in time, a hyphen of prior and past moments--a political Jetztzeit, as Benjamin and Bloch would say, filled with "the presence of the now."⁴¹ This presence can be seized for radical purposes in art and politics alike. To this end not only does Surrealism restore Lautréamont and Rimbaud to

⁴¹ "History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [Jetztzeit]" (Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," p. 261). Another thesis allows us to think the Freudian concept of Nachträglichkeit or deferred action, associated with the Surrealist concept of the image in Chapter Three, in relation to the Surrealist concept of the historical: "Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the 'time of the now' which is shot through with chips of Messianic time" (p. 263). I am indebted to Rosalind Krauss for the association of Benjamin with deferred action.

aesthetic effectivity,⁴² but, as Breton suggests, it also evokes the radical historical moment of those two figures-- and so sets up a past revolutionary epoch in resonance with a present one. Paradoxically this resonance depends on a certain distance: though newly present in Surrealism, Lautréamont and Rimbaud also remain auratic, "charged with distant meaning."⁴³ And it is this auratic dimension, this charged distance, which turns the resonance between these two moments into revolutionary shock, which simultaneously blasts the prior moment out of its historical continuum and gives the Surrealist moment its political depth. In this way the apparently outmoded can become truly revolutionary, the auratic may be made explosive.

These two moments are times of crisis in more than poetry and politics. Just as Surrealism occurs in the middle of the second technological revolution, so the moment of Lautréamont and Rimbaud punctuates the long economic wave

⁴² The first if not the second was all but forgotten. Indeed, the discovery by Breton and Soupault of the last known copy of Poesies (1870) in the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1918 (sometimes said to be 1919) is one of the foundational legends of Surrealism.

⁴³ "What is aura? A strange web of time and space: the unique appearance of a distance, however close at hand" (Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography" [1931], in Alan Trachtenberg, ed., Classic Essays in Photography [New Haven, 1980], p. 209). I develop this notion further in relation to Surrealism in Chapter Six.

produced by the first technological revolution.⁴⁴ As T.J. Clark has recently stressed, the 1860s and '70s were a time of great socioeconomic dislocation in which "one kind of capitalism was superseded by another," in which the premodern Paris still evident in the early 19th century was slowly Haussmannized into the spectacular city of consumption and control of the late 19th century.⁴⁵ (As we will see, a final act of this Haussmannization produces the privileged image of the Surrealist outmoded, the condemned Passage de l'Opéra . recorded by Aragon before its demolition.) It is to be expected, then, that the Surrealists would not only look back to this prior revolutionary moment but also work to redeploy it in the present--all the more so at a time of transformation when some of its traces are about to disappear. Beyond aesthetic-political correspondence, it is this endangered condition that attracts the Surrealists to it.

Of course, the Surrealist gaze extends beyond this moment as well--from the arcades of the early-mid 19th century to Art Nouveau at its very end--wherever psychic disturbance and social change are registered, especially in

⁴⁴ Mandel, Late Capitalism, p. 120. Mandel dates this wave from the crisis of 1847 to the beginning of the 1890s; it is characterized by the spread of the steam engine to all industries.

⁴⁵ T.J. Clark, The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers (New York, 1985), pp. 58, 57-64.

architectural forms. Again for Benjamin the Surrealist gaze focuses on the decline of the bourgeoisie, specifically on the decay of such "dream houses" as the arcades, because such architecture provides "the most important evidence of latent 'mythology'."⁴⁶ Influenced by Aragon, this statement begins to explain the Surrealist interest in outmoded spaces, but it must be supplemented by a remark of Giedion, who, under the influence particularly of Ernst, wrote that 19th architecture "had the role of the subconscious."⁴⁷ This connection between psychic affect, architectural form and social change is another Surrealist insight, one which is developed in our three test-cases of the Surrealist outmoded--the arcades, the bourgeois interior and Art Nouveau architecture as seen respectively by Aragon, Ernst and Dalí.

The arcades suggest the subconscious precisely as "dream houses": not only are they the first stage-sets of the phantasmagoria of the commodity, "the ur-landscape of consumption," but they are also "passages which have no outside--like the dream."⁴⁸ Meanwhile, the interior can be seen to represent bourgeois subjectivity as such; indeed, Breton refers the interior as deployed by Ernst to the Rimbaudian salon at "the bottom of a lake"--a metaphor which

⁴⁶ Benjamin, PW, p. 1002.

⁴⁷ Siegfried Giedion as quoted by Benjamin, PW, p. 494.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 993.

links the interior to the unconscious.⁴⁷ Finally, Dalí sees Art Nouveau in explicitly psychological terms as an expression of "desires grown solid."⁵⁰ Together, then, these three Surrealists propose a certain archaeology of bourgeois subjectivity as fossilized in its 19th-century spaces, an archaeology that posits three stages in the becoming unconscious of this subjectivity.⁵¹

At the same time this archaeology registers three stages of a complementary process: the becoming industrial of bourgeois society. While the arcades are an early confident example of industrial technique (iron and glass construction), the interior is produced as a sanctuary from this industrial world (now perceived to be a moral, even physical threat). Finally, Art Nouveau represents an attempt to bridge the resultant gap between private and public realms, to reconcile the contradictory demands of art and industry, through the production in modern materials of

⁴⁷ Breton, "Foreword" to Ernst, The Hundred Headless Woman, p. 10. In this regard, just as Aragon paints the arcades as a "human aquarium" (P 28), so Ernst often depicts the interior as a feminine (sub)marine realm [Fig. 85].

⁵⁰ Dalí, "L'Ane pourri", Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 1 (July 1930), translated by J. Bronowski as "The Stinking Ass" in This Quarter 5, 1 (September 1932), p. 54.

⁵¹ Benjamin: "The XIX century: a time-space [Zeitraum] (a time dream-Zeit-traum) in which individual consciousness maintains itself ever more reflectively whereas in contrast the collective consciousness sinks into ever deeper sleep" (PW, pp. 492-93).

fantastic shapes.²² In these three outmoded architectures, then, the industrial is first embraced, then repressed, only finally to return in an uncanny, even phantasmagoric way.

These associations will be developed further below; it is important here, however, to grasp the Surrealist admixture, in these spaces, of the future and the archaic. "In the dream in which every epoch sees in images the epoch which is to succeed it," Benjamin writes, "the latter appears coupled with elements of prehistory"²³ So it is in each of these 19th-century spaces under the Surrealist gaze: the modern is indeed mixed with the primordial or the infantile as a site of "modern mythology" (Aragon), primal fantasy (Ernst) or "infantile neurosis" (Dalí).²⁴ For Benjamin this turn to the prehistorical conveys a wish for the classless. But it also signifies a certain withdrawal from social reality, a certain psychic regression. Ultimately it is in this association that the Surrealist outmoded is most directly related to the uncanny.²⁵

The arcades, Aragon writes, were "born towards the end of the romantic era" (P 109), and by the time he wanders through

²² See Benjamin, "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," p. 168.

²³ Ibid., p. 159.

²⁴ Dalí, "The Stinking Ass," p. 54.

²⁵ As I have already alluded to Aragon in discussing the outmoded, in the following I will focus more on Ernst and Dalí.

them 100 years later in Le Paysan de Paris (1926) they have indeed become "romantic ruins", the very image of the Surrealist marvelous as the outmoded. In hallucinatory detail Aragon describes one passage, the Passage de l'Opéra, as a "bazaar of the bizarre" (P 114), unheimlich home to old shops, outmoded objects and worn inhabitants [Fig. 86]. Though often antiquarian, his history is also critical, made politically urgent by the scheduled destruction of the passage by the Boulevard Haussmann Building Society. The forces arrayed in this "real civil war" (P 40) are clear to Aragon: small tradesmen against big business and corrupt government, the arcades of one era of capitalism against the department stores of another era (he names the Galeries Lafayette specifically). Although "this battle...is lost in advance" (P 80), there is still a victory to be gained, for in "these despised transformations" (P 24) there emerges "a modern mythology" (P 19). More than forty years later in Je n'ai jamais appris à écrire Aragon glosses this phrase:

Having observed that all the mythologies of the past became transformed into romances [romans] as soon as people no longer believed in them, I formulated the idea of reversing the process and elaborating a novel [roman] that would present itself as a mythology. Naturally, a mythology of the modern.²⁴

²⁴ Aragon, Je n'ai jamais appris à écrire, quoted by Simon Watson Taylor in his Introduction to Paris Peasant, p. 14. The Aragon formulation recalls Freud on the uncanny transformation of gods into demons. In The Painting of Modern Life T.J. Clark uses a similar phrase, "the myth of modernity," to demystify the political hegemony of the bourgeoisie that endures underneath the cultural surface of social mobility.

This mythology is not intended to mystify the modern (as Benjamin misunderstood it); rather, it is meant to defamiliarize the modern, to expose "the marvelous suffusing everyday existence" (P 24). As we saw in Chapter Two, the marvelous for Aragon is "the eruption of contradiction within the real" (P 216), a real that otherwise conceals such contradiction. In this way the "despised transformations" wrought by capitalism can actually expose conflicts within its order--between old and new types of goods, of architectural displays, of social behavior and the like--and these conflicts, what Aragon calls "the asynchronism of desire" (P 66), can then be used against this order.⁸⁷ For not only does such "asynchronism" reveal capitalism to be less than a total order; it also opens up this order in such a way that moments repressed in its past can return to disrupt and perhaps transform its present. Such are the implications of the modern mythology of the marvelous, which Aragon elsewhere terms "a dialectical urgency born of another, lost urgency."⁸⁸ On the one hand it reenchants, i.e., recovers past forms displaced by capitalist

⁸⁷ For example, Aragon writes, "We are doubtless about to witness a complete upheaval of the established fashions in casual strolling and prostitution" (P 29). These transformations are minor but material (e.g., the technique of shoeblacks, the look of stamps [P 82; 85]); they illuminate historical change in flashes that sear subjectivity.

