

RACE

SPECIAL ISSUE

SURREALISM:

REVOLUTION

AGAINST

WHITENESS

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TRASON TO WHITENESS IS LOYALTY TO HUMANITY

Race Traitor

Reason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity

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RACE TRAITOR / SURREALIST ISSUE

Guest Editor: Franklin Rosemont

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"Louis Wins! It's Joe by a Knockout!"
Collage by MARKO RISTIC, Belgrade, 1939

INTRODUCTION

This special issue of *Race Traitor* focuses on a particular group of race traitors—the world's first Surrealist Group in 1920s Paris, and its direct offshoot, the international (and multiracial) surrealist movement. With an unbroken continuity from 1924 down to the present day, the surrealist movement has helped develop not only a revolutionary critique of whiteness but also new forms of revolutionary action against it.

As a historically constructed social formation, the notion of a "white race" appears as ideology, mirage, hoax, hallucination, con-game, racket, swindle: an altogether malevolent piece of duplicity and horror. But for those who buy it and sell it, whiteness is what Richard Wright once called a powerful "psychological reality," a commodity fetishized into a pattern of belief, custom, law'n'order. Millions of those who are deceived into thinking they are white are unhappy about it, but don't quite know how to divest themselves of this debilitating delusion. *How to quit being white*—how to release the latent but repressed yearning to abandon the absurdity of whiteness and to become truly human at last—is one of the burning questions of the age.

For many Europeans and Americans of European descent, being surrealist has been one way of not being white—indeed, a way of actively undermining the white mystique and of sabotaging the repressive machinery that props it up. From the surrealist point of view, traditional anti-racist strategies—education against prejudice; support for civil rights; boycotts; picketlines; etc.—however important, clearly are *not enough*. The fact that white privilege is an inherently *irrational* phenomenon is proof that it cannot be overcome by rational means alone. Nothing less than surrealist revolution can abolish whiteness once and for all.

Surrealist intervention in this domain has always emphasized the *active imagination*, in keeping with surrealism's fundamental aim: the realization of poetry in everyday life. Of course it also involves revolutionary criticism, integral subversion, aggressive humor, and direct action. In poetry as in life, surrealism embodies the utmost fraternization and solidarity across the color-line as well as relentless struggle against the very existence of the color-line, and against all those who enforce it or tolerate it.

As we emphasized in our declaration on the Los Angeles Rebellion of April-May 1992,* whiteness corrupts and derails every impulse toward freedom, so that no solution can be found to any social problem without solving the problem of whiteness. Everyone knows that white supremacy is the single biggest obstacle to working-

class emancipation. It is also the major stumbling-block in the way of women's equality, for white supremacy is inherently androcentric. There are of course female white supremacists—a large part of today's "women's movement" is afflicted with this malady—but such women truly are no more than cheerleaders of the white male power structure. Can anyone doubt that overcoming whiteness is indispensable to women's liberation?

Similarly, it is no accident that the people most responsible for devastating the Earth's wild places, poisoning the air and water, driving uncountable species of animals and plants to extinction and otherwise wrecking the planet, are those who think of themselves as white. Only when humankind is free of the stifling burden of whiteness will we be able to develop a non-exploitative, ecologically sound relationship to the Earth and all its inhabitants. With rare exceptions, however, the organizations that currently pass themselves off as the "environmental movement" in this country are as devoted to white supremacy (and to capitalism) as the giant corporations whose depredations they pretend to oppose.

As surrealists, we are especially interested in how the "white problem" turns up in language, images, myth, symbols, popular culture, science, everyday life, the whole field of human expression. However, our goal at all times is to attack and abolish whiteness *and its institutions*—to attack and abolish the whole miserabilist social/political/economic/cultural *system* that has made whiteness the hideous emblem of the worst oppression the world has ever had to endure.

With this presentation of the concrete experience of surrealists past and present in the worldwide struggle against white supremacy, we hope above all to provoke and inspire readers to develop their own abolitionist imaginations in new directions, and more generally to stimulate discussion and debate with all who uphold the motto "Treason to Whiteness is Loyalty to Humanity."

THE CHICAGO SURREALIST GROUP

* The Chicago Surrealist Group, "Three Days That Shook the New World Order: The Los Angeles Rebellion of 1992," *Race Traitor* No. 2 (Winter 1993), 1-17.

To contact the Chicago Surrealist Group and/or the Surrealist Movement in the United States, write c/o Black Swan Press, P. O. Box 6424, Evanston IL 60204, or email to beasley@mcs.com.

SURREALISTS ON WHITENESS

From 1925 to the Present

compiled by FRANKLIN ROSEMONT

Why did I affirm my complete agreement with surrealism? . . . I recognized surrealism as the highest point of the European spirit, the point at which the European spirit harmonizes most with the spirit of the Far East and the spirit of the Black world. That is why I took part in surrealism.

—Aimé Césaire (1973)

Surrealism is first of all the liberation of language and imagination: the direct application of poetry to the solution of humankind's fundamental problems. Now as always, we strive to tear down the walls separating dream and action, conscious and unconscious, the real and the imaginary, thereby creating situations in which real freedom can develop beyond all the old immobilizing contradictions. What is called surrealist revolution is nothing less than a permanent potlatch festival, the Pleasure Principle's global supersession of alienated labor as well as alienated leisure and art. The movement's fundamental aim is admirably summed up in Lautréamont's watchword, "Poetry must be made by all."

Pierre Mabille was perhaps the first to point out in print that this maxim of Lautréamont's is, among other things, an unequivocal declaration against white supremacy. From its very beginnings as an organized movement, surrealism has been aggressively antithetical to the reactionary mystique of whiteness. Initially, however, race as such figured only peripherally in surrealist discourse. What we find in the earliest surrealist writings is rather a sweeping gut-level rejection of textbook and newspaper versions of French "Glory" (that is, chauvinism), the Greco-Roman heritage, European culture, Christian civilization—*i.e.*, the myths and ideologies as well as the political reality of the so-called white world. André Breton's "Drop Everything" (*Lâchez tout*, 1922) does not refer to race at all, but its spirit of absolute nonconformism, its adamant refusal to accept the conventional "wisdom" of the West, and its uncompromising demand for freedom suggest a world-view radically opposed to the vapidty and subjugation embodied in the notion of "white superiority."

Freedom is the hallmark of Breton's first *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924) and all his other works, as indeed it has remained, together with poetry and love, the constant emphasis of all surrealist agitation ever since. Dismissing Europe's empty rationalism and logic, the

Franklin Rosemont's latest book is Penelope, a poem, with drawings by Jacques Lacomblez (Surrealist Editions).

opening editorial of *La Révolution surréaliste* No. 1 proclaimed that "the dream alone assures humankind of all its rights to freedom," and that surrealism not only "opens the door of dreams to all" but is also "the breaker of chains."

Surrealists have never regarded freedom as a mere philosophical abstraction. Breton and his comrades demonstrated what they meant by freedom in their playful direct-action approach to the "practice of poetry" and in numerous manifestations of surrealist solidarity with revolutionary actions and struggles—Black, Third World, working-class, and women's—*against* Europe's repressive civilization. As "specialists in revolt," Breton, Péret, Crevel and their co-conspirators made no secret of the fact that this new and extreme revolt was directed specifically against "the Occidental world."

We Are the Defeatists of Europe

In an article on "The Suppression of Slavery" in *La Révolution surréaliste* No. 3 (April 1925) Paul Eluard stated what could be called the group's basic position on the "race question": "The supremacy of Europe is based only on militarism and the cross—the cross in the service of militarism. . . . The white man is nothing but a corpse—a corpse who dumps his garbage under the natives' noses. . . ." Although he and his friends did not yet think of themselves as "political," Eluard goes on to affirm his eager anticipation of a world revolution which will overturn all colonialism and thereby create the conditions in which "peoples of all colors will be absolutely free."

Addressing students in Madrid in April 1925, Louis Aragon made it plain that the surrealists not only vigorously supported colonial insurrections, but also recognized their own active role, as surrealists, in this world revolution: "First of all we shall ruin this civilization . . . in which you are molded like fossils in shale. Western world, you are condemned to death. We are the defeatists of Europe, so take care—or, rather, laugh at us. We shall make a pact with all your enemies." And he added, for good measure: "Let faraway America collapse with all its white buildings in the midst of its absurd prohibitions."

The Surrealist Group's "Letter to the Chancellors of European Universities" (*La Révolution surréaliste* No. 3, April 1925), called attention to the process by which Europe "slowly mummifies itself under the wrappings of its frontiers, factories, courts of justice and universities," blamed Europe's "moldy systems" for its moral and intellectual collapse, and—affirming the powerful affective link between surrealism and tribal cultures—stressed that "The least act of spontaneous creation is a more complex and revelatory world than any

metaphysics."

The collective "Letter to the Schools of Buddha" in the same issue urged the people of Asia (in the face of massive "yellow-peril" propaganda in France) to "hurl into the ocean all the whites who arrive with their small heads and well-governed minds." Two months later in their "Open Letter to Paul Claudel" (arch-reactionary Catholic and France's ambassador to Japan), they wrote: "We hope with all our strength that revolutions, wars and colonial insurrections will soon annihilate this Western civilization whose vermin you defend in the Orient," and went on to "take this occasion to publicly dissociate ourselves from all that is French, in words and in actions."

Traitors to Everything That Is Not Freedom

Significantly, Africans inspired the Surrealist Group's first leap into revolutionary politics. Their enthusiasm for the revolt of Abd-el-Krim and the Riff tribespeople of Morocco was as boundless as their revulsion against France's racist, imperialist war against them. Quickly outgrowing a vague, idealistic and non-political conception of revolution, they joined the revolutionary workers' movement in opposing the war. In a preliminary statement dated 15 July 1925, co-signed with other revolutionaries, they declared their solidarity with the Riffians' revolt and affirmed "the right of peoples, of *all* peoples, of whatever race" to self-determination.

A few weeks later the collective tract *Revolution Now and Forever!*—the Surrealist Group's first important political declaration—elaborated their attitude toward the war in North Africa, their critique of western civilization, and their growing self-recognition as race traitors and enemies of Eurocentrism:

[W]e want to proclaim our total detachment from, in a sense our uncontamination by, the ideas at the basis of a still-real European civilization. . . . Wherever Western civilization is dominant, all human contact has disappeared, except contact from which money can be made. . . . The stereotyped gestures, acts and lies of Europe have gone through their whole disgusting cycle.

Inspired above all by the Riffians' insurrection, but now also by the Russian Revolution, the surrealists declared their wholehearted solidarity with the mass uprisings of people of color throughout the world, scorning the racist timidity of those would-be "radicals" who feared the revolutionary violence of the "uncivilized": "It is the turn of the Mongols to bivouac in our squares. We should never for a moment worry that this violence could take us by surprise or get out of hand. As far as we are concerned, it could never be enough, whatever happens." Identifying themselves as "traitors to everything

that is not freedom," the Surrealist Group further insisted that "the idea of revolution is the best and most effective safeguard of the individual." Shortly afterward they signed yet another declaration in support of the Riffians, urging French troops to stop fighting France's imperialist war in Morocco and to fraternize with the rebels.

The journal *La Révolution surréaliste* (1924-1929) and its successor, *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (1930-33) featured numerous surrealist statements against racism, colonialism and imperialism. The May 1931 collective tract, "Don't Visit the Colonial Exhibition!"—against a huge government spectacle glorifying French colonialism—is an especially notable example of surrealism's anti-racist offensive. Simultaneously, surrealists also put up an anti-Eurocentric exhibition of their own, creatively ridiculing white supremacy and French imperialist megalomania.

The single most important surrealist declaration against white supremacy during the movement's early years was the collective tract, *Murderous Humanitarianism* (1932), written for Nancy Cunard's *Negro Anthology* (which was not published, however, until 1934). This pivotal document, the first surrealist tract to reflect the influence of the young Black surrealists from Martinique who had recently joined the group, is reprinted in its entirety in this issue of *Race Traitor* (pages 67-69).

One of the Martiniquans, and a likely co-author of *Murderous Humanitarianism*, was Jules Monnerot, whose article, "Starting from Some Peculiar Features of the Civilized Mind" appeared in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (No. 5, 1933). In this article Monnerot took the condescending theory advanced by the then-famous Eurocentric/racist philosophy professor Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in his influential book *The Primitive Mind* (1922), and applied it to the mental processes of the so-called "civilized," with devastating results. "When the 'primitives' rid themselves of the whites," concluded Monnerot, "there won't be anyone left to defend the theses of Mr. Lévy-Bruhl."

This kind of *détournement*—a term introduced into revolutionary discourse by André Breton, signifying the *turning around* of a text or image to make it serve ends radically opposed to those of the original—has a long and fruitful history in surrealism. The famous "Surrealist Map" of 1929, and the 1959 "Art Poétique" by Breton and Jean Schuster (modifying a text by the conservative ex-surrealist, Roger Caillois) are other examples.

Murderous Humanitarianism was almost certainly also written in part by René Crevel, who addressed the problems of white supremacy and Eurocentrism in several of his other essays, as well as in his fic-

tion. Openly bisexual, Crevel is especially insightful in his considerations on race as it intersects with gender. In his last novel, for example—*Les Pieds dans le plat* (The Screw Up, 1933)—he wrote:

In Africa, in Asia, everyone knows how the white man treats people of color. The muzzle of a cannon is the loudspeaker of imperialist Europe. . . . In Alabama, rich American farmers treat Blacks no better than the Hitlerites treat Jews. One of the Scottsboro Blacks is condemned to die in the electric chair, even though the so-called victim of those young proletarians denied having been subjected to the rape of which they were accused. And now that white woman too is threatened, because she refused to play the court's game by lying; she herself is virtually enslaved by a class of exploiters who want to *set an example*, and thereby to crush, by means of terror, the will to revolt that is brewing in the hearts of several thousand Black slaves.

Nancy Cunard, who was herself active in surrealism, was a powerful critic of whiteness and its discontents, and a major link between surrealism and Pan-Africanism. Her 1931 manifesto, *Black Man and White Ladyship*, a marvelously vituperative "open letter" to her white supremacist mother, is an extraordinary document on race, gender and class. When Cunard demanded, in her *Negro Anthology*, "recognition and enforcement of the Negro's full rights, as an equal, as a brother, and an end to the oppression of colored peoples the world over," she of course spoke for the surrealists of all countries.

