

# Notes

## First Session

1. Crossed out: [(Laughs) Why ask me first? (He reads the question again)]
  2. Crossed out: [I would like to intervene.]
  3. Crossed out: [unusual to say the least]
  4. [ANDRÉ BRETON I object most violently. (Péret [and] Unik then agree).]
  5. [To give examples: I would cite M. (Max Jacob) and J. Cocteau.]
  6. [Jean] *Trans.* Jean Lorrain was the pseudonym of Paul Duval (1856–1906), a minor symbolist poet and literary journalist. Quite rarely for the time, he had the courage to affirm his homosexuality proudly and publicly.
  7. Crossed out: [But, for example, the books of Proust, typically, are to me the expression of this shortcoming.]
  8. Crossed out: [I can even conceive of it not being practised.]
  9. [(Violently.) It has nothing in common with homosexuality!]
  10. According to the *Petit Larousse illustré*, 1980 edition, an ‘incubus’ is a ‘male demon who takes advantage of women while they sleep’, a ‘succubus’, a ‘female demon who, according to tradition, seduces men while they sleep’. Both kinds come up again in subsequent sessions. *La Révolution surréaliste*, no.6 (1 March 1926) contains a text by Aragon entitled ‘Entrance of the succubi’.
  11. [What is the nature of the distinction you make between images of women with succubi and images of women]
  12. [of two men masturbating and sucking each other in bed without penetration]
  13. [I am absolutely in favour of it.]
  14. [General agreement.]
  15. Crossed out: [ANDRÉ BRETON Because that would be vulgar.
- BENJAMIN PÉRET I protest.]
16. [I have a literary idea of it.] *Trans.* Simon-Théodore Jouffroy (1796–1843) was a spiritualist philosopher and lecturer at the École Normale Supérieure and the Sorbonne.

## Notes to Pages 10–23

17. [The man and woman lying on their sides, legs entwined, the woman sitting astride the man, sodomy, sixty-nine.]

18. [Yes, I have a great taste for women's legs and feet.]

RAYMOND QUENEAU For objects?

BENJAMIN PÉRET No, not particularly.]

19. [I didn't learn anything new.]

20. [It's not even enough, there could be more.] Crossed out: [ANDRÉ BRETON That's collectivism!]

21. [I can't think of any positive conditions.]

22. *Trans.* There is no English equivalent for a *frôleuse* or for *frôlement* in the senses they have here. *Frôlement*, from the verb *frôler*, is the action of lightly rubbing or brushing against something. A *frôleur* can mean a man with a mania for touching women; a *frôleuse* often simply means a temptress. The 'Lexique succinct de l'érotisme' included in the catalogue to the 1959 International Exhibition of Surrealism (see Appendix VI) gives a more specific definition, which seems appropriate here: '*Frôleuse* – an expert in seduction through surreptitious physical contact which seems more or less unintentional.' José Pierre suggests that this technique may have been one used by street prostitutes at the time.

23. [JACQUES PRÉVERT It makes me laugh.]

24. Crossed out: [PIERRE UNIK I hadn't understood what you meant by *frôleuse*. I withdraw my answer. I cannot love a *frôleuse*.]

25. [RAYMOND QUENEAU On the contrary.]

26. Crossed out: [You don't have to speak to do it.]

27. Crossed out: [RAYMOND QUENEAU Quite odious.]

## Second Session

1. [Applied by me in a proportion of 75 per cent – 25 per cent by the woman. In terms of the restraints we impose on ourselves to achieve simultaneity, 75 per cent of the time it's self-restraint on my part.]

2. [ANDRÉ BRETON Very desirable?]

MARCEL DUHAMEL Yes. In all this, something which is a very important factor for me is habit. The first time you make love with a woman it's very desirable but very difficult.

LOUIS ARAGON We must answer these questions quickly.]

3. [JACQUES–A. BOIFFARD 50 per cent.]

ANDRÉ BRETON 50 per cent using artificial methods?]

JACQUES–A. BOIFFARD Yes.]

ANDRÉ BRETON Without them?]