⁸⁸ Aragon, La Peinture au défi (Paris, 1930), translated by Lucy R. Lippard as "Challenge to Painting," in Lippard, ed., Surrealists on Art (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), p. 37.

rationality; on the other hand it demystifies, i.e., reveals such rationality to be neither complete nor completely rational. For Benjamin this "materialistic, anthropological illumination" is the greatest achievement of Surrealism,²⁷ and it is indeed fundamental to its aesthetics and politics, based as both are in collage. In Paysan Aragon practices this collage precisely as a juxtaposition of historical and contemporary images, of the outmoded mixed with the modern.

Although Aragon assumes the pose of the wanderer in his passage (he even alludes to Odysseus), he is less a detached flâneur than an active archaeologist or dream interpreter. In this capacity he is not apart from his field of investigation, for along with historical illuminations his juxtaposition of outmoded and modern images also provokes "moral confusions" (P 122). The arcade is not only a dream space for Aragon; in an even more uncanny register he also sees the "disturbingly named passages" (P 28) as both a womb and a tomb, at once maternal (even intrauterine) and chthonic. In this sense the arcade is indeed "illuminated by [his] instincts" (P 61), by "the double game of love and death played by Libido" (P 47).

Crucial here, however, is that Aragon comes to understand these psychic conflicts in terms of the historical

²⁷ Benjamin, "Surrealism", p. 179.

contradictions intuited in the arcade--and vice versa.⁴⁰ "Our cities," he writes, "are peopled with unrecognized sphinxes" (P 28), outmoded images that pose historical riddles. Yet "if the passing dreamer... interrogates them in his turn, all that these faceless monsters will grant is that he shall once again plumb his own depths" (P 28). This connection between the historical riddles of the outmoded and the psychic enigmas of the uncanny is essential to Aragon, and it produces the ambivalence of Paysan. For even as the uncanny enlivens the outmoded, renders it disruptive in the present, it threatens to overwhelm the subject--as indeed it overwhelms Aragon at the conclusion of his meditation on the passage:

What has become of my poor certainty, that I cherished so, in this great vertigo where consciousness is aware of being nothing more than a stratum of unfathomable depths? I am just one moment of an eternal fall (P 122-23).

This is exactly the fate of the Surrealist subject when the uncanny is not recouped; the subject remains, as Benjamin says, in the realm of outmoded dreams rather than of an awakened present.

Ernst also connects the outmoded and the uncanny, collective memory and individual unconscious, through an architectural

⁴⁰ In Paysan the passage functions as a figure of both individual and collective unconscious. In its second section, "A Feeling for Nature at the Buttes-Chaumont," Aragon writes of this nature as "my unconscious" (P 138).

form. If Aragon returns to the 19th-century arcade in Paysan, Ernst recalls the 19th-century interior in his three collage novels, La Femme 100 têtes (1929), Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au carmel (1930) and Une Semaine de bonté (1934). In these texts Ernst collages 19th-century illustrations, some from old goods catalogues and scientific magazines, most from melodramatic novels and salon paintings, into elliptical narratives. La Femme 100 têtes, which Giedion reads as "a symbolic name for the 19th century,"⁴¹ is filled with scenes of psychic and physical violation. Steeped in Surrealist anticlericism, Rêve d'une petite fille and Une Semaine de bonté are more conventionally scandalous: the first concerns a little girl whose dream of a life devoted to God is turned into a perverse parody of the religious vocation, while the second is a compendium of seven deadly sins, an anti-prayer book or parodic book of hours. The significance of the novels, however, does not reside in the fragmented storylines; rather, it has to do with a mise-en-scène of the unconscious that certain images suggest. Ernst found these outmoded images in the literary equivalent of the flea-market--used book stores, magazine stalls along the Seine and the like. And he deploys them in the novels precisely in the register of the uncanny, as once familiar images made strange by historical (indeed modernist)

⁴¹ Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History (New York, 1948), pp. 361-2.

repression. Many of the images are literally unheimlich--Victorian interiors defamiliarized in time and dislocated in collage. In this way Ernst relates the historically outmoded to the psychically repressed at the very level of representation, specifically of representations that largely date from the childhood of the Surrealists--that is to say, from the Freudian discovery of the unconscious.

We noted in Chapter Three that the novels are punctuated by images that restage infantile scenes or fantasies constitutive of the unconscious (e.g., primal scenes, castration fantasies [Figs. 34, 35]). These scenes are naturally set in domestic interiors, but the fact that they are outmoded complicates this obvious setting. For Ernst not only restages scenes in the formation of the unconscious but also returns the Freudian discovery of the unconscious to its own historical setting in the late Victorian home.⁴² Through the connection between the outmoded and the repressed a visual archaeology of this discovery is thus sketched out: just as Aragon saw the arcade as an analogue of the "hitherto forbidden realm" (P 101) of the unconscious, so Ernst proposes another analogue in the interior. But no more than in Aragon is this relation simply metaphorical: in the collage novels Ernst also suggests historical preconditions

⁴² For the contextualization of psychoanalysis see, for example, Juliet Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism (London, 1974), pp. 419-35, and Stephen Toulmin and A. Janik, Wittgenstein's Vienna (New York, 1973).

of this becoming unconscious of subjectivity.

Many of the sources are overtly melodramatic. Several images in Une Semaine de bonté, for example, are based on Jules Marey illustrations for Les Damnées de Paris, a 1883 novel of murder and mayhem.⁴³ These illustrations depict dramas de passion, such as a woman spied upon by a man or a scene of a murder or a suicide. However, in his appropriation Ernst relocates these scenes in psychic reality through the substitution of Surrealist figures of the unconscious: a primitive (Easter Island) head in the first image and a lion's head in the second--and a general becoming animal in both images [Figs. 87, 88]. This transformation only articulates what is implicit in the found illustrations, for melodrama is a genre already given over to the unconscious, a genre in which repressed desires are "hysterically" expressed. Significantly in the collage novels, especially in Une Semaine de bonté, this melodramatic return of the repressed is registered not only in the becoming-monstrous of the figures but also in the becoming-hysterical of the interiors: images evocative of "perversions" of all sorts (e.g., sodomy, sadomasochism, lesbianism) erupt in these rooms, often in paintings or mirrors on the walls [Figs. 80, 89, 90]. Here the mirror as a reflection of perceptual reality, the paradigm of realist painting, becomes a window

⁴³ See Werner Spies, "The Laws of Chance," in Homage to Max Ernst (New York, 1971), 17-8. Also see Werner Hofmann, "Max Ernst and the Nineteenth Century" in the same volume.

onto psychic reality, the paradigm of Surrealist art.⁶⁴

In short, these stuffed interiors are literally convulsed--but by what exactly? What is the repressed of this architecture, of this epoch, that is registered in these rooms? One answer seems obvious enough: sexual desire, especially the "aberrations" evoked in particular images.⁶⁵ As if to underscore this symptomatology of the repressed and to complete his archaeology of the unconscious, Ernst concludes the last of his novels, Une Semaine de bonté, with a few images of hysterics derived from the Iconographie of Charcot [Figs. 91, 92].⁶⁶ As Ernst well knows, psychoanalysis is pitched on the body of the hysteric: it is where the workings of the unconscious were first posited (and where the relationships among the image and the body, knowledge and desire, are still problematized). If Ernst connects the uncanny and the outmoded through scenes of the unconscious and the interior, it is here that he does so most exactly: at

⁶⁴ See Chapter Three.

⁶⁵ This answer is not specific enough, for desire is even more repressed in modernist architectures. See Anthony Vidler, "The Architecture of the Uncanny: The Unhomely Houses of the Romantic Sublime," Assemblage 3 (July 1987), p. 24.

⁶⁶ Again I am indebted to Rosalind Krauss for this association. In La Femme 100 têtes Ernst constructs an image of a primal scene (Fig. 34; see Chapter Three) out of an illustration in an 1883 essay in the popular science magazine La Nature on the use of chronophotography in the representation of hysterical symptoms [Fig. 93]. Here again we glimpse a historical and technical synchronicity between hysteria and photography via convulsive beauty. Thanks to Erica Wolf for her help on this source.

the site of hysteria--not only the late Victorian home but the Charcot clinic, the analyst couch, wherever the body of the woman, is surveyed for symptoms. As suggested in Chapter Two, convulsive beauty is largely an aestheticization of hysteria, one which, even as it objectifies the feminine position, also disrupts the masculine. For, on the one hand, the feminine subject is objectified through the very analogy of Surrealist image and hysterical symptom, while, on the other, the masculine subject is disrupted by this feminine object, this hysterical beauty. In effect, the masculine subject is rendered hysterical too, for like the hysteric his axes of identification and desire become confused (as in the classic question of the hysteric: am I a man or a woman?). For Ernst in particular, this convulsive identity is the most important effect of convulsive beauty.⁴⁷

The uncanny disruptions of the Ernst interiors also register other types of repressed contents--social contents sedimented, as it were, in the interior as an historical

⁴⁷ As noted in Chapter Two, Freud posed different conceptions of hysteria: one in terms of the conversion of a repressed wish into a somatic sign through association, another in terms of the sexual confusion just described. As suggested in Chapter Three, Ernst identifies with the hysteric precisely in this confusion. (Significant in this regard is a series of photo-booth self-portraits, published in Variétés, of Ernst in several quasi-hysterical poses [Fig. 94].) For a critique of the theory of somatic association see Monique David-Ménard, L'Hystérique entre Freud et Lacan: Corps et langage en psychanalyse (Paris, 1983), translated by Catherine Porter as Hysteria from Freud to Lacan: Body and Language in Psychoanalysis (Ithaca, 1989); and for the origins of hysteria see Georges Didi-Hubermann, L'Invention de l'hystérie (Paris, 1982).

form. And as with Aragon it is this connection between the psychic and the historical which is both provocative and problematic in Ernst. The interior has a special place in critical studies on 19th-century culture that are contemporaneous with the collage novels. In his 1933 dissertation on Kierkegaard Adorno argues that the Kierkegaardian notion of an inward realm of spirituality is grounded in an ideological image of the bourgeois interior, in its status as a refuge from a debased material world: "the immanence of consciousness itself is, as intérieur, the dialectical image for the 19th century as alienation."⁴⁰ This alienation misrecognized as spirituality is evoked in several images in the Ernst collage novels, one of which implies that such alienation is the very precondition of the artist or aesthete [Fig. 95].