Surrealism: Diametrically Opposed to Racist Militarization

Against what they called the "patriarchal trilogy" of the capitalist order—Father, Fatherland, Factory-owner (*père, patrie, patron*)—surrealists fought for a revolution to create a new, truly free society based on the full equality and global solidarity of all peoples. Implacable enemies of fascism, they were constantly denounced in the fascist press. Unlike Stalinists and social-democrats, however, surrealists never let their hatred of fascism blind them to the systemic racism, massacres and other atrocities committed by the great imperialist powers, which then (as now) liked to call themselves "democracies." A May 1933 statement titled "Against Fascism, but also Against French Imperialism!" issued by the Association of Revolutionary Artists and Writers (AEAR)—a group the surrealists had initiated—declared: "We are not duped by the mask of American democracy, when the United States, which protests against the monstrous antisemitic agitation in Germany, itself implacably wages a race war against the Negroes. . . ." It also denounced the U.S. "extermination of the Indian tribes" and the death-sentences imposed on the Scottsboro Nine and eight revolutionists in what was then

known as French Indochina (this statement appeared in the AEAR paper, *Feuille rouge* [Red Leaf], May-June, 1933).

Some critics have managed to convince themselves that this surrealist "extremism" against the white supremacist "democracies" can be attributed solely to the influence of the Communist International, but they are mistaken. Stalin's Third International soon abandoned its anti-imperialism in favor of the ignoble "Popular Front," which, ostensibly in order to "fight fascism," led people who called themselves Communists to unite with all the plunderers of Africa and of every other Third World country. In their "race politics," the surrealists' allies were in fact such Black anti-Stalinist revolutionists as George Padmore, Garan Kouyaté and C.L.R. James.

One of the most original French-language contributions to a revolutionary critique of fascism during that period was made by Martiniquan surrealist Pierre Yoyotte. His "Reflections on the Anti-Fascist Significance of Surrealism," published in the surrealist issue of *Documents* 34 (1934), analyzed fascism as a "sentimental" substitute for revolution, based on the mass exploitation of emotional release. Yoyotte's approach, not unlike Wilhelm Reich's in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (a book then unknown in France), is still pertinent—illuminating, for example, the mass appeal of today's huge rock concerts and sports events. Especially interesting is his identification of surrealism as characterologically, as well as morally and politically, the *direct opposite* of fascism. "Starting from the affective misery" of the postwar years, he wrote, "the surrealists immediately oriented themselves toward the defense of desire, toward individual expression, toward a solution diametrically opposed to Mussolinian or racist militarization."

In 1935 Breton, Péret, Claude Cahun and other surrealists cofounded with Georges Bataille and several of his co-thinkers a revolutionary political group, Contre-Attaque (Counter-Attack). In a prospectus of their program, referring to the Nazis' notorious love for the Fatherland, they declared that "We too can love fanatically, but what *we* love—although we are of French origin—is *not* the French Community, but the *human* community; not France but Earth."

In the tract *Neither Your War Nor Your Peace!* (27 September 1938), the Surrealist Group protested that the impending imperialist war would "not be the war of democracy, or the war of justice, or the war of liberty," for *all* the imperialist pseudo-democracies preparing for war—France, England, the U.S., etc.—had "acquired their wealth and consolidated their power by methods of tyranny, arbitrariness and blood." First in their list of the "latest proofs of the unworthiness of these states" is the fact that "They permitted Italy to annihilate

Ethiopia, notably because any successful resistance to the *white* invader would encourage the colonial peoples to free themselves from the grip of imperialism."

The racial/political hypocrisy of the capitalist "democracies" of Europe and the U.S. was subjected to further criticism in several other surrealist works. In *Egrégores, ou la vie de civilisations* (1938)—a book dedicated to "the combatants of revolutionary Spain"—Pierre Mabille briefly discusses Nazism's "mystical ideology dredged up from old racial myths," and notes that England had aided and abetted the birth of Hitler's regime, expressly to prevent working-class revolution in Germany, which of course would have had a deleterious effect on the stability of the British Empire. Similarly, in his *Foyers d'incendie* (Hearths of Arson, 1938), Greek surrealist Nicolas Calas pointed out the link between Fordism and Nazism (and also, by the way, noted the Nazism of Heidegger and Jung).

Who Will Civilize the Civilized?

In "Toward a Third Surrealist Manifesto" (1940), Calas touched on yet another dimension of race politics. "In our fight against all forms of reaction," he urged, "we will have to devote more and more of our attention to forms of society, like the primitive ones, which are in entire contradiction with the humanist conception of life." At that time many liberals and even would-be "radicals" agreed with Nazis that "primitive" peoples were hopelessly "backward" and doomed to "disappear." Indeed, most Marxists in those years, with rare exceptions, shared what can at best be called a "benevolent colonialist" mentality, according to which "primitives" need "white supervision" in order to become "civilized." Surrealism was practically the only organized intellectual current to turn such spurious "arguments" completely around, and to insist that it is the "civilized" who desperately need to learn what only the "primitive" can teach them. In Mabille's wonderful anthology, *Le Miroir du merveilleux* (The Mirror of the Marvelous, 1940), the strong poetry of ancient societies, contemporary aboriginal peoples and surrealists constitutes a kind of "united front" manifesto against Euro-miserabilism. The living poetry of the tribal societies of Africa, Oceania and the Americas also resounds in the anthropological anthology Calas later co-edited with Margaret Mead, *Primitive Heritage* (1953).

Many surrealist writings relate the struggle against white supremacy and other forms of repressive discrimination to the broader surrealist project. In his lecture on "Poetic Evidence" at the International Surrealist Exhibition in London (1936), Paul Eluard explained that surrealism is

an instrument of knowledge [which] strives to bring to light humankind's deepest consciousness [and] to demonstrate that thought is common to all; it strives to reduce the barriers existing between people, and with this end in view, it refuses to serve an absurd social order based on inequality, deceit and cowardice.

A collective declaration issued on the same occasion, co-authored by members of the Surrealist Group in England and published in the fourth issue of the *International Surrealist Bulletin* (September 1936), defended the movement's revolutionary perspectives in response to a typical "Marxist" misunderstanding:

Having no coherent attitude to the world of the dream, they [vulgar Marxists] appear to be obsessed and governed by it. In our work they see only the dream, while for the other element of our synthesis they have a blind spot. Naturally, they see nothing of the synthesis itself. Their label for their personal distortion is "bourgeois individualism." Nursing their own dreams in private terror, they are unaware of the plain fact that people are more alike in their dreams than in their thoughts and their actions. Here is, indeed, the common ground, the meeting place of all humanity, an essential part of the basis of equality which we, with them, desire to establish. . . .

More brusque, but no less to the point, and more directly focused on whiteness as such, was a remark by Antonin Artaud, the poet who had directed the Bureau of Surrealist Research in Paris in 1924-25, and who in his own way remained true to surrealism's subversive spirit even after leaving the group in 1929. In the preface to his collection, *The Theater and Its Double* (1938)—in which the theater of the Third World (especially of Bali) is praised as much as European theater is condemned—Artaud responded to an old white supremacist slur simply by pointing out that "anywhere but in Europe it is we whites who 'smell bad.'" And I would even say that we give off an odor as white as the gathering of pus in an infected wound."

Long Live Degenerate Art!

Undermining white supremacy was a surrealist priority in other countries as well. When Goebbels' goons started their pogrom against "degenerate art"—*i.e.*, all modern and especially African-influenced art: fauvist, cubist, surrealist, etc.—the Surrealist Group of Cairo issued a militant statement unambiguously titled *Long Live Degenerate Art!* in which they denounced the "regressive myths" of racism as nothing but "the concentration camps of thought." Published as a tract in Arabic and in French (with thirty-seven signatures), it was promptly reprinted in the journal of the Surrealist Group in England, *London Bulletin* (No. 13, April 1939), which—exemplifying the international character of the movement—was edited by the Belgian poet E. L. T. Mesens.

Long Live Degenerate Art! was probably written by Georges Henein, founder and leading theorist of the surrealist movement in Egypt, who also discussed race and racism in other writings. In the 1960s Henein edited the magazine *Jeune Afrique* (Young Africa) and contributed the entry on "racism" to the *Petite encyclopédie politique* (1969), published under the direction of Jean Lacouture.

Meanwhile, in Yugoslavia, 1939, surrealist poet Marko Ristic made a collage featuring the *Chicago Defender* headline, "LOUIS WINS / IT'S JOE BY A KNOCKOUT" (reprinted elsewhere in these pages). At a time when Nazi scum were overrunning Europe, this bold assemblage of images, highlighting the aggressive front page of an African American newspaper, was a powerful race-traitorous statement indeed.

Despite the ravages of imperialist war and the very real hardships of exile, the years 1940-1945 were, for surrealism, a time of remarkable effervescence, especially on this side of the Atlantic. André Breton's meetings with Suzanne and Aimé Césaire and their friends in Martinique, and his later sojourns in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and especially Haiti (with Wifredo Lam), as well his journey to the land of the Hopi and Zuni in the southwestern U.S., were determining factors in the expansion of surrealist horizons during this period. Something of the expectant mood of the time is conveyed in Breton's first U.S. interview (*View* magazine, New York, 1940), in which the author of the *Surrealist Manifesto* mentions a dream in which he was Emiliano Zapata, "making ready with my army to receive Toussaint L'Ouverture the following day and to render him the honors to which he was entitled."

Black participation in surrealism (which started in 1932) multiplied during and after the war, as did the participation of women. A co-founder of the *Tropiques* group, Suzanne Césaire emerged as one of surrealism's major theorists. In her manifesto, "1943: Surrealism and Us," she wrote: "Our surrealism will enable us to finally transcend the sordid antinomies of the present: whites/Blacks, Europeans/Africans, civilized/savages—at last rediscovering the magic power of the mahoulis. . . ." Another important figure in the movement, English-born poet Mary Low, had played a key role as organizer of the Women's Militia in Spain during the 1936 Revolution. Her historical study of women, love and capitalism published in *La Verdad Contemporanea* (Contemporary Truth, Havana, 1943), discussed the connection between white supremacy and the subjugation of women.

In his widely reprinted essay on the poetry of Aimé Césaire,

Breton stressed the significant fact that during the gloomiest days of the world war, it was a Black who brought forth the first revivifying breath, a Black "who today guides us into unexplored regions. . . A Black who is the embodiment of all humankind as well, [and] who expresses all its questions, all its anguish, all its hopes and its ecstasies. . . ." Addressing Haitian students, he further insisted that "It is . . . no accident, but *a sign of the times*, that the greatest impulses toward new paths for surrealism have been furnished during the war just ended by my greatest 'colored' friends—Aimé Césaire in poetry, Wifredo Lam in painting. . . ." Interviewed by Haitian surrealist poet René Bélance, Breton pointed out that surrealism has always considered itself to be "allied with people of color," and has always "sided with them against all forms of imperialism and white brigandage."

Unequivocal Defense of the "Mau-Mau"

Surrealist statements against white supremacy and imperialism during the Cold War include the tract *Freedom Is a Vietnamese Word* (1947); Benjamin Péret's unequivocal defense of the "Mau-Mau" rebellion in Kenya (published in the surrealist broadside *Médium*, in June 1953); the statement "In the Kingdom of the Dollar" in *BIEF: Jonction surréaliste* No. 1 (15 November 1958), denouncing the treatment of Black Alabama sharecropper Jimmy Wilson, sentenced to death for the alleged theft of \$1.75; and many statements opposing France's racist war against Algerian independence.

Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, one of the most explosive attacks on white supremacy and Eurocentrism in any language, was brought out by *Présence Africaine* in 1955. In a speech at an anti-war meeting, Breton praised the book as "a definitive work in which the argumentation is as rich and solid as the expression is ardent and beautiful. The circulation of *Discourse on Colonialism* constitutes today's spiritual weapon *par excellence*."

The single most important statement opposing the Algerian war was the celebrated "Manifesto of the 121" (1960), a text the surrealists proposed and drafted, issued over the signatures of 121 prominent French writers, artists, teachers and other intellectuals. Its full title, *On the Right of Insubordination in the Algerian War*, conveys its substance. Posing the question, "Are there not instances when the refusal to serve is a sacred duty, when 'treason' means courageous respect for the truth?" the manifesto urged complete non-complicity with, including desertion from, the French armed services.

In the 1960s the Surrealist Group in France took up the international banner of Black Power. The group's journal *L'Archibras* pub-

lished a spirited declaration, "Black Flower," by Black American surrealist poet/painter Ted Joans, in which the new Black revolt in the U.S. was hailed as "a Black declaration of independence" and a revolutionary means of attaining real "freedom for all." Joans's book, *Propositions for a Black Power Manifesto* (1969) was co-translated into French by one of the leading figures in the Paris group, Moroccan-born Robert Benayoun.

After a major split in the Paris group in 1969, surrealism went underground for several years, though the movement did not "end," as many critics would like to believe. One of the most interesting articles in Vincent Bounoure's important compilation, *La Civilisation surréaliste* (1976) is the discussion of racism and language by leading Czech surrealist poet/theorist Vratislav Effenberger, who emphasizes the undiminished relevance of the 1931 tract, *Don't Visit the Colonial Exhibition!* Notable critiques of racism and xenophobia also appeared in the journal of the Arab Surrealist Movement in Exile, *Le Désir libertaire* (Libertarian Desire), and more recently in publications of the Surrealist Groups in Buenos Aires, Stockholm and Madrid.

Guerrilla Actions Against the "White" Pseudo-Culture

The Surrealist Group in Chicago, organized in 1966, was from the start vehement in its support for Black liberation, and also in its race-traitorousness—a concept with which we identified long before we knew the words. Early on our heroes were such revolutionists as Nat Turner, John Brown, Wendell Phillips, Harriet Tubman, Patrice Lumumba, Malcolm X, and C.L.R. James, as well as jazz geniuses Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk, and blues-singers Memphis Minnie, Elmore James and Peetie Wheatstraw—"the Devil's Son-in-Law and High Sheriff from Hell." Defending the late-sixties Black insurrections in a leaflet passed out at the unveiling of Mayor Daley-the-First's Picasso statue (1967) we denounced the city's "regiments of specially trained anti-riot police . . . hypocritical 'Urban Renewals' [and] . . . armies of occupation in the Black communities." The tract *Toward the Second Chicago Fire: Surrealism and the Housing Question* (1971)—again in reference to these uprisings—stated categorically that "no theory of any human activity has any value today unless it assimilates both the critique of society and the tentative outline of its transformation implicit in such exemplary acts. . . ."