JACQUES–A. BOIFFARD Very rarely. The figures don't mean anything. Sometimes it's desirable, sometimes it isn't. Not always.]

4. [PIERRE UNIK Breton said just now it's a moral question. With respect to what?]

ANDRÉ BRETON With respect to the methods used. Such methods are libertinism.]

5. [ANDRÉ BRETON For what reason?]

GEORGES SADOUL It's more or less a matter of vocabulary.]

6. [or 85 per cent]

## Notes to Pages 24–51

7. [ANDRÉ BRETON A fortiori, therefore, if the performance has been successful.]
8. [EVERYONE ELSE Yes.]
9. [For me, these would not be pathological cases.] It is important to underline this serious contradiction between the manuscript text (although it was corrected by Breton) and the text in *La révolution surréaliste*. Since, as far as I know, Breton never objected to it, it is the printed version which must be taken as correct. (*José Pierre*)
10. [General approval, with the exception of Breton, Baron, Duhamel and Péret, who protest.]
11. [LOUIS ARAGON Does anyone want to speak on this subject?]
12. [Does no one have an opinion on this subject?]
13. *Trans.* There is no equivalent in Britain for the French *droguerie*, which I've translated as 'household store' and which is sometimes more misleadingly translated as 'hardware shop'. The *droguerie* sells non-prescription medicines and toiletries as well as general household goods. A *pharmacie* (chemist) sells *only* medicines.
14. [I'm neither one nor the other.]
15. Crossed out: [except where it serves a very elevated notion of love]
16. The ellipses here are in the manuscript.

### Third Session

1. Crossed out: [MARCEL NOLL Breton, same question.  
ANDRÉ BRETON Naturally I wouldn't let myself be seen in such apparel for anything in the world.]
2. Crossed out: [I am entirely in favour in every case.]
3. Crossed out: [If the woman wants to do it.]
4. There follows a fairly long passage – a reply from Péret, it would seem – which has been particularly heavily crossed out.
5. Crossed out: [LOUIS ARAGON Would you like to tell us where that intuition comes from?]
6. Breton has added a note to the manuscript here, preceded by an asterisk: 'Punctumcœcum (circumf. and centre).'
7. These ellipses are followed by a veritable thicket of crossings-out.

### Fourth Session

1. As José Pierre points out in his own footnote at this point in the French edition, readers need to know something about Jean Genbach (whose real name was Ernest de Gengenbach) to understand this session. In his *History of Surrealism* (Pelican, Harmondsworth 1973), Maurice Nadeau provides a useful summary of Genbach's strange career, which is worth quoting here:

A Jesuit Abbé, he had fallen in love with an actress at the Odéon and in her company frequented restaurants and dance-halls. Defrocked by his bishop, he had lost his

mistress, who loved him only in his cassock, and happened to pick up an issue of *La révolution surréaliste* at the moment he was thinking of suicide. Hence he did not fling himself into the Gérardmer lake as he had planned, but entered into relations with Breton and his friends. He was to be seen at the Dôme or the Rotonde, a flower in the buttonhole of his soutane, which he had begun wearing again as a provocation, a woman on his lap, vilified by the respectable passers-by whom he delighted in scandalising. He divided his time between a scabrous worldly life, periods of calm with a Russian woman, an artist, in Clamart, and retreats at the Abbey of Solesmes. When there were rumours that the prodigal was about to return to the bosom of the Church, Gengenbach enlightened the surrealists in a letter to Breton:

‘It is my custom to go several times a year to rest and recover my spirits with the monks . . . and the surrealist circle is well aware of my pronounced taste for escapades in monasteries. . . . As for the ecclesiastical habit, I wear it by caprice for the moment, because my suit is torn. . . . I also find it affords me certain advantages in initiating sadistic relations with the American women who pick me up in the Bois at night. . . .

‘I have found *no solution*, no escape, no pragmatism that is acceptable. There remains my faith in Christ, cigarettes, and the jazz records I love – “Tea for Two”, “Yearning” – and above all, there remains *surrealism*.’