In his 1935 exposé "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" Benjamin also analyzes the bourgeois interior as a refuge from the reality principle of the workplace. For Benjamin the interior embodies the new ideological division not only between working and living, office and home, but

⁴⁰ Adorno letter to Benjamin (August 2, 1935), in Aesthetics and Politics, ed. Ronald Taylor et al. (London, 1977), p. 112. Also see Adorno, Konstruktion des Aesthetischen (1933), translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor as Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic (Minneapolis, 1989). Adorno relates this alienation to the social position of Kierkegaard as a rentier disconnected from the productive process. The Adorno critique of Kierkegaard also had a contemporary object: existentialism, particularly of the Heideggerian sort.

also between public and private, social and subjective. In this private space both the industrial aspects of the work world and the unstable aspects of the public realm are repressed--only to return, according to the formula of the uncanny, in displaced fantastic form. For in the bourgeois interior the actual retreat from the social world is compensated by an imaginary embrace of exotic and historical worlds--hence its typical arrangements of different objects in eclectic styles.

From this [social repression] sprang the phantasmagorias of the interior. This represented the universe for the private citizen. In it he assembled the distant in space and in time. His drawing-room was a box in the world-theatre.⁶⁷

That this embrace is illusory is suggested by the other principal characteristic of the interior for Benjamin: its function as a "casing", i.e., a protective shell wherein the bourgeoisie attempts to preserve its private familial traces against the very impermanence that its public capitalist order produces.⁷⁰ In his novels Ernst exposes both these

⁶⁷ Benjamin, "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," pp. 167-8. This historicist eclecticism is no simple indication of decline; it can also be read as a sign of wanton mastery over the processes of signification as well as of the means of production. It also, of course, points to the expanded markets of imperialism.

⁷⁰ Benjamin: "Since the days of Louis-Philippe the bourgeoisie has endeavored to compensate itself for the inconsequential nature of private life in the big city. It seeks such compensation within its four walls. Even if a bourgeois is unable to give his early being permanence, it seems to be a matter of honor with him to preserve the traces of his articles and requisites of daily use in perpetuity" ("The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," p. 46). In

aspects of the interior: in some collages he points to the repression that underlies its historical phantasmagoria [Fig. 96], while in others he parodies its status as a private casing through a literal fossilization of natural forms [Fig. 97]. More generally, Ernst not only exposes the interior as a figure of bourgeois subjectivity (in the manner decoded by Adorno), but also opens up the interior to the outside which defines it as such, i.e., to the psychic and cultural others of this subjectivity. In one typical image a middle-class matron gazes in a mirror only to find a primitive head reflected there; meanwhile two praying mantises perform a deadly coitus on her dressing table as a possessed naked young woman roams outside her window [Fig. 98].

Neither Adorno nor Benjamin convey the "psychic unrest"⁷¹ of the bourgeois interior as tapped by Ernst in such collages. This articulation was left to Giedion, who was influenced in this regard by all three figures. For Giedion the collage novels reveal that the bourgeois interior failed as a refuge from the industrial world: "These pages of Max Ernst," he writes in his 1948 history Mechanization Takes Command, "show how a mechanized environment has affected our

Mechanization Takes Command (p. 365) Giedion notes that the stuffed interior, so marked in the Ernst collages, emerges with the new industrial bourgeoisie. In The Railway Journey (New York, 1977, p. 123) Wolfgang Schivelbusch in turn suggests that this stuffed interior served a psychological function for the bourgeoisie: to soften the shocks of its own industrial order.

⁷¹ Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command, p. 8.

subconscious."⁷² For Giedion this effect has to do with "the devaluation of symbols" caused by industrial production, a devaluation most marked in the bourgeois interior.⁷³ Such interiors were filled with objects of all sorts--statuary, carpets, drapes, ornaments--whose mechanical production was only lightly disguised by historical styles and natural motifs. Such production "hollows out" these things, Benjamin, Aragon and Giedion argue, deprives them of use value, turns them into kitsch. Thus alienated, the objects become ciphers of subjective alienation loaded, as Adorno writes, "with intentions of wish and anxiety."⁷⁴ In his interiors Ernst makes this wishful anxiety, its "mixture of the banal and the eerie," manifest.⁷⁵ Many of his images derive from old catalogues of goods and fashions such as Catalogue de grand magasin du Louvre, Magasin des nouveautés and Attributs de commerce. The fetishistic shine of these commodities has long since dulled; what remains are traces of the wishful anxiety with which they were once invested. In his collages Ernst accentuates these traces; as a result the objects of the

⁷² Ibid., p. 362.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 361. For Giedion this devaluation is the result of mechanization; for Benjamin it is an effect of commodification. Obviously the two processes are integrally related.

⁷⁴ Adorno letter to Benjamin (August 5, 1935) as quoted by Benjamin in "N [Theoretics of Knowledge; Theory of Progress]," 5, 2, p. 12.

⁷⁵ Giedion, Mechanization Takes Command, p. 361.

19th-century bourgeoisie appear not only as ruins but almost as ghosts--ghosts which, filled with desire and dread for the patriarchal subject, are often figured as women [Fig 96].⁷⁶

Ernst returns to a moment when mechanical-commodified objects had begun to dominate bourgeois interiors at a time when such objects and interiors had begun to be outmoded. At roughly the same time Dalí focuses on a later point in this dialectic of the industrial and the outmoded, specifically on a form which is both modern and démodé in the 1930s: Art Nouveau architecture. What remains implicit in Aragon and Ernst--the arcade and the interior as hysterical expressions of repressed desires, even as spatial analogues of the unconscious--becomes explicit in the Dalí account of this style.

No collective effort has produced a dream world so pure and so disturbing as the "Modern Style" buildings, these being, apart from architecture, a true realization in themselves of desires grown solid. Their most violent and cruel automatism pitifully betrays a hatred of reality and a need for seeking refuge in an ideal world, just as it happens in infantile neurosis.⁷⁷

Dalí not only relates this architecture to the unconscious,⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Adorno: "Surrealism toppled the images of antiquity from their Platonic heaven. In Max Ernst's work they roam about like phantoms among the late 19th century middle class, for which art, neutralized in the form of a cultural heritage, had in fact become a ghost" (Aesthetic Theory, trans. C. Lenhardt [London, 1984], p. 415).

⁷⁷ Dalí, "The Stinking Ass," p. 54.

⁷⁸ Like Breton Dalí draws this analogy through the Rimbaudian figure of "a salon at the bottom of a lake."

but also understands this relation in terms of a withdrawal from social reality--though hardly in the manner of Adorno and Benjamin. For Dali celebrates this retreat precisely as a regression, and he is hardly concerned with its historical conditions: an industrialization of society and culture first pervasive at this time. Indeed, Dali wants to see such architecture as "postmechanical"⁷⁷ when it is precisely the mechanical which informs Art Nouveau. In a fetishistic way Art Nouveau both recognizes and disavows the industrial; i.e., it uses industrial materials but mostly to mitigate them through idiosyncratic designs, to absorb them into art. If industry rivals art in the arcades near the beginning of the 19th century, and if mechanization penetrates the interior during the middle of the century, then Art Nouveau reveals art "imprisoned by technical advance"⁸⁰ at the end of the century. Its defense against technology is similar to that of the interior: a double tropism to historical styles and natural motifs. Dali understands this defense as pathological, and it is this pathology that delights him. "In a modern style building," he writes in his 1933 Minotaure essay "De la beauté terrifiante et comestible, de l'architecture modern'style," "the Gothic metamorphoses into

⁷⁷ Dali, "Objets surréalistes," Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 3 (1931), translated by David Gascoyne as "The Object as Revealed in Surrealist Experiment" in This Quarter 5, 1 (September 1932), p. 198.

⁸⁰ Benjamin, "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," p. 168.

the Hellenic, into the Far East and...into the Renaissance...all in the 'feeble' time and space...little known and truly vertiginous which are none other than those of the dream...."⁸¹ This historical phantasmagoria of Art Nouveau is matched by its fantasias on the theme of nature, such as floral motifs forged in iron (e.g., Hector Guimard) and concrete facades in the form of waves (e.g., Antonio Gaudi). These conceits, compensatory as they are, also delight Dalí, as the images that accompany his text-- photographs by Brassai and Man Ray of Guimard Metro entrances and Gaudi Barcelona buildings--clearly attest [Figs. 99, 100].