Active in the most radical wing of the civil rights movement, we took part in open housing demonstrations led by Martin Luther King, in rallies against racists in Marquette Park, in support-work for the Black Panther Party and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and in anti-apartheid actions. The Chicago group, along with every

Surrealist Group in the world today—in Madrid, Paris, Prague, Brno, Stockholm, Leeds, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Puerto Rico and Australia—have been active in the movement to free Black author and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Many of our tracts, as well as polemics in our wallposter, *Surrealist Insurrection* and our journal, *Arsenal/Surrealist Subversion*, attacked the vacuous and reactionary character of the various lily-white, Wall-Street-generated, *New York Times*-supported miserabilist pseudo-avant-gardes. In 1976 we tossed a shaving-cream pie at false poet Robert Bly, identifying him in an open letter as "an enemy of everything that is important to us in the world—love and freedom, for example." (Note that this "Pie Heard Round the World" hit its mark years before Bly appointed himself *fürher* of his own version of the "Promise-Keepers"—his ridiculous and of course white "Men's Movement.") The 1977 disruption of the unveiling of Claes Oldenburg's "Batcolumn" (our leaflet called it "a five-story nightstick" and "a symbol of repressive authority . . . yet another miserabilist monument, designed by yet another miserabilist lap-dog") resulted in three arrests and was much-televised and featured not only in daily papers around the country but also in *The New Yorker* and *People* magazine.

Along with guerrilla actions to expose the hollowness of the "white" pseudo-culture, surrealists have never ceased to champion the revolutionary imagination that flourishes in the Black community. Starting with Douglas Ewart's "Sun Song" concert at the World Surrealist Exhibition in Chicago in 1976, the Surrealist Group has several times enjoyed the inspiring collaboration of our friends in the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). Our 1992 tract, *For Tyree Guyton*, signed by thirty-seven participants in the Surrealist Movement in the United States, defended the great Detroit African American artist whose marvelously reconstructed houses—truly *live-in collages*—were bulldozed by a criminally negligent city government (reprinted here on pages 120-121).

Freedom, Revolt, Imagination and Love

In the surrealist celebration of African American culture, Paul Garon's *Blues and the Poetic Spirit* (1975) is a landmark. At a time when the prevailing commentaries regarded blues nostalgically if not patronizingly as a quaint relic of backward-looking folklore—or even worse, as "sociology"—Garon saw it as a dynamic form of *modernism* at its wildest, overflowing with authentically surrealist qualities. The book also includes a sharp critique of the racism implicit in so-called "white blues"—a critique developed at length in a special chapter in the new, revised edition (1996), and in several other publications. In the "Surrealism and Blues" supplement to *Living Blues* magazine

(January 1976), we stated:

Surrealism is the exaltation of freedom, revolt, imagination and love. The surrealists could hardly have failed to recognize aspects of their combat in blues (and in jazz), for freedom, revolt, imagination and love are the very hallmarks of all that is greatest in the great tradition of Black music. . . . To avoid any possible misunderstandings, we reaffirm here our unalterable hostility to so-called "white" blues, in which we see nothing more than a cowardly, racist attempt to appropriate Black music for ends wholly inimical to its living essence. . . . In declaring here, once again, our aversion to this and all other variations of imperialist plunder, we reaffirm at the same time our deep fraternal respect and admiration for the blues' true source of inspiration: the Black working men and women of this country, who have proved themselves time and again to be the heart and nervous system of every mass revolutionary movement.

The Chicago Surrealist Group's fullest statement on whiteness, *Three Days That Shook the New World Order: The Los Angeles Rebellion of April/May 1992*, which originally appeared in the group's occasional bulletin, *WHAT Are You Going to Do About It?* No. 2 (1993), was reprinted in the (still available) second issue of *Race Traitor* and in the *Race Traitor* anthology published by Routledge.*

The recently published book, *The Forecast Is Hot! Tracts and Other Collective Declarations of the Surrealist Movement in the United States, 1966-1976* (1997), contains an introduction outlining the specific features of "Chicago Idea" surrealism: revolt and revolution against Capital and State, poetry as revolutionary praxis, psychoanalysis as a subversive activity, love and sexual insurrection, the struggle against miserabilism, the exaltation of play, the necessity of laziness, the creation of free territories of the imagination, defense of the Marvelous against religion, the abolition of whiteness, undermining patriarchy, the importance of recalcitrant undercurrents in popular culture, the special glory of Black music, the dialectic of dialectic, alchemy by any means necessary, and *humor*, the pivot of surrealism's revolutionary project today.

Here is what it says under the heading "Abolishing Whiteness":

Although most of the original members of the Chicago Surrealist Group were descended from European immigrants, none of us ever identified with "white" society. In the entire history of surrealism, moreover, "whiteness" has never been a positive value. The movement's founding poets, whose rejection of the culturally vacuous Euro-American white power structures was absolute, made no secret of the fact that they found a large share

of their deepest inspirations and brightest hopes in the nonwhite cultures of the world, from Africa to Oceania, from Brazil to Zuni.

Surrealists in Chicago, even before the formation of the group, were active in the more militant wing of the Black freedom movement, and strongly influenced by such figures as Malcolm X, St. Clair Drake, Patrice Lumumba, James Forman and C.L.R. James. We demanded full equality for all racial minorities, but we agreed wholeheartedly with those Black and Native American revolutionaries who rejected the liberal program of "integration" (liquidation) into the dominant white culture. Eventually we came to recognize that combatting what James Baldwin called "the lie of whiteness" was, in itself, a revolutionary priority. Far from being a tangible entity, much less a scientific category, the "white race" is a historically constructed social ideology—in other words, a *deadly fiction*—and those who believe in it, or accept its guidelines, are inevitably, however unwittingly, part of the problem.

Like everything else that is revolutionarily good, beautiful and true, surrealism is treason to the so-called "white race." The realization of Lautréamont's "poetry made by all" demands not only the affirmation of blackness but also the abolition of the repressive, racist myth of "whiteness."

Speed the day!

* Along with the international surrealist statement against the Columbus Quincentennial (published in English in *WHAT Are You Going to Do About It?* No. 1, in 1992), *Three Days That Shook the New World Order* is undoubtedly the most widely circulated surrealist document in recent decades. A French translation by Armand Vulliet was published as a pamphlet by the Atelier de création libertaire in Lyon (B.P. 1186, 69202 Lyon cedex 01, France). It included a "letter-preface" by Pierre Naville—the distinguished Marxist scholar who in 1924 had been a founding member of the Surrealist Movement and the original co-editor (with Benjamin Péret) of *La Révolution surréaliste*—and an afterword by Guy Girard of the Surrealist Group in Paris. It was reviewed by Michael Lowy in *Rouge*, by Alain Joubert in *Le Cerceau*, and in a number of other publications. A Turkish translation by Ergun Aydinoglu soon followed in *Sosyalizmin Sorunlarini Tarifma Dergisi* (Journal of Discussion on the Problems of Socialism), a leading Far Left exiles' journal. We have not yet seen copies of the announced Spanish or Czech translations, but recent correspondence informs us that an Italian translation has just been completed. A German translation is scheduled to appear in a volume of political and critical writings by U.S. surrealists.

SOURCES

Most of the French group's statements are included in José Pierre, ed., *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives* (Paris, two volumes, 1980, 1982); and many in English translation in *What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings of André Breton* (New York, 1978). Statements of the U.S. group prior to spring 1976 are collected in *The Forecast Is Hot! Tracts and Other Collective Declarations of the Surrealist Movement in the United States, 1966-1976*; later statements will appear in a companion volume now in preparation. Sources of uncollected statements are cited in the text.

Notes on Surrealism as a REVOLUTION AGAINST WHITENESS

by FRANKLIN ROSEMONT

*Isn't it funny how all of a sudden you can
find out there's something new about
what you are or what you're doing?*

—Frank London Brown, *Trumbull Park* (1959)

Implacably opposed to white supremacy in all its forms, surrealism is also the only major modern cultural movement of European origin in which people of color have participated as equals, and in considerable numbers. These two truths highlight a third: surrealism is a movement *fundamentally different* from those that preceded it and those that pretend to have superseded it. Starting with poetry, the surrealist adventure extends far beyond all traditional categories and encompasses the most radical social and cultural transformations. "When freedom becomes reality," as Czech surrealist Karel Teige put it, "poetry becomes life."

This brief survey of the surrealist mix of poetics and politics with which André Breton and his comrades shaped their own critique of whiteness focuses on the background and development of that critique, and on the movement's evolving strategies for undermining and overthrowing the Eurocentric/white supremacist/miserabilist patriarchy. These notes are also intended as a contribution to the project of a broad-based "highly poetic politics" as proposed by our collaborator Dave Roediger in his invaluable book, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness* (1994):

A highly poetic politics is exactly what is required in a situation in which workers who identify themselves as white are *bound* to retreat from genuine class unity and meaningful antiracism. . . We cannot afford to ignore the political implications of the mass questioning of whiteness as a trend. . . . In a variety of settings . . . whites are confessing their confusion about whether it is really worth the trouble to be white. We need to say that it is not worth it and that many of us do not want to do it. . . A central focus [must be] on exposing how whiteness is used to make whites settle for hopelessness in politics and misery in everyday life. . . Our opposition should focus on contrasting the bankruptcy of white politics with the possibilities of nonwhiteness.

* * *

How the Surrealists Became Race Traitors. None of the surrealists in the 1920s seem to have made a special study of race. In this and many other realms, including politics, these poets and dreamers had no "plan." They were improvising, making their own way on

uncertain terrain. What counts is this: All the early Surrealist Group statements that touch on race condemn white supremacy; not one could be said to condone it, even remotely, in any form; not one is demeaning in any way to people of color; not one gives whiteness as a racial notion even the slightest positive value—on the contrary, the term "white" is almost always used disparagingly. In contrast to the numerous European specialists in handwringing who worried themselves sick over Europe's "decline" and blamed the "colored races" for Europe's self-inflicted woes, the surrealists rejoiced at every anticolonialist uprising, every sign that white bourgeois/Christian hegemony was weakening. Only among the colonized and "primitive" peoples, oppressed racial and ethnic minorities, and (a little later) the revolutionary working class did they recognize their comrades.

Surrealist solidarity with people of color was reinforced by their reading of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, but it did not begin there, and it ranged far beyond the limits of Marxist discourse. It began in their disillusion as teenagers with European civilization's repressive ideals; in their experience of that civilization's World War; in their search for ways to *live*—and to live *poetic* lives—in a society dominated by merchants of misery and death.

They began by questioning and self-questioning, and the answers did not come all at once or in neat little rows. Just as people are not born revolutionists, so too they are not born race traitors. In a white supremacist society everyone inevitably suffers the damaging influence of whiteness, and people become race traitors only as a result of experience, knowledge and struggle. This *becoming* proceeds unevenly, often with embarrassing missteps—provoking a state of mind not unlike the "double consciousness" W.E.B. DuBois describes in *The Souls of Black Folk*. That individual surrealists in the 1920s did not wholly elude the lure of exoticism is no more surprising than the fact that some of their references to race reflect their inexperience and naivete. Consider this example: In February 1928, in the French group's ongoing discussions of sexuality, Pierre Naville asked whether anyone thought it "repugnant" to have sexual relations with a "nonwhite" woman, and in the exchanges that followed, André Breton mentioned that he did not find Black women physically attractive. Now these were private talks not intended for publication (and in fact were not published until 1990); the accuracy of the transcription is also open to question. However, while it would be wrong to exaggerate the importance of brief, uncharacteristic passing remarks, it would also be wrong to dismiss them altogether, for their very off-handedness exemplifies the insidious ways in which even the subtlest, most critical minds can retain half-conscious traces of a world-view

long since rejected. This fleeting exchange suggests that two of the most brilliant revolutionary writers of their time—who had already taken a strong stand against the "whites" during France's war on the Riffians—in 1928 still had a way to go before they succeeded in freeing themselves entirely of French society's racial ethos.

It is no easy thing, after all, to break completely with the values of one's time and place.

Naville and Breton went on to become two of this century's foremost race traitors, identifying themselves body and soul with the liberation struggles of Black people everywhere—Naville as a revolutionary critic of the racial dimension of modern capitalism (in his studies of Fordism, for example), as a friend of C.L.R. James and translator of *The Black Jacobins*, and as sponsoring editor and frequent contributor to the journal *Présence Africaine*; and Breton as the author of some of the most insightful appreciations of Black culture ever written in the French language, including the first major writings on Aimé Césaire, Wifredo Lam, Agustín Cárdenas, Clément Magloire-Saint-Aude and the voodoo painter Hector Hyppolite, as well as the first important essay in France on Katherine Dunham, and the book *Martinique: Snake-Charmer* (with André Masson, 1948), which Martiniquan film-maker Euzhan Palcy has called "the most beautiful of all books" on the island; and also as a courageous anti-imperialist and defender of the cause of African independence.

In Breton's case particularly, his evolution from radical critic of European civilization to thoroughgoing race traitor was influenced decisively by his direct association and friendship with Black thinkers, writers, artists and activists. After his meeting with the Martiniquan *Légitime Défense* (Self-Defense) surrealist group in Paris, 1932—the students Etienne Léro, Simone Yoyotte and her brother Pierre, and Jules Monnerot (all of whom wrote for *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, which Breton edited), and later with Léon Damas, Wifredo Lam, Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, and others, his references to the world of Africa and the African diaspora are more substantial as well as more numerous. Especially crucial was the impact of Suzanne Césaire, one of surrealism's most penetrating thinkers, whose intellectual influence on Breton—and on the entire movement—was considerable, and for whom Breton felt a deep personal friendship and admiration, as evidenced in his splendid poem, *For Madame Suzanne Césaire*. Elsewhere, as if to cancel his unfortunate remark of February 1928, he rapturously described her: "not only as beautiful as the flame on a bowl of punch, but more than that, a journey into the very heart of the island."

Luis Buñuel once said that people's "potential for change" is the

only thing that makes a story or film interesting. It is also our only hope for a better world.

Surrealist Abolitionism. Surrealism came into being in part as a self-conscious heir of nineteenth-century Abolitionism. From Breton's first *Manifesto* on, the group's abundant use of a recognizably Abolitionist vocabulary—fervent denunciation of the "slavery of the imagination," persistent demand for "unfettering," passionate emphasis on *freedom*—strongly suggest the sources they were drawing on. A writer they acclaimed an important precursor was poet Victor Hugo (then held in low esteem by critics); indifferent to his early, sentimental work, surrealists admired the visionary poems he began writing in the 1850s. An Abolitionist, Hugo was an ardent admirer of John Brown and the only well-known writer in Europe to publicly champion the attack on Harpers Ferry.