This curious individual was to end badly all the same. Trying to reconcile Christianity and surrealism, after writing such works as *Judas ou le Vampire surréaliste* (Aigle noir, Paris 1930) and *Satan en Espagne*, he denounced Breton as the living incarnation of Lucifer and the surrealists as ‘conscious demoniac victims of possession or demons incarnate’. Exorcism, he added, was ‘unfortunately relegated to the remote Middle Ages’, but he nursed hopes that ‘suffering and the vicissitudes of life would fling these conquistadors of Hell at the foot of the Cross’. Unfortunately, ‘no theologian’s argument will convince a surrealist, only the love of some passionately desired female saint can transform a surrealist’. (trans. Richard Howard)

2. The ellipses here follow the manuscript text.

3. As above.

4. The word in square brackets has been added to make sense of the phrase.

5. The manuscript tells us no more about Bataille’s idea.

6. Crossed out: [PIERRE UNIK I cannot see any moral hope except in chastity.]

7. *Trans.* Breton is referring to ‘Le rideau cramoisi’, one of the stories in Barbey d’Aurevilly’s *Les Diaboliques* (1874). In the story, an officer staying at a country house is seduced by a mysterious young woman. Their relationship is purely sexual. At the end of a particularly torrid night with her, he discovers that he has been making love with a corpse.

## Fifth Session

1. This participant, who is only given an initial and only intervenes once, may perhaps be Max Morise.

2. The sentence is incomplete in the manuscript. Perhaps Breton means that

## Notes to Pages 73–115

Unik's earlier exclusion from the discussion should be terminated if he accepts this condition.

3. *Trans.* Georges Carpentier, a famous French boxer of the period.
4. Ellipsis as in the manuscript.
5. It is not possible to identify this 'friend'.
6. The question mark in brackets corresponds to the manuscript text.
7. Crossed out: [RAYMOND QUENEAU In that case, we're not talking about life. MARCEL NOLL Surrealism has never been anything other than a meaning of life.]
8. Prévert means that he is supporting Queneau's position.
9. Crossed out: [Shove Dada up your arse.]
10. Crossed out: [Great disgust.]

### Sixth Session

1. Perhaps it should be 'physical' here. But the manuscript unmistakably has 'psychological'.
2. Crossed out: [I protest most strongly at this answer.]

### Seventh Session

1. The participation of Boiffard is uncertain. In the list of participants, 'Bo' seems as if it can only refer to him. But in the actual discussion, the only intervention by this 'Bo' has been completely crossed out. We know that Boiffard was to be a very active collaborator on *Documents* with Bataille from December 1929. *Trans.: Documents*, which lasted for fifteen issues, was a journal which regrouped a number of former surrealists, including Robert Desnos, Michel Leiris, André Masson and Roger Vitrac. It was partly in response to Bataille's positions, developed in *Documents*, that Breton wrote his *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*.

2. Given her comments on 'possession' (p.103) it seems very likely that Y. is a woman.

3. In his autobiography, *Raconte pas ta vie* (Paris 1972), Marcel Duhamel faithfully repeats – from memory – Jean Baldensperger's account of his zoophilic experience.

4. Deleted: (BO These sexual jokes make me laugh often enough, because they probably correspond to things which I have repressed; there is also a degree of embarrassment.)

5. *Trans.* The French for a female donkey is *une ânesse*.

### Eighth Session

1. Crossed out: [Are these representations linked to childhood memories?]
2. The word *empêchement* (impediment) is unclear in the manuscript.

### Ninth Session

1. The participation of this 'Bauer' is conjectural: he only intervenes once in the discussion.
2. The manuscript does not specify who asks this question.
3. Eluard is referring to his wife, Gala, who at this time had been living with Salvador Dali for more than a year.
4. There is nothing to indicate what this series of vowels might mean. *Trans.*: But the French pronunciation of them might be approximately represented as follows: 'Ah! Oh! Ee!'

### Tenth Session

1. *Sic*.
2. This word has been derived from an ambiguous abbreviation in the manuscript.
3. Crossed out: [Love tends to remain a bolt from the blue. You are subordinating love to desire.]