In Minotaure 3-4 Dalí places his essay on Art Nouveau architecture between his "Involuntary Sculptures" and his "Phenomenon of Ecstasy," the first a series of photographs of trivial things subconsciously molded into strange shapes,⁸² the second a short text with a collage of faces and ears of "ecstatic" women [Figs. 101, 102]. Dalí juxtaposes these visual texts partly to underscore the "automatic" and "hysterical" aspects of Art Nouveau, perhaps even to suggest

⁸¹ Dalí, "De la beauté terrifiante...", p.71. Dawn Ades argues that this celebration of Art Nouveau was also intended to scandalize the official taste for tribal art; as opposed to "savage objects" "the ultra-decadent, civilized and European 'Modern Style'." See Ades, Dalí and Surrealism (New York, 1981), pp. 102-03.

⁸² The photographs were made by Brassai but captioned by Dalí; see Chapter Two.

that its historicist and natural forms are uncanny as such.⁸³ However, as with Ernst, the association with hysteria suggests more: that the psychic disturbance as registered by Dalí in this style is also rooted in historical contradiction, that this strange architecture expresses hysterically, as it were, a social repression. For Dalí, it seems, this is simply the repression of the "symbolic-psychic-materialist function" of Art Nouveau by the "functionalist ideal" of modernist art and architecture,⁸⁴ but more is at stake here than style. For in Art Nouveau the contradiction inherent in bourgeois culture--that it becomes evermore technical and evermore subjective--is developed to an extreme point. On the one hand, as we have seen, Art Nouveau attempts torturously to absorb "technical advance" within the categories of art; thus its use of novel processes like concrete in traditional practices of ornamentation. On the other hand, as Benjamin argues, Art Nouveau also attempts to mobilize "all the forces of interiority" against such technical advance; thus its insistence on "the mediumistic language of line, in the flower as symbol of...naked, vegetable Nature."⁸⁵ Dalí intuits this cultural conflict

⁸³ In the article Dalí applies such terms directly to sculptural details in Gaudi buildings.

⁸⁴ Dalí refers to "execrable 'modern art'" and Art Nouveau as "despised and neglected" in "The Stinking Ass", p. 54.

⁸⁵ Benjamin, "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," p. 168.

between the technical and the subjective: it is this that he terms the "perversity" of Art Nouveau. However interested in its disruptive potential, he delimits its critical effect greatly. For the most part he portrays Art Nouveau as perverse simply in order to scandalize functionalist doxa, modernist puritanism and "intellectualist aesthetics".^{ee}

In Dalí, then, the outmoded is more outré than revolutionary, more anachronistic than "asynchronistic" (again, the Aragon term for the outmoded). In fact, Dalí develops a notion of anachronism in his early writing and throughout his artistic practice. In this regard his "retrograde technique" (e.g., illusionist and perspectival devices) complements his simulated regressions (e.g., paranoia, oral sadism, coprophilia). Indeed, the two operations, stylistic anachronism and psychic atavism, effectively produce the Dalí oeuvre and persona. Eventually these two operations also involve him first in fascism and then in fashion. And this is not accidental: indeed, it is in relation to these two formations that the Surrealist outmoded must finally be placed.

In a 1934 text Dalí defines anachronism in terms similar to our description of the Surrealist outmoded--as a return of the repressed that is both disruptive and therapeutic, both a

^{ee} "Erotic desire," Dalí writes in "De la beauté terrifiante...", "is the ruin of intellectualist aesthetics" (p. 76).

"sentimental cataclysm" and a "traumatic renewal".⁸⁷ However, here again his purpose is to outrage vanguardist sensibility more than, as with Aragon and Ernst, to convulse given constructions of identity and history. Implicitly Dalí poses anachronism as a process of "uprooted ephemera"⁸⁸ against modernism as a process of continuous innovation. Yet even this incipient critique of modernist art as bound up in the dynamic of commodity production is spurious--and not simply because it comes from "Avida Dollars", future designer of kitsch jewelry, objets d'art and window displays.⁸⁹ It is spurious because anachronism does not oppose commodity innovation so much as it propels it in the form of the démodé returned as à la mode, of the retro recovered as risqué. This dynamic, which now informs cultural production both high and low, is first articulated in art by Dalí, who effectively displaces the Surrealist practice of the outmoded with the surrealist taste for the démodé. Rather than an uncanny disruption of the present and a comedic completion of the past, such Daliesque anachronism "uproots" past forms

⁸⁷ Dalí, "Derniers modes d'excitation intellectuelle pour l'été 1934," Documents 34 (June 1934); significantly, this issue concludes the L'Amour fou fragment "Equation de l'objet trouvé." Dalí sees anachronism in terms of trauma or "shocks" [commotions]: it marks us "in our flesh and in our memories"; it expresses "the terrifying white of the skinned bone of our own death."

⁸⁸ Dalí, "De la beauté terrifiante..." p. 73.

⁸⁹ For an account of this production see Ades, Dalí and Surrealism, pp. 168-69.

precisely so as to serve present "ephemera"; rather than a cultural revolution keyed to disjunct modes of production, it abets a compulsive repetition calibrated to smooth cycles of consumption.

The Surrealists are aware of this tendency within Surrealism, of the outmoded reduced to the démodé, of the aura of the old placed in the service of the fetishism of the commodity. For example, in a 1929 Documents text Robert Desnos notes the "pseduo-consecration" which "time or market value confers upon objects."⁷⁰ And in a retrospective essay Claude Lévi-Strauss, a late associate of the Surrealists, describes the recuperation of the Surrealist outmoded within the very system of exchange which it once implicitly critiqued--a transformation that, for Lévi-Strauss, sees the flea-market trouvaille become the fashion-boutique accessory.⁷¹ Dali exposes this transformation from "the revolutionary energies of the outmoded" to the frenetic

⁷⁰ Robert Desnos, "Imagerie moderne", Documents 7 (December 1929), pp. 377-78.

⁷¹ Claude Lévi-Strauss, "New York en 1941," in Paris-New York (Paris, 1977), pp. 79-83; translated by Joachim Neugroschel and Phoebe Hoss in The View from Afar (New York, 1985), pp. 258-67. Lévi-Strauss captures not only the aura but also the historicity of the outmoded: "As the relics and witnesses of an era that was already industrial, but in which economic pressures and the demands of mass production were not yet urgent and permitted a certain continuity of past forms and the existence of useless ornaments, these articles acquired an almost supernatural quality. They bear witness among us to the still real presence of a lost world." "Today," he adds, "all these objects [old kerosene lamps, outmoded old clothes, late-nineteenth-century bric-à-brac] are avidly gathered in Parisian shops..." (p. 263).

status quo of fashion most flagrantly, and he is made its scapegoat.

Dalí is also made the sacrificial victim of another crucial connection--between Surrealism and fascism, specifically between the Surrealist practice of the outmoded and the fascist exploitation of the atavistic.⁷² For Dalí not only comes to serve the fashion industry; he also displays an ambiguous interest in fascism--in the very figures of Hitler, whom he regards as "the perfect image of the great masochist," and of the swastika, which he sees as a surrealistic "amalgam of antagonistic tendencies."⁷³ This interest prompts his first expulsion from Surrealism in 1934, an expulsion that is defensive to the degree Dalí here exposes a commonality between Surrealism and fascism vis-à-vis the archaic.⁷⁴ In Chapter Four I noted that it is in the Surrealist milieu that Benjamin theorizes the fascist exploitation of the mechanical-commodified, of the (social)

⁷² Several Surrealist associates, mostly early ones who quickly became disenfranchised, developed fascist sympathies, the most famous being Drieu La Rochelle. On this connection see Alice Yaeger Kaplan, Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature, and French Intellectual Life (Minneapolis, 1986).

⁷³ Dalí, Comment on devient Dalí, as told to André Parinaud (Paris, 1973), translated as The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí (London, 1976), and "Honneur à l'objet," Cahiers d'Art (Paris, 1936). In Chapter Four I pointed to a masochistic tendency, differently mediated, in fascism and Surrealism alike.

⁷⁴ The Surrealist purging of Dalí on grounds of "counter-revolutionary actions involving the glorification of Hitlerian fascism" is recounted in Ades, Dalí, pp. 106-08.

body as (war) machine, an exploitation which Surrealism investigates critically. It is also in the Surrealist milieu that Ernst Bloch theorizes the fascist exploitation of the counterpart of the mechanical-commodified, the outmoded (or, in his terminology, the nonsynchronous), an exploitation in which Surrealism again participates--but to dialectically different ends.⁷⁵

Informed like Benjamin by Surrealism, Bloch discusses the nonsynchronous in the 1935 text Erbschaft dieser Zeit (Heritage of This Time, a significant title for us here). He too derives the notion from the Marxian concept of the uneven development of productive modes and social formations, and its gist is simple: "Not all people exist in the same Now".⁷⁶ The nonsynchronism that concerns Bloch is the "uncompleted past which has not yet been 'sublated' by capitalism" but which is presently exploited by fascism.⁷⁷ For Bloch fascism preys on class fractions displaced by capitalism and/or threatened by communism (e.g., déclassé youth, peasants, the

⁷⁵ "The task," Bloch writes as if with Surrealism in mind, "is to extrapolate the elements of the nonsynchronous contradiction which are capable of antipathy and transformation, that is, those hostile to capitalism and are homeless in it, and to refit them to function in a different context" ("Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to Its Dialectics," trans. Mark Ritter, New German Critique 11 [September 1977], p. 36).

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 22. The Bloch term "nonsynchronous" recalls the Aragon term "asynchronism".