Other signs of surrealist interest in Abolition are not hard to find, from Péret's extensive writings on slave revolts and runaway slave communities in Brazil, and the pages devoted to French Abolitionist Victor Schoelcher in *Tropiques* No. 13-14 (1945), to Breton's involvement in the Toussaint L'Ouverture Committee in Paris, 1948—a group formed to remind the French public that the abolition of the slave trade in 1848 had been preceded by Black revolutionary Abolitionist efforts decades earlier. (Eleven years later during the Algerian war the surrealist journal *Front Unique* [United Front, 1959], published in Milan, reprinted a 1791 text by Jean-Paul Marat defending the right of Black slaves in the colonies to use any and all means to break the yoke of their oppressors.)

Breton and his friends found much that appealed to them in Hegel, but the "Master/Slave" dialectic was among the strongest. Paul Eluard's article, "The Suppression of Slavery" in *La Révolution Surréaliste* No. 3 (1925) concludes with an Abolitionist axiom that also has a Hegelian ring: "The taste for freedom is acquired in struggling for it."

In poetry and art, the struggle to abolish the slavery of the imagination proved comparatively easy, except for one detail: It has to be abolished again and again, because present-day society keeps putting runaway imaginations in chains. As the surrealists were quick to realize, the struggle doesn't stop in poetry and the arts, it only starts there.

The "slavery of the imagination" is chiefly a function of *ideology*, or the systematization of false consciousness. White supremacy is the continuation of chattel slavery by other means, and the belief in whiteness is imaginative slavery at its worst, for whiteness absorbs every repressive, life-denying trend: It is always linked to

miserabilism, militarism, sexual misery, the police state, the subjugation of women, and all forms of injustice, dehumanization, genocide and counter-revolution.

Whiteness also exaggerates the *degradation of language*, the most virulent form of that "hatred of the Marvelous" that Breton decried in his first *Manifesto*, and a major feature of the miserabilist order. Pompous ignoramus sometimes blame Black athletes, rappers, or immigrants for "ruining" the language—but that is absurd. Minority slang and immigrant locutions add sparkle, color and *life* to language, and keep it vibrant. What stifles language and weakens the human capacity to communicate is precisely the apparatus of whiteness: the news media, advertising industry, and most of all the bureaucratic politico-military machine that makes it possible for White House spokesmen to say "We have neutralized the enemy forces" when they really mean that they have killed tens of thousands of unarmed men, women and children by dropping bombs on them.

Surrealism is a revolution *for* the emancipation of language, poetry, the imagination, the Marvelous—and *because* it is all these things, surrealist revolution is also necessarily *revolution against whiteness*. From the standpoint of racial politics, surrealist revolution is a synonym for the abolition of the so-called "white race."

An imagination that oppresses another cannot itself be free!

Dreaming the Future, Overthrowing the Past. In developing his own and surrealism's race-traitorousness, Breton was simply following through the implications of surrealism itself—as the subversive "prehensile tail" of Romanticism, as the revolutionary historic process by which the imaginary becomes real, and above all as the *fundamental experience of poetry*.

Verily, surrealism has influenced the past more than it has been influenced by it. Most of the now-recognized precursors of the movement were little-known until the surrealists themselves insisted on their greatness. The history of literature and art looks very different now because we see it in the light of surrealism.

In the vast critical literature which today exists on these precursors, the question of race is generally passed over in silence. That the surrealists' reading of these authors influenced their view of race matters is, however, a virtual certainty. Lautréamont, for example—the movement's single greatest forerunner—was born in Uruguay and spent much of his childhood in wilderness. I suspect there is a connection between this biographical detail and the fact that *Les Chants de Maldoror* introduced an emphatically non-European outlook into French literature. And in 1920s Paris, his admonition that we must face the "new tremors in the intellectual atmosphere" surely directed

surrealist eyes and ears toward Africa and Black America.

Arthur Rimbaud, the teen-aged poet and partisan of the Paris Commune who scrawled "Shit on God" on church walls, took pains to dissociate himself root and branch from European civilization. "I have never belonged to this people; I have never been a Christian," he wrote in *A Season in Hell* (1873), and went on to proclaim "Je suis nègre" (I am a Negro)—a bold affirmation that later meant much to Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas and other founders of Négritude.

Revalorizing Blackness. Far from accepting the traditional veneration of the Greco-Roman heritage, surrealists openly proclaimed their preference for the philosophical heritage of Africa, Zuni, and the Australian aborigines. As Philip Lamantia first called to my attention, surrealism is itself an outgrowth of a long Afrocentric tradition *within* European culture—a tradition sustained not by the academy but by an underground of heterodox thinkers commonly labeled "occult." Exemplified by Giordano Bruno, the alchemists and hermetists, this counter-tradition profoundly influenced the *poetic* underground in which the founders of surrealism first recognized themselves: the work of Nerval, Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Saint-Pol-Roux and Jarry.

Focused on Egypt (the legendary birthplace of Alchemy), this current nourished many of surrealism's major fields of inquiry, and certainly reinforced one of the movement's earliest and most enduring achievements: the *revalorization of blackness*. In contrast to Christian civilization's fear and loathing of the color black, surrealism has always, as St. Clair Drake wrote of ancient Egyptian culture, "invested 'blackness' with positive affect" (*Black Folk Here and There*, 1987).

No European poet has referred more often or more affirmatively to blackness than André Breton—and his only competitors are other surrealists, such as Jean-Pierre Duprey, or François Valorbe, who transmuted the phrase "carte blanche" (white card or blank map) into *Carte noir* (1953), a book of poems in praise of Great Black Music. As refusal/negation of whiteness, and/or as symbol of birth, creation, night, or the Earth itself, the word *black*, in surrealism, always confers the highest respect and elevation. This was a dramatic shift in linguistic usage. As the entry on *noir* in the *Dictionnaire Générale du surréalisme et ses environs* (1982) puts it, black has always been *the* color of surrealism.

"Primitive Art": Poetry Made Visible. In 1920s France, most Marxists agreed with liberals and fascists that it was the White Man's Duty to "civilize" the natives in what was bombastically called "Overseas France," *i.e.*, the colonies. As part of the revolutionary minority

who denounced this hypocrisy, surrealists demanded the complete overthrow of colonialism, and sovereignty for all peoples.

The surrealists' anti-imperialism was partly a result of their admiration for so-called "primitive art." A key stimulator of their awareness of the "primitive" was Picasso, whose "Demoiselles d'Avignon" (1907) was the first European painting directly inspired by African art—a mask he copied at a museum. Significantly, Picasso's initial response to this mask was *fear*. His candid admission is crucial because fear is often a response to the unfamiliar, the "strange," the Other. As thinkers as different as Hegel (in his *Phenomenology*) and Freud have noted, fear that is overcome—as in Picasso's case, by *imaginative activity*—readily yields to respect, admiration and love.

Picasso painted the picture, but his surrealist friends drew the conclusions. Surrealists were not trying to rejuvenate the dying culture of Europe, but rather to supersede it by revolutionary/poetic means. For them, the fact that tribal art was irreconcilably *outside* the established esthetic paradigms was part of its greatness. The attempt to subsume it into the stultifying framework of European esthetics seemed as stupid and dishonest as the anthropologists' view that it comprised mere "documents" of "undeveloped" cultures.

As surrealists were among the first to point out, tribal sculptures were not *objets d'art* at all, in the European sense of the term, but splendid examples of *poetry made visible*: objects of great spiritual intensity, integral to the daily lives of the people who made and used them, unencumbered by alienated ideological conceptions of esthetic value. At the same time, surrealists refused to regard these works as mere artifacts. On the contrary, and here they were practically alone, surrealists recognized so-called "primitive" art as *absolutely modern*, in Rimbaud's phrase: that is, as an active element in the development of a global revolutionary consciousness.

The surrealists perceived that this art was, for Europe, a radically new kind of beauty—Breton later called it *convulsive* beauty: deeply disturbing, subversive, beyond esthetics, inseparable from revolt—a marvelous challenge to the decadent ideologies of the West. In these masks from afar they glimpsed the negation of all that stands between humankind and poetry.

Their Reason and Ours. Surrealism is not against reason, but it is very much against the arrogance of reason, as epitomized by Plato's *Republic*, an authoritarian-rationalist utopia from which poets are banned. (Compare Saint-Pol-Roux's *Repoetic*, from which no one is banned, but all are poets.)

As atheists, materialists, poets and revolutionists, surrealists have always been foes of obscurantism—rationalist as well as religious.

Their passional attraction to the arts, poetry and world-views of tribal peoples helped them recognize the exceedingly narrow limits, and therefore the reactionary and oppressive side, of the so-called "Age of Reason." Because of their anti-rationalism, surrealists have frequently (and wrongly) been accused of "irrationalism" by liberals and would-be Marxists. Now that it is more widely known that the Enlightenment was the very period in which "scientific" racism was imposed on the world (by rationalists), this "argument" seems particularly ludicrous. The spectacle of Reason in defense of white supremacy, which is the vilest form of unreason, makes it clear that Western philosophy's concept of "reason" is, to put it mildly, partial and prejudicial. ("Logical people," Lena Horne pointed out in her autobiography in 1965, "have not treated the Negro logically.") Rationalism's one-sidedness and denial of the non-rational easily allow it to succumb to the irrational, without even knowing it. In contrast, if by reason we mean coherent thinking, and drawing logical inferences from the known data, surrealism is surely one of its living embodiments.

For surrealism, inspired by the philosopher-poets of Haitian voodoo, ancient China, Hopi land, and Chicago blues, it has never been a question of imagination *versus* reason—that is, of one *or* the other—but rather of one *and* the other, and especially of one *in* the other.

Surrealist Direct Action. To a far greater extent than their Communist or anarchist contemporaries in France, surrealists did everything they could to make themselves unacceptable and unforgivable to the dominant order. I know of no group anywhere who tried to deviate more from Eurocentric norms, or to free themselves of European racist/capitalist/christian ideology, or to spurn the spurious "privileges" granted to those who submit to the white mystique. Eschewing the corrupt and corrupting "success" offered to those who play by this society's rules, André Breton and his friends preferred revolt and revolution. In poetry, painting, collage, objects, games, dance, film, mad love, black humor and the pursuit of objective chance, surrealism is the living negation of misery and miserabilism. If it's not subversive, it's not surrealist!

In addition to its constantly expanding field of research and experiment, the movement has always been vigorously *activist*. Its defining "absolute nonconformism," which each subsequent surrealist generation naturally has had to renew according to its own historic circumstances, inspired scandalous forms of *direct action*. Many of the surrealists' most characteristic actions—gestures just as characteristically scoffed at as "frivolous" by critics—take on a whole new

dimension when viewed in relation to their rejection of whiteness. Their practice of sending vituperative letters to Establishment figures, insulting priests in the street (recognizing the church as a bastion of white supremacy), distributing subversive tracts (*Open the Prisons! Disband the Army!*, and many others), disruptions of official cultural affairs (which, then as now, are mostly coverups for racist/imperialist orgies of self-congratulation on the part of the white "literary-industrial complex," as Ishmael Reed once called it): These are some of the ways surrealists burned the bridges linking them to the respectable white bourgeois world they rejected.

A Black friend once remarked to me that while white radicals could, at any point in their lives, renounce their radicalism and find acceptance in the social system they had previously opposed, Blacks—no matter how much they might try to accommodate the existing order—remain antagonistic to it *by the very fact of their blackness*. Seen in this light, surrealist direct action is a way of *raising the stakes* in a revolt that exceeds all existing models of reform and revolution. Deepening their break with what T-Bone Slim termed Western Civilinsanity, surrealism's marvelous disruptions also have the effect of making it harder for the disrupters to take "the white way out."

A School of Race Traitors. "I chose surrealism when I was very young," African American poet Ted Joans wrote to André Breton in 1962. "I sensed in it a camaraderie that I found also in jazz." Years later, reflecting on his participation in the Surrealist Group in Paris, Joans added: "I wonder where I would be if I had been greeted by such a group of good people when I first arrived in New York, instead of those jiveass and basically racist abstract-expressionists."

The first surrealists' spontaneous and unrelenting broadside attack on European and Euro-American values and institutions, combined with their enthusiastic celebration of the art, poetry and myth of people of color, proved to be a sturdy foundation for the movement's race politics, permitting extraordinary development in many directions. By the mid-1930s surrealism was, among other things, a veritable *school of race traitors*, its subversive force vastly multiplied since the Twenties, for the movement had now become international and multiracial, and its active participants included a growing number of women. Since then, its cycles of dislocation and renewal have tended to follow those of other revolutionary currents. By the time of its worldwide revival in the 1960s, surrealism's newcomers were mostly from the Third World and the satellites of the USSR, and there was hardly a country in the world where its disturbing presence had not been felt.

Surrealists have never thought of themselves as a "school" of any

kind, but it is remarkable how many of those who passed through the movement learned their race traitor lessons well. Striking indeed is the number of surrealists and former surrealists who distinguished themselves as scholars/celebrators of Black culture. Citing only those whose surrealist activity began in the 1920s, in addition to Breton and Naville: Robert Desnos introduced Léon Damas' first book, *Pigments* (1939). Benjamin Péret prefaced the Spanish translation of Aimé Césaire's *Return to My Native Land* (Havana, 1942) and contributed, as did René Crevel and Raymond Michelet, to Nancy Cunard's *Negro Anthology*. Georges Limbour was one of the first translators of Langston Hughes. Marcel Duhamel translated Richard Wright and suggested to Chester Himes that he try his hand at a mystery novel set in Harlem. Michel Leiris became one of France's leading Africanists, and the author of important critical studies on race and racism. Many later surrealists—Gellu Naum in Romania; Claude Tarnaud, François Valorbe and Gérard Legrand in France; Georges Gronier in Belgium; Paul Garon and Joseph Jablonski in the U.S.; Michael Vandelaar and Hilary Booth in Australia; Carmen Bruna in Argentina, and others—have written highly original appreciations of Black music.

As a school of race traitors, the surrealist movement has been in many ways unique, and not least in its amazing persistence and capacity for renewal. Its current agitation in many countries indicates that it has no intention of giving up now.

At a time when many of the idols and heroes of today's U.S. academic intelligentsia—including Pound, Heidegger, Jung, and Paul de Man—were openly promoting racist views and actively supporting Nazism, André Breton and the surrealist movement were vigorous opponents of white supremacy, defenders of full equality for women, and fighters for workingclass emancipation. Whether this alone explains the prevailing hostility to surrealism in academia is hard to prove, but this much is clear: Surrealism, the best-hated movement of the past century, continues to be hated and lied about today because the questions it raises, the principles it defends, and the revolutionary solutions it proposes are still dangerous to the existing order.