### Eleventh Session

1. *Trans.* Giorgio Baffo, a Venetian nobleman (1694–1768), was, according to Apollinaire, 'the greatest priapic poet who ever lived.' More recently, his work has been celebrated by the surrealist writer André Pieyre de Mandiargues.
2. In the manuscript, Breton has added: '(This is not true) (Second reading)', then: 'This is absolutely untrue, third reading, but I would like to.'
3. *Trans.* Unik is presumably referring to the prolific and popular comic writer, Georges Courteline (1861–1929). But the allusion is just a part of the banter that predominates in this session, as is the one to Molière which precedes it, where Breton is simply mocking Unik for sounding sententious ('The ear is made for the tongue, not for the cock.').

### Twelfth Session

1. Crossed out: 'The arse.'
2. There is no indication as to what this mysterious '+ . . .' might mean.

### Appendix II

1. Published in *La révolution surréaliste*, no. 12, 15 December 1929. In volume one of André Breton's *Œuvres complètes* (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, Paris 1988),

## Notes to Pages 157–167

p. 1759, Marguerite Bonnet confirms that the text of this inquiry was written by André Breton.

2. Among the responses to this inquiry was Magritte's famous painting representing a naked woman with the inscription: 'I do not see the [ . . . ] hidden in the forest', surrounded by the photographs of sixteen surrealists with their eyes closed.

### Appendix III

1. *Minotaure*, no. 3-4, December 1933. The comments are by André Breton, who included them in *L'amour fou* in 1937 (where they formed most of the second section of the book), prefaced by the following remarks: 'It was with these words that Paul Eluard and I not long ago instigated an inquiry whose results were published in the journal *Minotaure*. When we published the responses, I felt the need to specify the meaning of the two questions and to draw some preliminary conclusions from the views expressed.'

2. This quotation accompanied a drawing by Man Ray – placed above the inquiry's title – which faithfully illustrated Lautréamont's phrase. Neither the drawing nor the quotation were included in *L'amour fou*.

3. *Trans.* Antoine-Augustin Cournot (1801–77), mathematician, economist and philosopher of *probabilisme*.

4. *Trans.* Henri Poincaré (1856–1912), mathematician and philosopher, whose studies of science were relatively popular. His cousin, Raymond, was a president of the Third Republic.

5. This is in fact the first time Breton defined *objective chance*.

### Appendix IV

1. First published in *Le surréalisme, même*, nos 4 and 5, Spring 1958 and Spring 1959.

### Appendix V

1. The text of this inquiry was published in *La brèche, action surréaliste* no. 6, June 1964; the responses in no. 7, December 1964, and no. 8, November 1965.

2. This was followed by the instruction: 'Address your response to Vincent Bounoure, 49, boulevard de la Gare, Paris (13<sup>e</sup>).'

### Appendix VI

1. The International Surrealist Exhibition, devoted to eroticism, opened on 15 December 1959, at the Galerie Daniel Cordier, rue de Miromesnil, Paris 8, and closed

at the end of February 1960. The two texts here were republished in *Le surréalisme et la peinture* (Gallimard, Paris 1965), set in two parallel columns as they were in the exhibition catalogue. Here we have printed them one after the other.