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 31. "The essence of fascist ideology," Bloch writes, "[is] to incorporate the morbid components of all cultural phases" (p. 36).

petit-bourgeoisie), fractions seduced by its "primitive-
 atavistic 'participation mystique.'" 76 This mystique is
 nothing other than a concerted regression, through the
 nonsynchronous, to archaic structures of feeling (as captured
 in the infamous slogan Blood and Soil), a regression that
 serves the purposes of blind allegiance to Nazi power. In
 effect, fascism attempts to subsume the forces of the
 outmoded in the form of the atavistic to bind its subjects
 psychically. Although Bloch does not do so, it is finally
 against this reactionary abuse of the nonsynchronous that we
 must pose the revolutionary energies of the Surrealist
 outmoded, against the archaic image of fascist ideology that
 we must pose the dialectical image of Surrealist art. Here
 again, theoretically, aesthetically and indeed politically,
 Surrealism appears as the critical double of its hideous
 contemporary, which it anticipates, partially collaborates
 with, mostly contests. 77 On the one hand, fascism uses the
 past in order both to control the present and to seal the
 future; in effect, it exploits the uncanny in order to lock
 both present and future into a tragic repetition of atavistic

76 Ibid., p. 26.

77 Certain groups in the Surrealist milieu attempted to address the same problems that fascism exploited--the nature of the sacred, the basis of the social in the sacrificial, the modern countertendency toward the atavistic--in an anthropological critique which, cognizant of the death drive, was not entirely bound to it. This is especially true of the Collège de Sociologie formed around Bataille, Caillois and Leiris; see The College of Sociology, passim.

psychic and social forms, a repetition which, we can now say, is governed by the death drive.¹⁰⁰ Surrealism, on the other hand, uses the past precisely so as to disrupt the present and to open up the future; in effect, it exploits the uncanny for critical purposes. In so doing it attempts to recoup the uncanny, to turn the compulsive return of the repressed into comedic resolution, a resolution which might free both the subject and the past from defusion and death and place them in the service of erotic binding and revolutionary life.

¹⁰⁰ In this sense fascism is, as is sometimes remarked, "psychoanalysis in reverse."

Chapter Six

CONCLUSION:

SURREALISM, AURA AND ANXIETY

At several points in this essay I have suggested an hypothesis about Surrealism: not only that it revolves around the uncanny or the return of the repressed, but that it oscillates between two uncanny fantasies in particular, a fantasy of maternal plenitude, of a space-time of bodily intimacy and psychic unity before any separation or loss, and a fantasy of paternal punishment, of the trauma of such separation or loss. Dominated by two figures, the phallic (or noncastrated) mother and the castrative father, both these fantasies return as uncanny because both are repressed. I have also argued that Surrealism works to restage these repressed (pre)Oedipal fantasies precisely in order to disrupt the structures of subjectivity and representation that are largely rooted in them.

This oscillation between fantasies of maternal benevolence and paternal threat informs the ways in which the Surrealists see the world. We have noted how they often project an uncanny animation onto the spaces around them (e.g., in the form of enigmatic signals, objects and persecutors for Breton, de Chirico and Ernst), an animation whereby the world, as it were, gazes back upon them. This gaze also oscillates between the two registers of the

benevolent and the castrative, an oscillation which in turn produces both different effects in the subject and different apprehensions of space. By way of a conclusion I want to think these two kinds of uncanniness in Surrealism, these two types of gazes, subjective effects and spatial constructions, in terms of two concepts which, bound up with the uncanny, are also thought either at the time of Surrealism or again in its milieu: the Benjaminian concept of aura and the Freudian concept of anxiety.

The connection between anxiety and the uncanny is clear: the first is the effect of the second.¹ Aura and the uncanny are also associated, though more indirectly, for just as the uncanny involves the return of a familiar thing made strange through repression, so aura according to Benjamin also concerns "a strange web of space and time: the unique appearance of a distance, however close at hand."² In some

¹ "[I]f psychoanalytic theory is correct in maintaining that every emotional affect, whatever its quality, is transformed by repression into a morbid anxiety, then among such cases of anxiety there must be a class in which the anxiety can be shown to come from something repressed which recurs" (Freud, "The Uncanny", in Studies in Parapsychology, ed. Philip Rieff [New York, 1963], p. 47).

² Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography" (1931), trans. Phil Patton, in Alan Trachtenberg, ed., Classic Essays on Photography (New Haven, 1980), p. 209. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936; in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn [New York, 1968], pp. 217-51) Benjamin relates the aura of an art object to its cult value or ritual function. Such ceremonial works are usually veiled or hidden, and the aura is experienced only when they are shown, i.e., in the manifestation of this hiddenness. Similarly, as Freud quotes Schelling, "'Unheimlich' is the name for everything that

sense, then, aura and anxiety share a point of origin or intersection in the uncanny; they are thus not so much opposed as dialectical terms (as is the case, in the Benjaminian lexicon, with aura and shock). This is also suggested by the way that they are developed in Surrealism. Before we recapitulate this development, however, we need to understand the two concepts more fully.

Freud posed two distinct conceptions of anxiety. He first saw anxiety as a discharge of libido or sexual excitation rejected by the ego; however, in 1926 he posited the ego as the source of anxiety.³ In this account anxiety becomes a homeopathic signal of danger, a repetition of a past trauma in a mitigated mnemonic form deployed by the ego to ward away expected trauma or at least to gird for it.⁴ In The Trauma of Birth (1924) Otto Rank refers all anxiety to the ur-trauma of birth. In Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety (1926) Freud argues on the contrary that trauma takes many forms: other separations from the mother, threats of

ought to have remained...hidden and secret and has become visible" (Freud, "The Uncanny", p. 27). Also, for Benjamin the Madonna is a primary example of the auratic art work (again, usually hidden); so, too, for Freud the uncanny hovers around the memory of the maternal body. Miriam Hansen develops the connection between aura and the uncanny brilliantly in "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: 'The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology'," New German Critique 40 (Winter 1987), pp. 179-224.

³ See Freud, Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety, trans. Alix Strachey (New York, 1959), p. 87 and passim.

⁴ "Ego subjects itself to anxiety as a sort of inoculation" (Ibid., p. 88).

castration, premature initiations into sexuality, even intimations of mortality--traumas which, repressed, return as uncanny. Nevertheless, like birth all these traumas produce a helplessness (Hilflosigkeit), and it is this helplessness that generates anxiety. Also like birth they all involve excessive stimuli that are external or internal, worldly or instinctual--or both. (In fact, for the subject the two types of stimuli converge in the traumatic situation.)² According to the psychic law of the compulsion to repeat, the anxiety first generated by the helplessness of birth is later repeated in traumatic situations, as it is, according to Freud, in the stirring of sexuality in childhood: "It is a curious thing that early contact with the demands of sexuality should have a similar effect on the ego to that produced by premature contact with the external world."³ It is also repeated in adulthood whenever the subject cannot meet an instinctual demand. In effect, then, like the fort/da game, anxiety is a device of repetition triggered by danger

² Ibid., p. 94. When the danger is entirely unknown, i.e., instinctual, then the anxiety is neurotic.

³ Ibid., p. 81. For Freud the helplessness of the infant is biological; that of the immature subject confronted with sexuality phylogenetic; and that of the mature subject before an instinctual demand perceived as a danger psychological. By "phylogenetic" here Freud means to suggest that the period of latency in the sexual development of the subject recapitulates "the period of latency" experienced by the species in the ice age; the one interruption recalls the other. This "theory" was largely inspired by Sandor Ferenczi, especially his Versuch einer Genitaltheorie (Leipzig and Vienna, 1924), translated as Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality (New York, 1938).

in order to mitigate a traumatic situation of perceived loss.⁷

Clearly this concept is pertinent to my "traumatic" account of Surrealism, for I have read much of its art as so many attempts to abreact trauma, with its primary feeling-tone precisely one of anxiety. On a theoretical level the transformation of trauma into a mnemonic symbol is intuited in the Surrealist analogy between symptomatization and symbolization. And on a psychic level various oeuvres in Surrealism recapitulate different moments of trauma as noted by Freud: the feared separation from the mother (especially in Breton), the traumatic awakening of sexuality (in de Chirico), the shocked recognition of sexual difference (in Ernst), the fantasmatic loss of the penis (in Giacometti), the defusive helplessness before masochistic demands (in Bellmer), etc. Moreover, the attributes of anxiety are prominent in Surrealist experience: e.g., a confusion of inside and outside whereby endogenous or "compulsive" stimuli are projected outward as exogenous or "convulsive" signs, as in convulsive beauty; a relay of repetition and expectation in which past and future or memory and prophecy are somehow conflated, as in objective chance; and generally a replaying

⁷ "Anxiety is the original reaction to helplessness in the trauma and is reproduced later on in the danger-situation as a signal for help. The ego, which experienced the trauma passively, now repeats it actively in a weakened version, in the hope of being able itself to direct its course" (Ibid., pp. 92-3).

of the loss of a primal love object as an ambiguous defense or working through of trauma, apparent in the work of all the aforementioned Surrealists. Finally, as I suggested in Chapters Four and Five, the traumas thus parried in Surrealism derive not only from individual psychic life but also from modern capitalist society: the excessive stimuli of the city in general and of the becoming machine and/or commodity of the body in particular.⁶ Much of this is evoked in the great Bretonian formula: "Interpretive delirium begins only when man, ill-prepared, is taken by a sudden fear in the forest of symbols." This formula captures many Surrealist notions precisely in terms of anxiety: the concern with Stimmung and "surprise" in de Chirico, the convulsion of identity advocated by Ernst, the paranoid-critical method of Dalí, and, more generally, the pose of disponibilité in the space of the city seen as an array of ambiguous signs.⁷

Auratic experiences are no less cultivated in Surrealism than are anxious affects. Above I noted the similarity of

⁶ Benjamin also implies this in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction": "Man's need to expose himself to shock effects is his adjustment to the dangers threatening him" (p. 250). Again, any thorough theory of modernism must account for both registers of shock, the psychic and the social, as they are worked through in art--but that is another project.