The Proper Use of Demoralization. The post-World-War-I years when surrealism was born was a period of massive demoralization, much like today. The French government, church, media and most intellectuals wanted to overcome this demoralization with nationalist or openly racist fervor.

The surrealists, however, made demoralization part of their revolutionary program. Refusing to be victimized by the ideological moods of a declining social order, they turned demoralization against the enemy. Unfortunately, the French Left—even the anarchists, with

few exceptions—supported the anti-demoralization crusade by promoting a naive "feel-good" optimism, I.O.U.'s of "Progress." The result was fascism in Europe, gulags in the USSR, workingclass defeat everywhere.

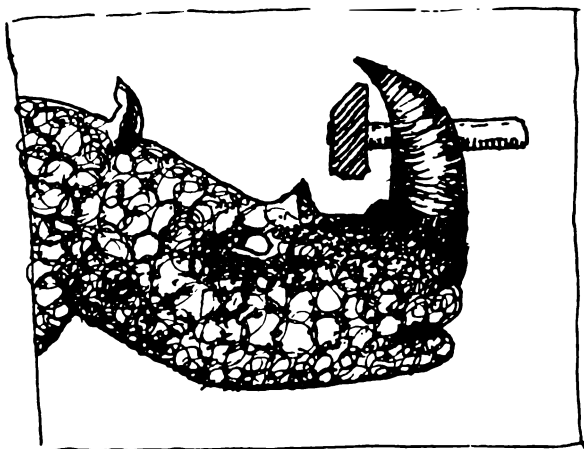
I suggest that the surrealist strategy of applied demoralization meets the needs of race traitors today. There are times, said Georges Henein, when the most important thing is not to instruct, but to *inter-rupt*. What so-called whites and especially white workers need most is to imagine different ways of living beyond the oppressive dissimulation of whiteness. They need to recognize that whiteness is an ideology that keeps white working people who believe in it confused, docile, and cut off from the great majority of humankind. They need to see how their belief in whiteness multiplies their own misery, and that their only real hope for a life worth living is to develop active solidarity with people of color.

First of all, whites must become *disillusioned* with whiteness: that is, freed of the paralyzing illusion that they belong to something called the "white race." Later, when there are more race traitors and fewer spewers of white rubbish, there will be time for the *remoralization* of the newly liberated part of the population for whom having white skin is no longer a badge of domination. But for now, let's keep disillusioning and demoralizing the "whiteness worshippers."

Pop the white balloon—it's nothing but hot air! Demoralize the so-called "white race" by any means necessary!

Surrealism lives!

Freedom *now*!



"Hammer and Rhino," drawing by ROBERT GREEN

BURNING THE DAYS

by J. ALLEN FEES

Nothing screams louder today than the urgent need to attack "whiteness," white supremacy, the sickening myth of the white race, and to do away with the whole *crapitalist* system that sustains these atrocities. The tension at work, on the streets, and in social gathering places is straining more and more every day with the momentum of history. Surely we can do nothing less than help it along, doing our best to build a new, non-repressive society in the spirit of an absolute freedom that none of us has ever really witnessed in social life. But we have seen glimpses of a desirable future, and we know that white supremacy is one of the most repressive and genocidal forces holding all of us back from multiplying these instances of freedom, and from realizing them collectively in a new way of life.

Who am I? It seems only a few of us know who we are (early warning: don't doubt a doubter), but getting to be who we want to be tends to be further and further from our hands because, in the existing state of things, our hands are often what somebody else is (i.e., the bosses).

I was born on December 30 in one of the more tumultuous years in this century: 1968. I grew up in Iowa and lived there until graduating two months early from high school to move to Arizona. For the next seven years I wrote science fiction (in the "cyberpunk" sub genre; none ever published), and gathered my hatred of the present genocidal system. In 1994 I got the first (and only) job I've ever had in my life. In the same year I also came across a book that had been whispering out through the mist to me, drawing me to it from past links that I had added to my chain of screaming signs for change: *What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings of André Breton*. All I can say is that from then until now events and ideas have kept falling into place and, for me, there is no turning back.

Atheist, revolutionary, dialectician, historical materialist, poet: This truly is how I describe myself to people I meet. In 1996 I got my first and only tattoo. Remembering a quotation from Jacques Vaché that I'd come across a few years ago—about his wanting to be a member of a purposeless Chinese secret society in Australia—I had emblazoned in plain sight six very simple yet penetrating words in Chinese: Poetry Love Freedom Dream Desire Revolution.

My individualism involves those magic moments on the road to a better life for five billion people (yes, my *individualism*), and even

Surrealist poet J. Allen Fees lives in Arizona, where he is currently pursuing his interests in autism and tap dancing.

what I've done that no one else knows I've done. People will one day turn a corner and see glimmering through the cracks of the sidewalk a jumping point toward a better life under their feet. Their chains, *our* chains, are easily broken by the very hands that forged them.

"One of the engaging paradoxes of our existence—which strip mathematics of meaning—is that a million times a crime is patriotism" (Charles Fort). Today, in the U.S., those who believe they are part of the "white race," but who are not necessarily aware of the fact that this very belief makes them racist and therefore part of the problem, are busy congratulating themselves that racism has been officially ended. In their completely distorted and self-serving view, "everyone else" is now, as a result of corrective changes made since the 1960s, assimilated and integrated into supposedly equal cultures of diversity. What these apologists for whiteness refuse to acknowledge is that the cultures of diversity that make up these United States are in truth largely *stolen* cultures, brutally exploited and manipulated by giant corporations owned and operated by rich white men, and backed (as well as subsidized, at your expense and mine) by an inherently white supremacist government. This white corporate power and its state machinery make up what is called the White Power Structure, and if you don't see that it's still intact today, you're not looking very hard.

Chipping away at the window-dressing of this structure, by means of reforms and education, may be useful, but it never will be enough to overturn and destroy the structure itself. Immense and complicated as it may seem, however, this genocidal system is not that hard to decipher, or to tear down. For what holds the White Power Structure together is the disgusting mysticism of whiteness, the groundless belief that such a thing as the "white race" really exists, and the pitiful system of "benefits" granted to obedient members of the "white club."

Nonconformity is our best weapon. When enough of those who happen to have "white" skin realize that the so-called white race is nothing more than a horrendous, life-threatening self-deception, the White Power Structure will collapse *from the inside*, and we can all get on with the task of building a new life for all.

At the place I work everyone has to wear a name tag. On mine, however, you'll find neither my name nor the name of the company I supposedly represent. It simply says Race Traitor.



Monitor (total
length about 4 ft.)

aged to consider how it came to pass through England, the leader of the plundering nations in 1884 when an international agreement established the system. In the U.S. children mature staring to the front of classrooms to see world maps which hugely overstate the size of Northern nations and which center on the Atlantic Ocean, and therefore on the U.S. and Europe as land masses. Thus in looking at the 1929 surrealist map on which this article focuses (see Figure One), my eleven-year-old son noted its "Océan Pacifique"-centeredness by asking "How come it's backwards?"

If students later see less distorted maps such as those based on the Peters Projection, the land masses seem remarkably bunched around the equator, with Africa impossibly large and the U.S. surprisingly tiny. Maps are passed off as replications of the land (and, far less often, of the oceans), not of how humans imagine their relationship to nature. As Robert Harrison's *Eccentric Spaces* argued in 1977, "On the kind of maps most people use, one feature is exaggerated at the expense of everything else, the system of roads." And yet these are seen simply as objective maps, rather than as plottings tailored to a civilization whose relation to the natural world is utterly and perhaps fatally mediated by automobiles. Churches, national forests, colleges and little drawings of oil wells occasion little comment when they crop up on the authoritative maps in encyclopedias. If toxic waste dumps, areas redlined by banks and insurance companies, union halls or bird populations are mapped, the project is surely exotic and peculiar.

Indeed, geographers refer to attempts to provide alternatives to imperialist projecting not as mappings but "countermappings." The tradition is a venerable one. Just more than a century after Christopher Columbus carried getting lost to world-historical proportions, colonists at Jamestown, Virginia encountered an ambitious map drawn by members of Chief Powhatan's confederacy. The map placed the land which the Native Americans inhabited at the center of a flat world. Near the map's edge, a small pile of sticks represented England. In the early 1720s, remarkable Chickasaw and Catawban maps came into the possession of British officials in Charlestown, South Carolina. One Chickasaw-drawn map placed the "Chickasaw Nation" in Northern Mississippi at its center while one produced by a member of a Catawban group enlarged the Piedmont dramatically. Both the Chickasaw and Catawban maps represent Native American groups with circles of various sizes. "The Catawban mapmaker," the archaeologist and historian Greg Waselkov writes, "expanded the metaphor of the social circle when he drew a rectangular grid plan of Charlestown and a square representing Virginia." Charlestown's grid

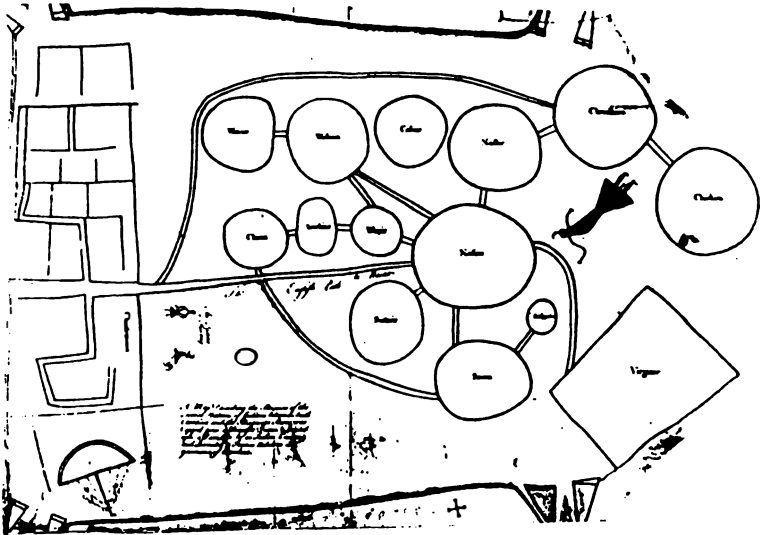


Figure Two: Copy of a Catawaba map of the South Carolina Piedmont, from about 1721. Virginia, squared, is in the lower right. The circles represent Indian groups.

on the map may have plotted the actual pattern of the streets or rice fields in the area, but the depictions of Virginia signaled to Waselkov a clear commentary. In contrast to recognition of even enemy tribes as "circular people," he writes, "the British are square." (See Figure Two)

More self-consciously anti-imperialist countermaps of the recent past include the frontispiece of Kwame Nkrumah's *Class Struggles in Africa* (1970). Within the confines of Africa, Nkrumah's map inserts the whole of Europe and the U.S. as well as Japan, all shaded gray, and the British Isles, blackened. India, like Africa unshaded, is added for good measure, and there remains plenty of room to spare. (See Figure Three) The collaborative "indigenous counter-maps" produced in this decade by the Kek'chi and Mopan Maya peoples of southern Belize, recently collected in the strikingly beautiful *Mayan Atlas* (1998), came into being as part of a struggle to resist deforestation and to secure land rights. Making land claims, and claims as how people do and should interact with the land, these intensely local maps represent the results of collaborative deliberations. The cartographers are popularly elected.

It is within such traditions that the 1929 "Surrealist Map of the World" ought to be considered. Originally published in the special

"Surrealism in 1929" issue of the Belgian review *Variétés* under the title "Le Monde au temps des surréalistes" (The World in the Time of the Surrealists), the map almost certainly represented a collaboration. Thus it was included as a "collective declaration" in José Pierre's *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives, Tome I, 1922-1939* (1980). Probably drawn by the French surrealist painter Yves Tanguy, who assembled the rescaled world as collage, the map retains charming enigmas.

For some, the project defies explanation. Indeed, the British leftist David Widgery reported overhearing the following at London's Hayward Gallery in his article on the 1978 "Dada and Surrealism Reviewed" exhibition there:

Woman: "Surrealist map"—what's it all mean?

Man: Well, I suppose that it is trying to portray, er—it's like a child would draw a map—you know, a childlike drawing. See—the United States is missing.

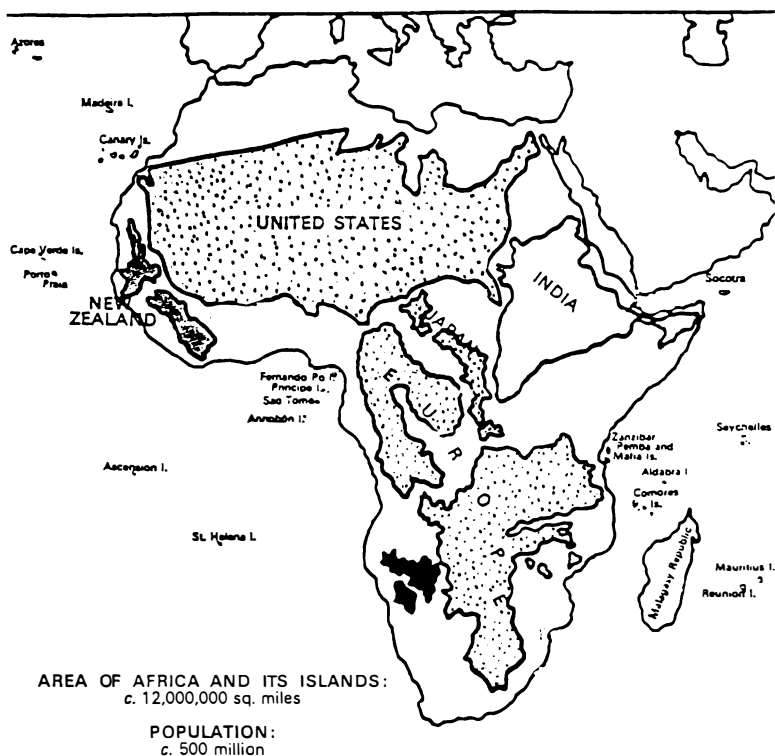


Figure Three: from Kwame Nkrumah, *Class Struggles in Africa* (1970)

Woman: Oh, yes, and England's missing too.

Man: Yes, I don't understand that at all.