## Afterword

1. Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism*, Collier Books, New York 1967, p. 143.
2. Louis Aragon, 'Introduction à 1930', *La révolution surréaliste*, no. 12, 15 December 1929, p. 62.
3. Ibid.
4. Such 'inquiries' or surveys were popular at the time, and many journals, both avant-garde and conservative, ran them on a variety of topics. Unlike the surrealist 'Recherches', though, which were restricted to the more or less closed circle of the surrealists themselves, the 'Inquiry' of 1929 was widely circulated. Responses from *Commædia*, *Paris-Midi*, and even some derisory comments from the reactionary *Action française* were published in *La révolution surréaliste*, as well as replies from the surrealists themselves and from such prominent figures as Roch Grey. Answers covered a wide spectrum of opinion. This was in fact quite deliberate, and is a part of the dialectical relationship between the 'Recherches' and the 'Enquête'. If the 'Recherches' accepted no definition of love and/or sexuality as given, the 'Enquête' appeared to start from a position of an absolute belief in love and proceeded to ask questions that then problematised this in relation to the social and political spheres.
5. André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane, Ann Arbor 1972, p. 10.
6. André Breton, *L'un dans l'autre*, Paris 1970, p. 7.
7. *Nadja* chronicles Breton's friendship with a woman whose precarious hold on reality was one of the chief causes of her fascination for him; the mystery in their relationship was not that of the magical reciprocity of love, but rather that of repeated chance encounters and coincidences located more within the experience of the streets of Paris than in that of the body. Nadja eventually goes mad and is incarcerated, and this is the occasion of an outspoken attack by Breton on mental institutions.
8. Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism: Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia', in *One-Way Street*, New Left Books, London 1979, p. 237.
9. Breton, *Manifestoes*, p. 177.
10. Benjamin, 'Surrealism', p. 277.
11. André Breton, 'Second manifeste du surréalisme', *R.S.* 12, pp. 2–3 (translation based in part on Breton, *Manifestoes*).
12. In *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution*, no. 4, 1931.
13. Whitney Chadwick quotes the following passage from the English surrealist painter Ithell Colquhoun's 'The Water Stone of the Wise', which rejects the Oedipal myth rather on grounds of its incarnation of sexual difference: 'Oedipus will be king no longer but will return to Colonus. The new myth, the myth of the Siamese Twins, will make of him a forgotten bogey.' *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, Thames and Hudson, London 1985, p. 105.
14. Sigmund Freud, 'The Sexual Aberrations' (from *Three Essays on Sexuality*), in



Notes to Pages 194–205

*Freud on Women: A Reader*, ed. Elisabeth Young-Bruhl, Norton, New York and London 1990, p. 90.

15. *Freud on Women*, p. 45.

16. Aragon, 'Introduction à 1930', p. 64.

17. Chadwick records from an interview with Leonora Carrington the following splendid statement: 'In *l'amour passion*, it is the loved one, the other, who gives the key. Now the question is: Who can the loved one be? It can be a man or a horse or another woman' (*Women Artists*, p. 105). Such remarks by the women associated with the surrealist group are not uncommon.

18. Guy Rosolato, 'Le fétichisme', in *Le désir et la perversion* as quoted by Xavière Gauthier, *Surréalisme et sexualité*, Gallimard, Paris 1971, p. 357.

19. Gauthier, *Surréalisme et sexualité*, p. 331.

20. Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1990, p. 19.

21. In *L'Amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*, Abbeville, New York 1985.

22. See for instance Rudolf Kuenzli, 'Surrealism and Misogyny', in *Surrealism and Women*, ed. Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf Kuenzli and Gwen Raaberg, MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 1991.

23. Georges Bataille, 'Le langage des fleurs', *Documents*, Paris 1929. See my 'Documents', in *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, Arts Council of Great Britain, London 1978.

24. Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan and Co.*, University of Chicago Press 1990, p. 17. The *Revue française de psychanalyse* began publication in 1927.

25. Gauthier, *Surréalisme et sexualité*, p. 51.

26. This is a standard dictionary definition, and similar terms are used for the (male) incubus. It is interesting, however, that the *Larousse du XXIème siècle* genders the 'commerce' between human and succubus/incubus differently: the succubus in this version takes the form of a woman 'in order to submit to the man', while the incubus is a 'sort of demon which abuses of women as they sleep'. This passivising of the succubus runs counter to the surrealists' idea, which took pleasure in the active nature of the succubus.

27. J.-K. Huysmans, *Down There (Là-Bas)*, New York 1924, pp. 153-4.

28. 'Le cinquantenaire de l'hystérie', *R.S.* 11, p. 22. It is interesting that the first issue of the *Revue française de psychanalyse* for 1928, its second year of publication, printed the translation of Freud's famous case study of the hysteric 'Dora', the (incomplete) analysis of a young girl whose gynecophilic feelings for her father's mistress lay at the root of her illness. Whether this moment was chosen to publish also in homage to Charcot is unclear.

29. Roudinesco, *Lacan*.