⁷ The Freudian term for such signs is Angstsignal, and, as noted in Chapter Two, Breton uses a similar term in Nadia (Paris, 1928; translated by Richard Howard [New York, 1960], p. 19; N hereafter). In a sense, disponibilité is a benign form of anxiety, since in anxiety as in disponibilité the object is not known but the danger is expected.

aura as "a unique manifestation of distance" to the uncanny as a return of the repressed, a similarity which suggests in turn that this auratic distance is temporal, i.e., that it involves the perception of a "forgotten human dimension."¹⁰ For Benjamin this dimension seems to encompass at least three registers. One is natural: the aura of an empathic moment of human connection to material things, which Benjamin evokes at one point through the image of a hand tracing the line of a mountain range or of a recumbent body receiving the shadow of a twig.¹¹ The Surrealists were sensitive to this aura of found natural objects, which they often exhibited; Breton, Caillois and Mabille in particular were fascinated, for example, by "the language of stones."¹² Another register is cultural and historical: the aura not only of cultic works of art but also of artisanal objects where the "traces of the practiced hand" are still evident.¹³ As we saw in Chapter

¹⁰ Marleen Stoessel, Aura, das vergessene Menschliche: Zu Sprache und Erfahrung bei Walter Benjamin (Munich, 1983).

¹¹ Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," p. 209. This is not to say that this perception of the natural is not coded, dependent on a certain semiotic order of social relations.

¹² See, for example, Breton "Langue des pierres," Le Surréalisme, même (Autumn 1957), pp. 12-4. Among the categories of the 1936 "Exposition surréaliste d'objets," for example, were objets naturels interprétés and objets naturels incorporés.

¹³ Benjamin: "If we designate as aura the associations which, at home in the memoire involontaire, tend to cluster around the object of a perception, then its analogue in the case of a utilitarian object is the experience which has left traces of the practiced hand" ("On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in Illuminations, p. 186). When Adorno proposed

Five, this aura is especially active in the Surrealist interest in the outmoded, as in the slipper spoon of "peasant fabrication".¹⁴ Finally, the third register, which invests the other two with psychic intensity, is subjective: the aura of the memory of a primal relationship to the body, to the maternal body--a relationship evoked in The Invisible Object but also in all the childhood images that so attracted the Surrealists. In Surrealism as in Benjamin all three registers are allegorically interwoven: thus the connections, made, for example, in Le Paysan de Paris, Une Semaine de bonté and many other visual texts, among natural (or prehistorical) images, historical (or phylogenetic) references, and subjective (or psychic) effects.¹⁵

Some of these registers are evoked in the fullest description of aura offered by Benjamin:

Experience of the aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return. This experience corresponds to the

that the "forgotten human dimension" in things was labor alone, Benjamin demurred, with an insistence on the natural (if not the maternal) connection. See Hansen, "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience," p. 212.

¹⁴ Breton, L'Amour fou (Paris, 1937), translated by Mary Ann Caws as Mad Love (Lincoln, 1987), p. 30; AF hereafter.

¹⁵ I use the parenthetical terms in order to suggest a possible correlation with the schema of anxiety noted in footnote 6.

data of the memoire involontaire.¹⁶

Clearly for Benjamin aura involves a gaze distinct from the anxious look found in de Chirico and Ernst, but before we take up this point two others must be noted. Consciously or not, Benjamin articulates aura in relation to Marxian and Freudian conceptions of fetishism. In fact, his definition of aura as an empathic "transposition" of a rapport between people to that between a human and an object reads as the inverse of the definition of commodity fetishism as a perverse confusion of human qualities and object attributes, a reification of producers and an animation of products. Whereas in auratic experience the object becomes human, as it were, in commodity fetishism the human becomes objectified, and social relations assume "the phantasmagoric form of a relation between things."¹⁷ Contrary to auratic experience the human dimension remains forgotten in commodity fetishism;

¹⁶ Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," p. 188.

¹⁷ Marx, Capital, vol. 1 (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 165. Benjamin evokes the Marxist formulation more directly in another fragment of the Passagen-Werk: "Derivation of the aura as a projection of a social experience of people onto nature: the gaze is returned" ("Central Park", trans. Lloyd Spencer, New German Critique 34 [Winter 1985], p. 41). Marcel Mauss also evokes the Marxist formulation implicitly to the gift to the commodity: "In all these instances there is a series of rights and duties about consuming and repaying existing side by side with rights and duties about giving and receiving. The pattern of symmetrical and reciprocal rights is not difficult to understand if we realize that it is first and foremost a pattern of spiritual bonds between things which are to some extent parts of persons, and persons and groups that behave in some measure as if they were things." As suggested in Chapters Four and Five, the Surrealists are involved in a similar implicit critique of the commodity.

indeed, it is a most profound form of this forgetting. At the same time it is this forgetting that renders any outmoded image which retains a human dimension auratic, for when it returns to the present it does so as an uncanny reminder of a time before alienation. Such an image looks at us across the distance of this alienation, but, because it is still part of us or we part of it, it can look at us, as it were, in the eye.¹⁶

The relation of aura to sexual fetishism is even more complicated. If aura involves an involuntary memory of a forgotten human dimension, then it also involves the forgotten figure of the phallic mother. In fact, the memory of our pre-Oedipal relationship to this figure, of her look exchanged with our own, is the paradigm of the empathic rapport and the reciprocal gaze fundamental to Benjaminian aura (although he does not say so--in fact, he resists a psychoanalytic frame here).¹⁷ At first glance the unitary

¹⁶ It is this aspect of Benjaminian aura that Brecht termed a "mysticism [that is] rather ghastly" (Arbeitsjournal, vol 1. [Frankfurt-am-Main, 1973], p. 16). Lukács was also less than convinced: "Allegorical personification has always concealed the fact that its function is not the personification of things, but rather to give the thing a more imposing form by getting it up as a person" ("On Walter Benjamin," New Left Review 110 [July-August 1978], p. 86).

¹⁷ Like the Surrealists in this regard too, Benjamin projects this affect away from the psychic, as here when he refers to the prehistorical gaze of the stars rather than to the pre-Oedipal look of the mother: "Are not the stars with their distant gaze the Urphanomen of the aura?" (Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhauser [Frankfurt-am-Main, 1972] vol. II, 3, 958). On this issue see

body and the reciprocal gaze recalled in auratic experience appears quite distinct from the lacking body and the fixed look operative in sexual fetishism. But, it is important to remember, this first maternal body is precisely lost, forgotten, repressed, and it is this repression which produces the uncanny distance or estrangement that is also fundamental to aura.²⁰ It is repressed (at least for the little boy privileged by Freud) since the maternal body is the image not only of a lost pre-Oedipal unity but also of a present Oedipal lack, i.e., of castration. Or rather it represents this castration (as we saw in Chapter Three) as soon as the father intervenes between mother and child to concretize its threat, often with a gaze castrative in its import. Upon this threat the maternal body becomes occluded in memory, and the maternal gaze assumes an ambiguity, a nonreciprocity, indeed an anxiety, which it never had before. Benjamin speaks of this strange distance of the auratic object in terms of "inapproachability", which he also calls "a primary quality of the ceremonial image."²¹ According to Freud, this inapproachability is also a primary quality of

Hansen, "Benjamin, Cinema and Experience," p. 214.

²⁰ Hansen unpacks this uncanny paradox exactly: "Assimilated to an Oedipal economy, the memory of this imagined glance is likely to succumb to repression--and hence bound to return as distant and strange" (Ibid., p. 215). The Surrealists share with Benjamin an ambivalent relation to this "patriarchal discourse on vision."

²¹ Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," p. 188.

the totemic figure, which, significantly, he regards as the very token of paternal interdiction against incest.²² To the extent that aura is bound up with a promise of maternal redemption, then, it also recalls a threat of paternal castration, and thus its experience, like that of the ceremonial image or totem, is one of desire founded on prohibition, of allure mixed with repulsion.²³

Thus productive of ambivalence, aura cannot be merely opposed to anxiety. However, before we see how the two are mixed in Surrealism, we must reestablish the Surrealist perception of aura.²⁴ Essentially this perception follows the three Benjaminian registers--a concern with natural, historical and maternal images. In Le Paysan de Paris (1926), for example, Aragon writes of "the mystery" of "everyday objects," "the great power" of "certain places", which can be natural (as at the Buttes-Chaumont) or historical (as in the Passage de

²² See Totem and Taboo (1913), trans. James Strachey (New York, 1950). For a reading of a modernist practice, that of David Smith, in terms of totemic "inapproachability", see Rosalind Krauss, Passages in Modern Sculpture (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), pp. 152-7, where she refers his interest in totemism to his Surrealist beginnings.

²³ A related set of affects is said to be produced by the evil eye, Medusa's head, etc. See Freud, "Medusa's Head" (1922), in Sexuality and the Psychology of Love, ed. Philip Rieff (New York, 1963), pp. 212-13.