Less uncomprehending, if not sympathetic, is Patrick Waldberg's *Surrealism* (1965), which echoes the idea of the map as "childish," while casting the project as emblematic of surrealist enmity to "Western Christian civilization" and of the movement's readiness to sacrifice "all Romanesque art, the cathedrals, the chateaux of the Loire, and Versailles, in favor of the statues on Easter Island." Waldberg adds that the drawing creates "an imaginary world" which is "considered to be the only desirable one."

However puzzled and distant Widgery's overheard exchange and Waldberg's history are, on one level they together suggest what cannot be missed as striking qualities of the "Surrealist Map of the World." Reconnecting mapmaking with imagination, and frankly posing cartography as a matter of political and personal choice, the map does uncompromisingly disappear England (which may be a tiny nameless dot near Ireland) and the U.S. Indeed, with the exception of a much-enlarged Soviet Russia, at that time by no means unequivocally considered "Western," the 1929 map literally belittles Europe. It anticipates Richard Wright's 1957 reminder, in his *White Man, Listen!*, that "It is difficult for white Western Europe to realize how tiny Europe is in the minds of the people of the earth." If, as the surrealist poet Ted Joans has recently put it, the U.S. and Europe, those "two too-white places," are merely "meeting places for humankind to do technological and monetary jive," the map is drawn to human scale.

Although brief, Gérard Legrand's discussion of the map under the entry "Carte géographique" in the *Dictionnaire Générale du surréalisme et ses environs* (1982) pairs vital points. Calling the drawing an "imaginary planisphere," Legrand insists that it is at once a "humorous provocation" and a reflection of the "spirit as well as the artistic and political tendencies of the group at a given moment." To miss its playfulness—the intricacies of its production may preclude our crediting it with childishness—in order to linger over the meaning of each detail invites the sort of misunderstanding all too typical of today's humorless academic studies of surrealism generally. But neither would it do to miss the clear political and artistic messages, *at a given moment*, which it contains.

The example of the rendering of Soviet Russia helps to clarify interpretive matters. Russia's aggrandizement moves the map's center dramatically northward in a way so discomfiting to those of us accustomed to see global inequality mapped on a North-South rather than an East-West axis that we risk missing the novelty of a map

directing viewers' central attention to the Bering Straits and the Pacific. Moreover, as Gérard Durozoi has recently written in his *Histoire du mouvement surréaliste* (1997), this positioning of the Stalinizing Soviet Union exists in counterpoint with the inclusion of Constantinople—the place of Trotsky's exile—as the only named city save Paris. Moves toward more explicit critiques of Stalinism would have made for a much different surrealist mapping in the mid-1930s than in 1929. Similarly, it is easy to imagine a much larger Latin America and Caribbean quickly replacing the small renderings of those places on the 1929 map, as West Indian and Brazilian influences changed the racial politics and world-view of surrealism.

Although Durozoi rightly observes that the map "affirms that [surrealist] interest in communism did not in the least diminish their interest in non-Western cultures," it is fair to add that the interest focused in this instance on Oceania, Eskimo and Northwest Coast Indian territories—those areas least in contact with colonizing powers and known for the unspoiled wildness of their land and animals. The Communist and surrealist activist André Thirion observed in his later recollections (*Revolutionaries Without Revolution*, 1975) that the 1929 map imagined a world in which "half the globe is reduced in favor of New Guinea and Easter Island." Thirion emphasized that this resizing stemmed from both aesthetic and political commitments. The Afro-visionary novelist Ishmael Reed used related aspects of the 1929 map, in his 1990 collection *Writin' Is Fightin'*, to question the idea of pure and monolithic "Western civilization." He asked: "And what of the cubists, through whom the influence of African art changed modern painting; or the surrealists, who were so impressed with the art of the Pacific Northwest Indians that, in their map of North America, Alaska dwarfs the lower forty-eight in size?"

Africa, somewhat surprisingly, shrinks in the rendering of Tanguy. In the African case, the bourgeois and avant-fraud vogue for things African in 1929, in and out of France, may have played a role. Dawn Ades overdraws her insistence (in the catalog of the 1978 "Dada and Surrealism Reviewed" exhibition in London) that the 1929 world map downsized Africa out of a conviction that the art of that continent was "too terrestrial in its themes, too concerned with rendering the human figure in a more or less realistic way, and with beauty and proportion in form." Surrealist admiration for African art, and for what André Breton called its "explosive contribution" to the modern spirit, before and after 1929, cut against so sweeping a judgment. However, as Ades and Ishmael Reed both suggest, it is true that passion for African art among Europeans was more longstanding and widespread than the celebration of Oceanic, Eskimo and Northwest



Figure Four: "Destruction of a Map," collage by HAIFA ZANGANA (1978)

Coast art, which was more of a surrealist "discovery." Moreover, the grounds on which African art found admiration in post-World-War-One years sometimes took forms which would have appalled surrealists, as in Apollinaire's naive appreciation of "Negro sculpture" as a precursor of the Greek and as "able to compete perfectly well with the beautiful works of European sculpture."

But it is also vital not to overinterpret evidence from the map. The surrealists' collective mapping project encouraged and even cultivated idiosyncrasy and inconsistency. In that sense the prominence of Paris

(included as the capital of Germany, although France is omitted) ought to be read not as Francophile—but as provocation, reminding viewers that the map is a production imagined and made in a specific place, time and context, not a reproduction of reality. The attack launched by the map centered not only on challenging the *specifics* of imperialist, capitalist and technocratic mapping but also on blowing the cover of exactitude and science which the idea of mapping as reproduction gives to the acceptance of a world of misery.

In this sense, as well as others, the "Surrealist Map of the World" bears strong affinities to the brilliant "Destruction of a Map" (see Figure Four), a 1978 collage by the female Iraqi-born surrealist, pharmacist, novelist and anti-imperialist militant, Haifa Zangana. Zangana's work may go still further in suggesting that the labored and manly forces none-too-successfully attacking the map are so musclebound by the trappings of a classical, Christian and nationalist logic as to imperil their success.

Finally, and critically, it deserves emphasizing that, like the best of the whole utopian tradition of which it is a part, the 1929 surrealist remapping of the world does not invite our assent to its particular imagination. Rather it demands our active imagination of new worlds. Marx's injunction, that the point is not merely to understand the world but to transform it, finds apt literal impression in the 1929 map, but as an anti-Eurocentric work-in-progress, not as a last word. Ted Joans' 1984 invocation of the "Map of the World," in reprinting the Nkrumah volume's African map stands as a powerful example. Writing in the Berlin-based surrealist journal *Dies und Das* (This and That), which he co-edited with the German surrealist poet Richard Anders, Joans offered the reprint from the Nkrumah book not only in order "to demonstrate the immensity of the continent" but also "to update the true surrealist point of view of Africa."



Stormy petrel
(about 5½ in. long)

THE MARVELOUS Basis of a Free Society

by PIERRE MABILLE

Society, which makes us what we are, crystallizes thick shells of understanding all around us. It engenders laws, organizations, prejudices, customs, learned arguments, textbooks, hierarchies and esthetic habits. It is like a cultivated, stratified crust which increasingly tends to separate the inner fire of our being from the surrounding universe. The human individual is fond of this comfortable cloak, and recognizes its value, but also knows that it is an obstacle to desire and is therefore sclerosis and death. It is the Marvelous, then, which offers possibilities of contact between all that one has within oneself, and all that lies outside.

The Marvelous expresses the need to exceed limits imposed by our very structure—our need for a greater beauty, increased strength, expanded pleasure, a longer lifespan. Extending beyond the limits of space and time, the Marvelous seeks to destroy barriers. It is the struggle of freedom itself against everything that holds it back or tries to destroy or weaken it. The Marvelous is *tension*—something rather different from routine, mechanical work: tension that is passionate and poetic.

The Marvelous takes advantage of every weak spot in the structure of our understanding, just as volcanic fire seeps through faults in rock. It illuminates the attics of children; it is delirium's strange lucidity; it is the light of dreams, the green lightning of passion; it flashes over the masses in times of revolt. And it is also the conjunction of desire and external reality—the disturbing instant when we are in tune with Earth itself: when individual and planet agree.

Human society takes a dim view of such phenomena and states of mind. It locks up the "mad." It laughs at dreams and premonitions. It rules out of order everything that does not immediately find its rational explanation. It relegates the Marvelous to an elementary theatrical activity, or to allegory, or the "fantastic," or other cheap phantoms.

In my view, André Breton's definition remains best: "The imaginary is that which tends to become real." For some of us, faithful to the thought of Heraclitus, oneiric, imaginative, poetic activity is not just a gratuitous game, a vain adornment for idle dilletantes and

Pierre Mabilie (1904-1952) was a physician and one of surrealism's outstanding theorists. In 1941 he introduced André Breton to voodoo ceremonies in Haiti. This text is excerpted from Le Merveilleux (1945).

esthetes—on the contrary, it corresponds to the dangerous zones in which energy is transmuted into tangible reality. We recognize the artist's message as a prophetic prefiguration, a step forward into the unknown.

The Marvelous is a force of renewal, common to all the world's people, of whatever culture or intellectual level. Beyond natural boundaries and special interests, the Marvelous enables us to foresee a deeper harmony, a true human solidarity which has its universal language in poetry and authentic art.

The Marvelous is probably the only reality which sustains our hope in humankind and the future.



Drawing by PENELOPE ROSEMONT

THE DAYS FALL ASLEEP WITH RIDDLES

by PHILIP LAMANTIA

Why ride around with the chains of the tortured
bleeding from your cars?

Grapes are livid with corpses
the regal dead are passing out knockout candy

The seas are a hailstorm of flint and oranges
Over the land the floating eggshell
Under the rocks the tobaccos are squealing

If I know the way down the seashell's luxuriant city
why does your feline marrow reverse the human alphabet?

Philip Lamantia's latest book is Bed of Sphinxes, from City Lights.

BEYOND ANTI-RACISM: The Role of Poetic Thought in the Eradication of White Supremacy

by the SURREALIST GROUP OF MADRID

Let's not deceive ourselves: The condemnation of racism has become an inoffensive cliché. Anti-racism today is evidence of a good education, and a new excuse for the culture industry—with the help of its corporate yes-man, the mass media—to propagate a swath of good intentions (based on the most despicable sentiment of religiosity) among a broad sector of the population. The rhetoricians of anti-racism go on and on in their unique complacency, morally satisfied with their "contribution" to the desired process of defusing violent neofascist racism, and thereby having discharged their populist duty. We fear that anti-racism's "social responsibility," and above all its critical "imagination," end here: dictating diagnosis without putting itself under the x-ray.

Neofascist racism certainly won't be stopped as long as there persists an everyday white supremacy which perpetuates latent violence (its own intrinsic violence). Meanwhile, the cities of the world are becoming clusters of warring ghettos, and individuals—denied the freedom to choose the people with whom they wish to associate on the basis of personal affinities and passional attraction—are increasingly forced to choose them instead on the basis of their membership in a particular racial/ethnic club.

* * *

Evident here is the collapse and failure of a whole type of traditional leftist critique, which, in scorning the mechanisms of liberation inherent in poetic thought, chooses to mock a revolution that bases itself on a total reformulation of mental structures by unblocking the stagnant waters of revolutionary thought and thereby opening up a more fertile ground for changing our habits and behavior. This type of leftist thought, which pretends that all problems can be solved by economic/administrative means, confuses the real functioning of poetic thought and the yearning for the Marvelous, with the perversion of this thought and yearning that is incarnated in totalitarian myths. This perversion, however, in the last analysis, is born precisely of this social order's repression, ignorance and hatred of

This text is excerpted from a longer statement published in the Madrid surrealist newspaper, ¿Que hay de nuevo? (No. 1, 1993). The Surrealist Group in Madrid can be reached by writing Eugenio Castro, Torrecilla del Leal, 21, 1.º Izqda, 28012 Madrid, Spain.

mythical thought. For mythical thought, like energy, neither creates nor destroys: it transforms. Whether this transformation, this incarnation, is positive or negative, depends on us.

* * *

The existence of what we have agreed to call the "capitalism of the mind, or spirit"* (which, let it not be forgotten, has been traditionally and efficiently administered by religious authorities) will neither obstruct nor make us abandon our absolute certainty regarding the emancipatory possibilities of poetic thought. Indeed, we regard poetic thought as the most powerful formula for generating freedom. Poetic thought alone can transport us to a level of consciousness where we can recognize the possibility of forming new mental habits that are needed but lacking today.

The very longing for these new modes of thinking is, in itself, a question of primary urgency, and we see it as a decisive step and vital prerequisite toward achieving the goal we are discussing here: overcoming white supremacy. In truth, where *are* these new mental structures? If we are to believe in the historic development of thought in relation to the progress of civilization, should we not have acquired these new habits already? Of course, they are only too obviously absent. Certainly western rationalism cannot answer these questions. As a result of its own inertia, moreover, rationalism is not even capable of lending solid encouragement to the actions and ideas that are attempting not only to confront, but to eliminate from current-day mental processes, the tendency toward racist disaster.

We are convinced, on the contrary, that it is *poetry* alone—retaining as it does its exceptional importance in the exploration and liberation of the mind—which opens the way to these desired new ways of thinking. And we are also convinced that poetry plays an equally important role in shattering "supreme" stupidity.

This affirmation confirms our view that it is urgent, today, for humankind to acquire new ways of thinking and new modes of behavior. And their acquisition is directly related to our solidarity with racial minorities and immigrants, who arouse in us the recognition—although some may not always be keen to acknowledge it—that the Unknown may also take human form. We believe that shedding our fear of this recognition will enable us to perceive all the more clearly the beauty that comes to us from afar.

Solidarity with people of color and immigrants also requires that we recognize the ineffable existence of mental mechanisms that are different from our own (western) ways of thinking, and which therefore we need to learn. And we need to know them not so that we may judge them, but rather to celebrate them in the spirit of our common

aspiration for freedom.

If there has ever existed and still exists a *force* that embodies poetic thought, it is *myth*. It is true that on many occasions throughout history, myths have been used as a means of preparing the way for the most regressive ideologies and the most reactionary trends to take hold. Fascists have busied themselves in perverting the meaning of myth, making it a source of irrational superstition. . . . In its own way western rationalism, secure in its intellectual conservatism and authoritarian attitudes, reinforces the fascist objective in this regard, by applying its "rational" will to block access to other roads of human inquiry, and by persistently obscuring these other roads from human memory.