²⁴ Certainly the two concerns, Surrealism and aura, are proximate in Benjamin: the essay on Surrealism (1929) in which he develops the outmoded is followed by the essay on photography (1931) in which he develops the auratic.

l'Opéra) but which must recall a "feminine element of the human spirit," a forgotten "language of caresses."²³ In Nadja (1928) Breton also finds an aura in particular objects and places (though he tinges them with more anxiety), and here again this empathy with the inanimate is a transposition of a rapport with the human. Thus he writes of Nadja: "When I am near here I am nearer things which are near her" (N 90). This aura, made more or less ambivalent, is captured in various ways by different Surrealists, as in the spatial Stimmung imbued by de Chirico with its own gaze, or in "real or imagined articles," as Dalí writes, "endowed with a real life of their own...a 'being' entirely independent."²⁴ As we will see, aura in all its ambivalence is also active in the Surrealist reception of tribal works (e.g., the New Guinea mask which, Breton writes in Nadja, "I have always loved and feared" [N 122]).

In L'Amour fou (1937) Breton speaks specifically of aura, which he relates to the intensity of sensation in

²³ Aragon, Le Paysan de Paris (Paris, 1926), translated by Simon Watson Taylor as Paris Peasant (London, 1971), pp. 128, 133; P hereafter. Aragon is very close to Benjamin here: "The way I saw it, an object became transfigured:...it did not so much manifest an idea as constitute that very idea. Thus it extended deeply into the world's mass" (p. 128).

²⁴ Dalí, "Objets surréalistes", Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution 3 (December 1931), translated in part as "The Object as Revealed in Surrealist Experiment," This Quarter (London), V, 1 (September 1932), pp. 197-207. In this description we see again that Surrealist notion of the object is ambiguously connected to the Marxian concept of the commodity fetish.

certain motifs as opposed to the "banality" of repetition in most products (AF 102-7). Breton focuses here on a rather eccentric Cezanne painting, descriptively titled The House of the Hanged Man, which resonates with an anxious experience of his own involving an intimation of murder. This association suggests again that aura is somehow involved in trauma, more precisely, with the involuntary memory of a traumatic event or repressed condition--indeed, that this repression produces the distance or estrangement requisite to auratic experience. Thus, for instance, if Breton is nearer things because he is near Nadja (or whatever other love object), the force of this nearness depends paradoxically on the distance effected by repression--the repression of a primal love object. As we saw in Chapter Three, this uncanny dialectic of near and far, of familiar and strange, is evoked by Giacometti in erotic terms in his text on the "objets mobiles et muets" and in Oedipal terms in his allegory of the cave and the rock in "Hier, sables mouvants." In Benjamin, of course, this dialectic is thought in terms of vision: "The deeper the remoteness which a glance has to overcome, the stronger will be the spell that is apt to emanate from the gaze."²⁷ It is this relation that governs the perception of aura in the word (as evoked by Karl Kraus: "The closer the look one takes at a word, the greater the distance from which it looks back") as well as in the image (as evoked by the Belgian Surrealist Paul Nougé: "If an

²⁷ Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," p. 190.

image recedes--the larger it grows").²⁶ It also governs, as we saw in Chapter Five, the perception of aura in history, such as the period of the Commune, of Lautreamont and Rimbaud, "charged with distant meaning" for the Surrealists.²⁷

Here again aura and anxiety are bound up with one another through an uncanny return of the repressed. Indeed, throughout Surrealism they are thus mixed, as a brief resumé of examples noted elsewhere will attest. Thus, as we saw in Chapter Two, Breton describes the affect of objective chance as "a mixture of panic-provoking terror and joy" (AF 40),²⁸ which both he and Giacometti experience in relation to the flea-market trouvailles. Keyed to the maternal body, the slipper spoon and the metal mask simultaneously emanate aura and produce anxiety because each object promises a restored unity even as it recalls an old loss. As we saw in Chapter Three, the same mixture of aura and anxiety, of a joyful gaze that seduces and a terrible one that threatens, is active in de Chirico and Ernst, in the primal "world full of uncanny signs" with which they attempt work through in art. And finally, as we saw in Chapters Four and Five, the Surrealists

²⁶ Paul Nougé, "Nouvelle Géographie élémentaire," Variétés (1929). Kraus is quoted by Benjamin in *Ibid*, p. 200.

²⁷ Breton, "What is Surrealism?" (1936), in What is Surrealism? Selected Writings, ed. Franklin Rosemont (New York, 1978), p. 122. Also see Chapter Five.

²⁸ Note how close Breton is here to Baudelaire's "I cultivate my hysteria with joy and terror."

also project this ambivalence upon social figures, such ciphers of the machine and the commodity as the automaton and the mannequin, which they treat in fetishistic terms of allure and repulsion, of desire and death, as well as upon outmoded images, which, through a relation to the things of childhood, also appear in both redemptive and demonic guises. In all these ways, then, aura and anxiety are combined in Surrealism, with the energy of the first often used in the interest of a temporal shock, of a convulsive history (as Benjamin saw), and the ambivalence of the second often used for the purpose of a symbolic ambiguity, of a convulsive identity (as Ernst advocated).²¹

Ultimately, perhaps, the relationship between aura and anxiety in Surrealism can best be captured through the Baudelairean reference that runs throughout its practices-- from the de Chirican "world of uncanny signs" to the Bretonian "sudden fear in the forest of symbols." I mean, of course, the famous lines from "Correspondances", the Fleurs du mal poem so crucial to the Benjaminian theory of aura:

Nature is a temple whose living pillars
 Sometimes give forth a babel of words;
 Man wends his way through forests of symbols
 Which look at him with their familiar glances.

²¹ For the Surrealists as for Benjamin aura is not simply a traditionalist term to be eradicated (the facile reading often given "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction") but a mode of experience to be redeemed for disruptive (utopian) possibilities; it is less the opposite of shock than its detonator.

As long-resounding echoes from afar
 Are mingling in a deep, dark unity,
 Vast as the night or as the orb of day,
 Perfumes, colors, and sounds commingle.³²

Here the correspondences that constitute aura are those between natural and maternal glances, prehistoric and psychic echoes--phylogenetic correspondences, I am tempted to say, intuited by Baudelaire (and Proust), theorized by Freud (and Benjamin), and developed by the Surrealists. As we have seen, the Surrealists detected such correspondences in many things, but perhaps most of all in tribal objects, especially from Oceania and the Pacific Northwest Coast, which they considered in terms evocative of aura, i.e., of a reciprocal gaze. Here, for example, Giacometti recalls the effect of certain Oceanic objects: "New Hebrides sculpture is true, and more than true, because it has a gaze. It's not the imitation of an eye, it's purely and simply a gaze."³³ And here Lévi-Strauss writes of a favorite haunt of Surrealist emigrés in New York during the war, the Northwest Coast Hall of the Museum of Natural History:

³² 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.

³³ "Entretien avec Alberto Giacometti," in Georges Charbonnier, Le Monologue du peintre (Paris, 1959), p. 166.

Stroll for an hour or two across this hall so thick with 'living pillars'. By way of another correspondence, the words of the poet translate exactly the native term designating the sculptured posts used to support house beams: posts that are not so much things as living beings with 'familiar glances', since in days of doubt and torment, they too let out 'a babel of words,' guide the dweller of the house, advise and comfort him, and show him a way out of his difficulties.³⁴

It is significant that Giacometti associates this gaze with truth, and that Lévi-Strauss relates these correspondences to "difficulties". For Benjamin also saw aura both as a mark of genuine experience and as a way to make such experience "crisis-proof".³⁵ Here again aura is implicitly related to trauma: not only because its effect of involuntary memory requires a temporal distance to overcome, a distance created by loss or repression, but also because it serves as a salve to such loss or repression, as a salve to such "difficulties" or "crisis".³⁶ This insight is crucial to modernism from Baudelaire to Breton, at least to the degree that it privileges auratic (or symbolist) correspondences. For the correspondences in question are not only "the

³⁴ Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Art of the Northwest Coast at the American Museum of Natural History," Gazette des Beaux-Arts (1943), p. 180 (translation amended to conform to translation of "Correspondances"). Also see Lévi-Strauss, La Voie des masques (Paris, 1979), translated by Silvia Modelski as The Way of the Masks (Seattle, 1982), pp. 3-10. As regards Surrealist collections of tribal work see Philippe Peltier, "From Oceania", in William Rubin, ed., "Primitivism in 20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern" (New York, 1984), vol. 1, pp. 110-15.

³⁵ Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," p. 182.

³⁶ In this regard, too, aura functions very much like anxiety.

primordial ties" that exist between the natural and the human or the mother and the child--these ties, as Breton remarks, "are cut" for all of us.³⁷ The correspondences also, necessarily, come after the fact as so many attempts to reforge these ties in new (therapeutic) ways. In my reading this is a primary psychic imperative perhaps of art generally but certainly of this modernist tradition in particular.³⁸ Again, the cutting of "the primordial ties," our different separations from the natural world or the maternal body, our various castrations throughout life, are as necessary to aura as they are to anxiety. Indeed, in Surrealism as in Baudelaire it is this cutting or castration which renders "the forest of symbols" as productive of "sudden fear" as it is of remembered joy, which makes the "familiar glances" as strange as they are familiar. Ultimately, it is this "world of uncanny signs" that is the essential subject of Surrealism. It is a world of aura mixed with anxiety, and it is one which Freud referred precisely to the maternal body estranged through paternal interdiction: "In this case, too, the unheimlich is what was once heimisch, home-like, familiar; the prefix 'un' is the token of repression."³⁹

³⁷ Breton, Signe ascendant (Paris, 1947).

³⁸ For Breton this was the importance of analogical thought. "The primordial ties are cut--ties that only le ressort analogique succeeds fleetingly to reestablish." "I have experienced intellectual pleasure only in le plan analogique" (Ibid.).