Certainly we shall not be the ones to propose reductionist solutions or "critiques of practical reason" as measures capable of eradicating the sinister progress of the neofascist phenomenon. On the contrary, we shall continue to search for something truly effective, something capable of erecting an impenetrable barrier to neofascism's advance. Just now our aim is more to investigate its nature than to advocate hasty solutions which could serve only as yet another form of first-aid. If we extol myth, it is because we see in it an inexhaustible capacity for *fomenting the imaginary* in human consciousness, and thus priming it for the victory of a collective adventure which aspires to situate all futures in the present, recreating them in a permanent eroticization.

Once humankind abandons itself to this imaginary adventure, it can be said to be acting in a time which is no longer linear, but rather mapped on the co-ordinates of *desire*—a desire which has necessarily severed its connections with the historic burden of exploiters and exploited, winners and losers. In the relations between peoples today, this burden has postponed the ideal of living together harmoniously, an ideal which is both possible and urgent, despite all the seemingly contradictory evidence at the moment.

Decisive, in this regard, is the dialectical relationship between myth and our call for new mental structures: The eruption of mythical thought effects the possibility for changing these structures, while this very change in turn appears to be capable of bringing about the realization of the desired myths. Our first need, therefore, is to find a way to abolish the linear time which paralyzes humankind today.

We have been searching for a myth which would help people of all colors to recognize each other, and convert hostility and exclusion into passionate attraction. In the course of this quest we recalled the myth of the City of the Arabian Nights (in Spanish: the City of 1,001 Nights), with its splendid retinue of prodigies and marvels. . . .

Replacing suspicion, fear and anger with curiosity, adventure and desire, permanent as well as transient residents of this City would recognize in themselves the figure of a Scheherzade who passes defiant through streets that have been transformed into the stories of her nocturnal adventures. . . .

The City thus becomes geometric space, made up of confluences all the more wonderful for being "long-distance."

The City becomes a compendium of totally new images, the treasure/memory of a multitude of knowledges and visions of the world. This is the City as a model space for collective living—a space from which separation and isolation are banished forever. . . .

This City of our desires will stimulate between people of all colors relations which are based not only on justice but also on passion. This is a fundamental prerequisite for overcoming our fear of the unknown. By raising the most beautiful barricade against the age-old historic tradition of hatred and confrontation, we shall take a gigantic step forward.

The Surrealist Group of Madrid:

CONCHI BENITO, ENRIQUE CARLON, EUGENIO CASTRO, JAVIER GALVEZ, TONY MALAGRIDA, LURDES MARTINEZ, FRANCISCO MORAN, JESUS GARCIA RODRIGUEZ, JOSÉ MANUEL ROJO, CARLOS VALLE DE LOBOS

and their friends: MARIO CESARINY, MIGUEL P. CORRALES, JUAN CARLOS MARTIN, LUIS NAVARRO, VICTORIA PANIAGUA, ANGEL PARIENTE, RAUL PEREZ, PEDRO POLO, MANUEL RODRIGUEZ, AMADOR FERNANDEZ SAVATER, PHILIP WEST, VICTOR ZALBIDEA

NOTE:

* Elsewhere in the statement from which this text has been excerpted, it is explained that this capitalism of the mind attempts to "monopolize the whole spectrum of human emotions: all our emotional, passionate, imaginative, mythical and erotic impulses." By "wheeling and dealing with our internal lives," this mental capitalism provokes "great epidemics" of racist, nationalist, xenophobic rage.



Zebra (4 to 4½ ft. high
at the shoulder)

NANCY CUNARD AND SURREALISM: "Thinking Sympathetically Black"

by PENELOPE ROSEMONT

Who could have imagined that Nancy Cunard—white, blue-eyed, pampered and privileged daughter of the British ruling class (her grandfather founded the Cunard Steamship Lines)—would come to identify herself with surrealist revolution, communism and Black liberation?

All three causes are embodied in her justly famous anthology, *Negro*, published in 1934. The volume's 850 lavishly illustrated pages in large format (10" x 12") contain essays, poems and polemics by 150 contributors from Africa, the Americas, the West Indies and Europe. Its authors include Zora Neale Hurston, W. E. B. DuBois, Sterling Brown, Alain Locke, Langston Hughes, George Padmore, Jomo Kenyatta, Arthur Schomburg, Arna Bontemps, Jacques Roumain, Nicolas Guillèn, and, among non-Black writers, Theodore Dreiser, Lawrence Gellert, William Carlos Williams, Josephine Herbst, V. F. Calverton, Walter Lowenfels and George Antheil, as well as several of Nancy's surrealist comrades.

Substantial sections are devoted to Slavery, Negro History and Literature, Education, Racial Injustice, Communism, Scottsboro, Music, Poetry, and Sculpture. There are some 250 articles, including ones on "Three Great Black Women" (Phillis Wheatley, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman), folklore, "white superiority," imperialism, lynching, chain-gangs, Pushkin, Louis Armstrong, Sterling Brown, "'Clicking' in the Zulu Tongue," theater, dancing, boxing, Ethiopia, "Congo Masks," and the conjure doctor "Uncle Monday."

As Hugh Ford notes in his Introduction to the current paperback abridgement, the anthology's purpose was simply "to combat racial prejudice," and to celebrate the richness, creativity, dreams and vitality of the world's Black population. Long since recognized as a classic, no publisher at the time would touch it. The book was so good that it was banned in the British colonies.

* * *

One of the best-known race traitors of her time (her name was on Hitler's "enemy list"), Nancy Cunard was a traitor to her social class as well, and although she was not exactly a feminist she violated gen-

Penelope Rosemont's Surrealist Experiences: 1001 Dawns, 221 Midnights, with a Foreword by Rikki Ducornet, is in press (Black Swan), and her Surrealist Women: An International Anthology is forthcoming from the University of Texas Press this fall.

der taboos and accepted nothing less than complete equality with men.

She was born in 1896 and brought up in the rarefied milieu of the British aristocracy and imperialist bourgeoisie; her U.S.-born mother aspired to be "Mistress of the Robes" when Wallace Simpson became queen. Even as a child Nancy found that life empty and loathsome, and imagined a totally different world: a world alive with poetry. Isolated as a child, and an avid reader, she dreamed dreams of "Africans dancing and drumming around me, and I one of them."

There seems to be something in the intelligence of children that enables them to see through the phoniness of adults and to reject the lies of conventional life—a truth-detector of sorts, which most people somehow lose as they grow older and more confused. Evidently Nancy Cunard's truth-detector remained in good working order, and prevented her from being dazzled by the fabulous but deadly illusions that wealth can supply.

She married young—anything to get out of the house!—but soon left her husband and moved to Paris in 1920. There, having escaped her family for good, she discovered surrealism. Man Ray and Tristan Tzara were early friends. For the first time in her life she found herself in a milieu in which she felt comfortable, and even exhilarated. She frequented the Bureau of Surrealist Research and later the Surrealist Gallery, attended the daily Surrealist Group meetings, and for a time lived in the raucous surrealist commune on the Rue du Chateau, where André Thirion years later recalled that she was "always ready for serious discussion." She and Louis Aragon became lovers and traveled together all over Europe together listening to African American jazz and going to junk stores where, in those days, one could often find exquisite examples of African art. Interestingly, Aragon's best works, including *The Peasant of Paris* (1926) and *Treatise on Style* (1928), were written during his life with Nancy. She herself wrote some of the first articles on surrealism in English (for *Vogue* and *The Outlook*), and when the Buñuel/Dali surrealist film *L'Age d'or* was banned in France, she showed it for the first time in London.

For Nancy Cunard, the experience of surrealism was a determining one. It encouraged her own rebellion, strengthened it and gave it direction. In surrealism she felt the kinship, even the oneness, of poetry and revolution. Although her active involvement in the movement lasted only a few years, its impact on her sensibility and outlook lasted all through her life. (She died in dire poverty in Paris in 1965.)

Meanwhile, she was widely recognized as the epitome of the "New Woman" of the Jazz Age: fiercely independent and daredevilishly nonconformist in everything. She turned up as a

character in novels by Aldous Huxley (*Point Counter Point*) and Michael Arlen (*The Green Hat*), where she is described as "a woman for all times." Many soon-to-be-famous artists painted her portrait. Several volumes of her poems appeared (critics found them "delirious"). She also learned to set type and run a press, and her Hours Press became one of the leading "small presses" of the time.

In Venice, 1928, Nancy met Henry Crowder, the Georgia-born African American jazz pianist who was then playing with Eddie South and the Alabamians. They became lovers as well as co-workers at the Hours Press. In 1931 the Press published a collection of Crowder's musical compositions, with poems by Samuel Beckett and others, and a cover by Man Ray.

Meeting Crowder was a decisive encounter for Nancy, who up till then had known little about African Americans beyond what she gleaned from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and her love for jazz and African art. From Crowder she learned about African American history, politics, literature, and racial conditions in the U.S. He told her about W. E. B. DuBois and other Black Americans, and sent for copies of *The Crisis* and *The Liberator* for her to read. Soon she was studying everything she could find in the way of Black literature and history. As Crowder made plain in his posthumously published memoir, *As Wonderful as All That?*, their relationship had its tensions and troubles—as did all of Nancy's relationships with her lovers—but she always warmly acknowledged Crowder as the man who introduced her to the Black world, and hence as a major influence in her life.

A trip to London with Crowder gave Nancy her first personal experience of racial discrimination. When word got out that the daughter of Lady Cunard was in town with a Negro, they were subjected to the snubs and stings of racist abuse. Newspapers ran sensational stories about them; hotels denied them rooms; they received threatening letters and phone calls. The famous conductor, Sir Thomas Beecham, said Nancy should be "tarred and feathered." Predictably, Nancy's white supremacist mother (whom she sarcastically called "Her Ladyship") was horrified by the scandal; she hired detectives to spy on the couple, and not long afterward slashed Nancy's allowance. In response to this hypocrisy and pettiness, Nancy wrote and published *Black Man and White Ladyship*, a polemic in the grand style of surrealist invective. She was the first woman involved in surrealism to write such a text—a bitter denunciation of her own racist, imperialist mother!

From Cunard's endless discussions with Crowder the *Negro* anthology began to take shape. The project advanced like a surrealist game: improvisation was the only rule, and new players were always

welcome. "Whatever organization *Negro* had," Hugh Ford points out, "came about more or less spontaneously," with "no strict plan." The result was a special blend of desire and necessity. As Nancy put it in the opening words of her Foreword, "It was necessary to make this book," and to do so "in this manner"—that is, first of all to let these voices of the Black world (along with a few of their non-Black friends) be heard at last, and all together, but also to make a book of such magnitude, scope and beauty, and so full of compelling and wonderful material, that it simply could not be ignored.

Nancy solicited the articles, edited the book, assembled the hundreds of illustrations, proofread the galleys, and in the end, paid for the printing—which wasn't easy, because when the time came to pay, she was broke. Her Ladyship had severed her allowance (later she was completely disinherited), and she had spent whatever money she had putting together the book. But now surrealist "objective chance" intervened to save the day. In the wake of the racist press distortion of her and Crowder's London trip in 1931, Nancy had sued several papers for libel. The case dragged on, but suddenly and by chance in 1933 an out-of-court settlement provided her with 1500 pounds—the exact amount needed to pay the printer!

* * *

Although critics seem to have ignored the surrealist dimension of the book, *Negro* is in a very real sense a *surrealist* anthology, or, more precisely, an anthology in which surrealist inspirations are evident from cover to cover. No less than seven participants in surrealism (including Cunard herself) were actively involved in the project. The French contributors included two of the most prominent figures in the movement, René Crevel and Benjamin Péret, as well as the little-known Raymond Michelet, who was perhaps still in his teens when the project began, but nonetheless was Cunard's "chief collaborator," and author of the powerful concluding text, "The White Man Is Killing Africa." The English painter John Banting was one of Cunard's close friends; he accompanied her on her second trip to Harlem, wrote "The Dancing of Harlem" for *Negro*, and a few years later became a key figure in the Surrealist Group in England. And from Belgium there was surrealist poet Ernst Moerman, who contributed a poem titled "Louis Armstrong," as well as Rolf Ubach, credited with taking many of the photos in the book, and better known as the great surrealist photographer Raoul Ubac. In addition to these individual contributions, *Negro* was also the original place of publication of the French Surrealist Group's major anti-imperialist declaration, "Murderous Humanitarianism." This was the first surrealist tract co-signed by Black surrealists: newcomers Jules Monnerot and Pierre Yoyotte,

students from Martinique living in Paris.

Bringing together the world of Africa and the African diaspora, and surrealism, *Negro* is a mix of great diversity which nonetheless reveals an underlying unity. This was Nancy Cunard's most important contribution to surrealism: to expand it by situating it, for the first time, *within* the worldwide movement for Black liberation. The Surrealist Group always had strong "elective affinities" in this direction, especially since the Riffians' uprising in 1925. But it was Cunard's anthology which highlighted these affinities in a specifically revolutionary and Pan-African context.

Like some of her surrealist friends, Nancy still had hopes for the Third International as a force for world revolution. She never joined the Communist Party, however, and always considered herself an anarchist. Significantly, *Negro* received no notice in the Communist press outside England. Mike Gold promised to review it in the *New York Daily Worker*, but never did. One of the longest reviews, in *The New Statesman*, was by English anarchist Herbert Read, who, two years later, helped organize the Surrealist Group in London.

Full of deep passion for freedom and an exalted life for all, the anthology continues to resonate today. In contrast to so many of today's "anti-racists" who pretend that white supremacy can be overcome without radical social change, Nancy Cunard boldly recognized the revolutionary implications of the struggle against whiteness. In our time of global imperialist escalation and other exacerbations of the "white problem," her vision of liberation is still up-to-the-minute, as exemplified in her ringing challenge: "How come, white man, is the rest of the world to be re-formed in your dreary and decadent manner?"

Marcus Garvey was not a man noted for bestowing praise on white folks, but he hailed Nancy Cunard as a person who "thinks sympathetically black." For Nancy Cunard, as for us, to do anything less would be unthinkable.

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"DOES ANYONE KNOW ANY NEGROES?"

by NANCY CUNARD

In September, 1928, I met Henry Crowder in Venice. He had stepped off the bandstand and we, who had been much struck by his piano playing in the fine rhythm of Eddie South's Alabamians, said: Won't you have a drink with us? We talked. After which several of us went every night to hear them, and talk later. Henry and I became great friends, and walked about Venice. The fascist-minded part of the population stared, the children capered and shouted: *Ché bel Moro* (what a beautiful Moor).