³⁹ Freud, "The Uncanny", p. 51.

The "familiar glances" that envelop the subject with aura are thus not so distant from the fearsome look that riddles him with anxiety. These two gazes do, however, generate different spaces, at least in Surrealist images, objects and writing: the first, theorized by Benjamin, is especially evident in Breton, Aragon and others, while the second, theorized by Lacan, is most marked in de Chirico, Ernst and others.⁴⁰ The anxious space or Lacanian scenario, associated with the fantasy of castration, is familiar to us from Chapter Three. In effect, to the degree that the subject is threatened, even dispossessed by a castrative gaze, so too is the space that is ordered around this subject as its point of coherence.⁴¹ Typically, in this register of threat, such space is distorted in these Surrealist ways: it appears detumescent, even "convalescent"⁴² (as it does in much Dali and Tanguy),

⁴⁰ Of course, these two types of gazes/spaces cannot be strictly opposed as maternal to paternal: just as the paternal term in Surrealism sometimes assumes a "maternal" function (e.g., with de Chirico), so the maternal term sometimes takes on a castrative aspect (e.g., with Giacometti). For the gaze in relation to castration see Jacques Lacan, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1977), pp. 67-119.

⁴¹ See Norman Bryson, Tradition and Desire (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 63-84. Should not the breakdown of this system in high modernism be seen as a crisis in patriarchal subjectivity rather than simply as a heroic breakthrough in pictorial convention?

⁴² This is the term used by de Chirico in "Meditations of a Painter"; see Chapter Three.

or it appears calcified, even petrified (as it does in much de Chirico after 1920). Perhaps the most characteristic type of Surrealist pictorial space is an oxymoronic combination of these two distortions, an impotently rigid space, sometimes anamorphic in effect, as befits the contradictory subject positions of the Surrealist Oedipus (this is true, to take just one early example, of the 1919 Ernst painting Aquis Submersus [Fig. 103]).⁴³

The auratic space or Benjaminian scenario, associated with the fantasy of maternal intimacy, even of intrauterine existence, is evoked less in images than in texts regarding architectural forms and urban dérives, though it is sometimes projected upon nature as well.⁴⁴ Highly ambiguous--for death is involved in this reunion with the maternal, this return to the material, as much as life--these spaces are often represented as subterranean or submarine. Thus, for instance, the typical Surrealist portrait, influenced by Baudelaire, of Paris as a "human aquarium" (P 28) where, especially in Breton and Aragon, figures of woman and death intermingle.⁴⁵

⁴³ As I implied in Chapter Three, perspectival space, repressed in high modernism, returns in Surrealism in uncanny--distorted--form. Even for such an art historian as Panofsky perspective was defamiliarized enough by 1920 that it could appear as a "symbolic form" ("Die Perspektive als 'symbolischen Form'").

⁴⁴ E.g., the Breton fascination with the veiled-erotic and the Giacometti fantasy of the cave.

⁴⁵ This is how Benjamin describes the Baudelairean city in "Paris--the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,

Already in Chapter Five we saw how Aragon, Ernst and Dali register such uncanniness in the "hysterical" architectures of the outmoded passage, the bourgeois interior and Art Nouveau structures, but it is perhaps Breton who is most sensitive to this uncanny spatiality. In effect, the unconscious of his texts maps a maternal body onto a prehistorical physiognomy of Paris.⁴⁶ In L'Amour fou, for example, he designates the Hôtel de Ville as the "cradle" of this maternal city (AF 47), while in La Clé des champs (1953) he regards the Place Dauphine as its very "sex".⁴⁷ This "profoundly secluded place" (N 80) is rather more uterine in form, but it is not simply auratic for Breton on this account. In fact, its "embrace is over-insistent, and, finally, crushing" (N 83), and while Breton experiences anxiety there, Nadja associates the place directly with death. Thus not even this maternal space is free of the paternal repression which renders the heimlich unheimlich, which mixes womb and tomb, life and death.

Nevertheless, maternal space remains an ideal for Breton: thus, for instance, the celebration of the Palais

trans. Harry Zohn (London, 1973), p. 171. The subject of the Surrealist city is too broad to be treated here; for an introduction see Marie-Claire Bancquart, Le Paris des surréalistes (Paris, 1972).

⁴⁶ Unlike Aragon, Breton would have the city be free of all signs of the historical--a repression that may partly produce its uncanniness.

⁴⁷ Breton, La Clé des champs (Paris, 1953), pp. 282-83.

idéal of the Facteur Cheval, a photograph of which in Les Vases communicants (1932) shows Breton in its very mouth or maw [Fig. 104].⁴⁰ Two years later, in Minotaure 3-4, Tristan Tzara made this ideal programmatic. For Tzara (who lived in a house with indoor pool designed by Adolf Loos) functionalist architecture denies "the dwelling place"--a denial which he refers to its "aesthetics of castration."⁴¹ Explicitly Tzara opposes the castrative to the intrauterine, for against such "self-punitive aggressiveness" he calls for an architecture of "prenatal comfort" sensitive to the ur-forms of the home--cave and yurt, cradle and tomb.⁴² However, this program is precisely that--a conscious call rather than an uncanny intuition. And as such it figures maternal space in the regressively simple terms of heimlich enclosure rather than in the psychically difficult terms of unheimlich passage.⁴³

⁴⁰ In this regard both "Le Palais idéal" and Les Vases communicants are suggestive titles.

⁴¹ Tristan Tzara, "D'un certain automatisme du gout," Minotaure 3-4 (December 14, 1933).

⁴² Ibid. Note how here again the masochistic/destructive term is projected away from Surrealism--this time, provocatively, to its modernist other. Five years later in a text in Minotaure 11 (May 1938), Matta, who worked in the Le Corbusier office in Paris, rendered this program of an intrauterine architecture at once more literal and more fantastic: "Man regrets the dark thrusts of his origins, which wrapped him in wet walls where blood was beating near the eye with the sound of the mother....We must have walls like wet sheets that get out of shape and fit our psychological fears" ("Mathématique sensible, architecture du temps," p. 43).

⁴³ One might say the same thing of the Dali reflections on architecture discussed in Chapter Five.

This other vision remains proper to the original flâneurs of Surrealism, Breton and Aragon, as they wander through Paris--Paris understood in toto here as a passage. Sometimes these flâneurs identify with Odysseus lured by "sirens", sometimes with Oedipus confronted by "sphinxes" (P 37, 28), but finally the mythological model of these Surrealists is Theseus in the labyrinth--a Theseus who is more involved with the Minotaur than with Ariadne.²² As we saw in Chapter Five, Aragon writes of a "double game" of love and death, of the redemptive and the demonic, which, played out in the passage, renders it once a dream space and a "glass coffin" (P 47, 61).²³ For the most part these Surrealists are able to hold these ambivalent terms in tension precisely in passage, through wandering. And it is indeed in the labyrinth produced by such wandering that the contradictory gazes between which Surrealism otherwise oscillates are at least momentarily suspended. For as both interior and exterior the labyrinth simultaneously envelops the subject in a maternal embrace and threatens him with a

²² William Rubin sees the Minotaur as the "symbol of irrational impulses" and Theseus as the Surrealist who probes the unconscious consciously; see Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage (New York, 1968), p. 127. This conventional reading reestablishes the very dichotomies which Surrealism seeks to overcome.

²³ It is the prostitute who mediates these terms; this is why she is such a fixated image in the patriarchal unconscious of Surrealism.

paranoid perspective.²⁴ In this spatial trope cherished by the Surrealists²⁵ refinding a lost home is one with facing a deathly end: the two terms communicate in the labyrinth; the labyrinth is their communication.

Finally, it is in this metaphorical space of the unconscious that several of the riddles fundamental to Surrealism are formed: the ambiguous role of sexuality in life and death drives; the search for an object which is never recovered so much as lost again and again; the attempt to found an identity, an art, on fantasies that upset rather than ground these terms; and the passage through Oedipal questions of desire and identification in which the subject moves back and forth between fantastic imagos of the maternal and the paternal. In Surrealism these riddles are given many different answers, but there are a few arrested images

²⁴ Denis Hollier has grasped the Surrealist function of the labyrinth exactly: "Neither father's work nor maternal womb (neither human nor natural), the labyrinth is basically the space where oppositions disintegrate and grow complicated, where diacritical couples are unbalanced and perverted, etc., where the system upon which linguistic function is based disintegrates, but somehow disintegrates by itself, having jammed its own works....Distance like proximity, separation like adhesion remain undecidable there. In this sense one is never either inside or outside the labyrinth--a space (perhaps that is already too much to say) that would be constituted by none other than this very anxiety, which is, however, incurably undecidable: am I inside or outside?" (La Prise de la Concorde [Paris, 1974], translated by Betsy Wing as Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille [Cambridge, 1989], p. 58).

²⁵ It was also cherished by Benjamin. In fact, one of the legends of Benjamin concerns a revelatory map of his life that he once drew on a napkin at the Deux Magots--in the form of a labyrinth. Fatidically, this labyrinth was lost.

designed, it seems, to contend with such contradictions-- images so familiar that we may forget how strange they are (or is it vice versa?), images such as the automaton-writer and the mannequin-muse, the persecuting father and the praying mantis. But below these images is one figure in particular, one which in the labyrinth of Surrealist intimations of desire and death not only condenses maternal and paternal images, pre-Oedipal and Oedipal states, but also connects the psychic involvements of Surrealism to its mythological, historical and contemporary interests, and that of course is the Minotaur [Fig. 105].

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Illustrations

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