After two weeks Henry and I left together. Various opinions as to "trouble" in getting out of fascio-land were voiced by my friends. In Milan however the hotel received us as potentates. So to Paris where he rejoined the Alabamians in a well-known Montmartre night club.

After some months I asked him to come and work in my printing press in the country. We built up the Hours Press together—no small job, where everything had to be done by hand yet delivered in a large-firm way. At night, when time could be spared, Henry played Grieg and the complexities of contemporary American music and started composing. I talked to him of the beauty and importance of African art that Germany and France have since years discovered and appreciated. I showed him my collection—all this was new to him, as he in Venice had been new to me, the first Negro I had ever known. *The Crisis* came into my life then—also new. Brussels, or rather the Museum of Tervueren nearby, is world-famous for its collection of Congo art. The huge building is dedicated to it. After a day of pondering on the Batéké, the Bashilélé and a hundred other tribal fétiches we danced and played baccarat in the Brussels cabarets. No one "stared." In Paris no one "stares," by night or by day—in the élite places, the restaurants, the theaters, the American banks, the street. You may now and then collect such a remark from an American as "Would you dare do that in New York?" (*i.e.*, driving in an open car with a white woman!).

That spring Henry got to know the rest of my continental friends (French and English), writers, poets and painters; many were astounded and revolted when the color question came up, for to their peace of mind, they had not realized its existence. In England the same: "the intellectuals" and the "brighter set," questioning about conditions in America, the differences in Europe, and "play your

This article (slightly abridged here) appeared in the September 1931 issue of W.E.B. DuBois' magazine, The Crisis.

music, Henry." At a weekend in an ordinary country inn the American ex-editor of an important British political and literary weekly remarked ironically in the dining room, "we should not be able to do this in U.S.A."

We had arrived late at night in London without reserving rooms. A fourth-rate and avowedly ecclesiastical hotel, and a restaurant hung with old sporting-prints of Black and white boxers, famous for its champagne suppers with the chorus after the show, were the scene of the only two "color incidents" we encountered. The ecclesiastical hotel said politely enough: "Sorry, no rooms after all." The restaurant porter, a callow redhead of 16 grinned: "No colored gents in 'ere." (What then happens to the Maharajahs?) You take the pro and the con—these trifles opened my eyes a crack more to England "my own country"—which, incidentally, I left long ago.

That August we went to the southwest of France, the region where the people are most real. Henry learning French, I writing on the river-bank, daily. Few foreigners come here and the old man who appeared suddenly from the tangle of bushes was most interested. "English aren't you?" says he in dialect, "but yon Black man's not the first I've seen; seen many in the war—my son was with them—magnificent fellows—vilely treated in their own country I'm told, and as for what I've heard of America—" he worked himself up, left, beating his breast. So, facts, it would seem, travel to the innermost regions.

We thought that winter of going to Africa, to French Gaboon—for the people, the land itself, ethnography, study of language, recording of native music. If you start with nothing overnight you may well not find yourself on the way at all. Here uncertainty stopped us. "Prudence" of ignorance, of not having to hand and in mind all best ways of getting and staying there, of travel, of climates. A postponement in fact—though I think we should have gone.

The apparently inevitable European urge of occupation took me again. Not by choice, but instead of Africa. The Press was moved to Paris and prospered. Henry took on "an attractive proposition" in a night-club and worked in the Press by day. Six months of that and two visits to London, also motoring to Frankfurt to hear the first performance of George Antheil's opera, *Transatlantic*, sitting later at the banquet given him by the city burgomasters.

It was decided to publish a collection of Henry's own compositions. Richard Aldington, Walter Lowenfels, Harold Acton, Samuel Beckett and myself gave him poems. The covers of *Henry-Music* are reproductions of ancient African figures and ivories. Much of the music was composed in the southwest of France where we lived that

summer with the peasants of Creysse. They, to be sure, could form no idea of "color-bar." In such places as well as in big towns one forgets the mere existence of it oneself—forgets that the small crust that calls itself "the old aristocracy" (mainly in England) is still of a mind to pull a long face at a Black face. . . .

Be it now said that having an American mother (born in San Francisco, living for 36 years in England, that since 10 years I seldom saw and with whom I had little enough sympathy) we had often wondered what (if any) could be her attitude—and had left it at that. It pleased me one day some months previous to what follows to test her knowledge and intelligence, good or ill-will concerning the color question. The caption at the beginning of this was her response. "Does anyone *know* any Negroes? I never heard of that. You mean in Paris then? No, but who receives them—what sort of Negroes, what do they do? You mean to say they go to peoples' houses?" After which *Henry-Music* was briefly discussed as the latest of the Hours Press publications in view of the copyright laws for England. Sir Thomas Beecham (the British conductor) who was fully aware of the author's race and nationality, was kind enough to indicate the source of exact information on this point, remarking meanwhile, "I'm told the Negroes make their own music," which left me in some doubt as to whether he referred to Africa or Harlem. The matter faded delicately in the dusk of Grosvenor Square, London, W.

I am now at December, 1930. We went to London for Christmas, Henry in charge of the modern dance-record department of the Sonabel Recording Co., Paris. Our arrival was feted by the news that "everything had been discovered," that "steps would be taken." I was interested to note just how long it had taken the above-mentioned quarters to discover my very real friendship and partnership with a colored man: Two years and three months.

I had, on leaving Paris, received a telegram emphatically advising me not to come to England till matters (not mentionable by wire) were explained. By the very nature of its wording no such telegram could stand in anyone's way. I surmised however that this might concern Henry and, consequently on the next day took legal advice from my solicitor in London. He, as I expected, informed me that no bar exists against the entry into England of any person of whatever nationality who is not guilty of offense against the State.

Hysteria however reigned at our hotel, where I have constantly stayed over some fifteen years including the five or six times we were there together. In deference to the time-wasting cackle of hysterics we moved in the direction of common-sense and courtesy—another hotel. Rumors of detectives, whispers of police, we ignored.

Meanwhile our first hotel was rung up daily by persons seemingly very desirous of knowing our whereabouts (whether we were actually in London, etc.). Either they never found out though the papers made frequent mention of what I was then doing—showing a *surréaliste* film—or, more probably, gave it up. We stayed a month. The cause of this frenzy had become more tangible (if that were needed) by a friend telephoning, "Your mother has just heard that you are great friends with a Negro"—thus forcing one to believe that friendships between whites and Negroes are inconceivable to a certain class. Pretty soon the rumor followed. "It isn't possible—if it were true I should never speak to her again." Presently, under a plea of income-tax increase, a quarter of my allowance was cut off. But why a quarter? Is that the evaluation of long friendship with a Negro or a sign of doubt as to the possibility of such a thing?

Meanwhile Henry was invited to the International Friendship Group Conference by its organizer. This conference is composed of all races.

The last moves in our travels were a stay on the highest point of the Austrian Tyrol with an English poet. . . then 2 days in Vienna with the Meistersinger and a Johann Strauss concert. The misery of all the faces in the street—no "staring" here indeed, they have their own bitter problems. . . .

The French, as a race, take it in their stride; the fact of Africans, American Negroes, Martiniques coming and going like themselves. They will tell you of the bravery of the Senegalese in the war, of their loyalty, soliloquizing over the disgraces of present-day colonization. The English, too, will put in a good word; the general Englishman doesn't see why the Black man should be treated differently. In Germany, in Holland, in Belgium, African art is avidly collected, fought for at sales with a fistful of cash. Who thinks of connecting the living Negro with the creations of his ancestors?

So that isn't it.

If the world were still run by Mrs. Grundy and Old Father Christmas (which it is not) one would be forced to wait in the general atmosphere of Non-Sense. Prophecy is of no use. The inner sense of probability, forerunner of accomplished fact, is the guerdon. No light word—Probability. It links conviction with instinct, is almost instinct itself, is the feeling of coming things. I mean here and now the abolition of your great American NON-SENSE (in the true meaning of this word: a thing without reason, of no sense) from lynching to hypocrisy; the word that covers the vile, the idiotic, the treacherous, the inconceivable, the differentiation between the black, the white, the red, the brown, the yellow men.

RENÉ CREVEL: Surrealist Critic of White Patriarchy

by MYRNA BELL ROCHESTER

René Crevel's contribution to Nancy Cunard's *Negro Anthology*, "The Black Woman in the Brothel" (*La Nègresse aux bordels*),¹ composed in 1931, is piercingly modern. Its premise: The patriarchy of the church and the white male power structure (*i.e.*, capitalism) has reduced all women to objects of desire. By the same process, it has objectified and oppressed people of color and manufactured for its use the most debased *object of entertainment*: the Black woman prostitute. In our time, it is Crevel's dream of revolutionary salvation that may have lost its immediate hold on many readers: "the music of the sea . . . the inexorable vibrations of a distant wave that hastens to engulf every capitalist fortress, from brothel to cathedral." Perhaps the dream is not so dated after all.

René Crevel was born in Paris in 1900. One of the most successful participants in "la période des sommeils"—the surrealist sleep experiments—he had joined with the surrealists in 1923 after doing university studies in law and philosophy and his army service.

Crevel's family was middle-class. His father was a music printer who committed suicide at home when René, the second of four children, was fourteen. In his writing, René repeatedly describes a stifling home life and his mother—indeed all bourgeois mothers—as intolerant, miserly, closed, cold, and unfeeling.

With his staunch participation in the Surrealist Group, and with essays such as *Spirit Against Reason* (*L'Esprit contre la raison*, 1927) and those collected as *Diderot's Harpsichord* (*Le Clavecin de Diderot*, 1932), and his last three fiercely satirical novels—*Babylon* (1927), *Are You Mad?* (*Etes-vous fou?*, 1929), *The Screw-Up* (*Les Pieds dans le plat*, 1933)—Crevel became valued as the sincere intuitive theorist of the surrealist rebellion, exactly in tune with his own revolt. He was one of the nineteen whose "absolute surrealism" was heralded by André Breton in the first *Surrealist Manifesto* (1924), and he remained a major spokesperson for the movement up to his death eleven years later. Openly bisexual, bearing all the anxiety related to that lifestyle in 1920s Paris, he was also gravely ill with tuberculosis beginning in summer 1926. In June 1935, politically torn between his loyalty to Breton's revolutionary stand and the changing line of the

Author of René Crevel: Le Pays des miroirs absolus (1978), Myrna Bell Rochester is currently editing and translating major writings by Pierre Naville and René Crevel. She lives in Palo Alto, California.

French Communist Party, and haunted by the memory of his father's act, Crevel committed suicide. (His sister H el ene took her life in 1957.) He left a surprisingly large body of work: seven novels, several books of essays, art criticism, political tracts and speeches, and scores of short journalistic pieces.

Crevel first met Nancy Cunard through Tristan Tzara in fall 1923. Cunard helped advance Ren e's early career in journalism, introducing him in 1924 to the editors of *The Transatlantic Review* who, in April of that year, published his article "Coups d'oeil," a review of the previous year's cultural events in France, the U.S., and Great Britain.

In early 1931, when Cunard left her Hours Press behind to devote herself full-time to the *Negro Anthology* project, Crevel, one of the first to receive her circular requesting contributions, agreed to be principal intermediary between Nancy's project and the Surrealist Group. Louis Aragon, who had been close to Cunard for several years, had by then switched his allegiance and efforts from the surrealists to the Communist Party. Crevel also assumed the task of drafting the collective surrealist tract for the *Negro Anthology*, "Murderous Humanitarianism." Breton and the others discussed and approved the collective text in spring 1932, then sent it on to Cunard, who presumably gave it to Samuel Beckett² with an early batch of translation work for the anthology.

Cunard had distributed her first calls for contributions in April 1931. Michel Carassou, one of Crevel's biographers and editor of a number of reissues of his writings, mentions at least twice that Crevel wrote "La N gresse aux bordels" in August 1931, while staying with Salvador Dal  and Gala in Port-Lligat, Cadaqu s, in the Spanish province of Gerona. Dal  and Crevel were collaborating on other political material at the time, in particular, lectures to be given in Barcelona in September 1931.

For Crevel, problems of race and power were especially vivid and current. The May 1931 Colonial Exhibition in the Paris suburb of Vincennes had recently called forth two important collective statements by the Surrealist Group, *Don't visit the Colonial Exhibition*, and then in July 1931, *A First Assessment of the Colonial Exhibition*. Mention of his work on "Black Woman" figures in Ren e's correspondence with Mopse Sternheim in August 1931; he was writing it along with a companion piece, a pro-Freudian, anti-racist essay "Patriotism of the Unconscious" that came out in *Le Surr alisme au service de la r volution* in December.

In winter 1934, Ren e's essay was, however, the final piece inserted in the massive, already typeset *Negro Anthology*. It was probably the last French article Cunard sent to Beckett in Dublin. Beckett,

who had already submitted eighteen other translations from the French for *Negro*, including "Murderous Humanitarianism," was known as a quick translator. If indeed "Black Woman" was written nearly three years earlier, its tardiness was likely due to a combination of indecision and poor communication; Crevel was ill during this time, spending long months in Swiss sanatoriums.

With Crevel's piece still outstanding, Nancy, stubborn and indefatigable as ever, working with her friend and editor Edgell Rickword at the London publisher Wishart and Co., refused to close the submissions, even after her book was typeset. She inserted Crevel's essay *hors texte*, paginated with roman numerals as the final article in the "Europe" section; it does not appear in the table of contents. We are not aware that "Black Woman" has been published anywhere in French. Crevel's biographers and commentators know of the article's appearance in *Negro*, but have not further analyzed it. His undated handwritten French manuscript, "La Nègresse aux bordels," is housed with the Jacques Doucet collection, at the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris (fonds Tzara TZR. C1038). The Doucet catalogue calls the manuscript a "first draft" (indeed, that is how it appeared to me). The final version may well have been stolen or destroyed at La Chapelle-Réanville along with many of Cunard's other effects during the Nazi Occupation, while she was in London.

Similarities between "Black Woman in the Brothel," "Murderous Humanitarianism," and "The Patriotism of the Unconscious" are striking, but not surprising. As he does in all his writing of the 1930s, Crevel's incendiary sarcasm harshly exposes the innate hypocrisy of French culture and history, railing against the sick inequities that characterize Western society. In "Black Woman," he has perceived that institutionalized white supremacy and sexism are one. In the hierarchy of exploitation, women and Blacks are reduced to decorative status. There is no end to venal possession and exploitation; colonization persists on European soil.

In February 1934, Crevel received notice of the publication of *Negro Anthology* in Switzerland, at Davos where he was once more in treatment for TB. Cunard invited him to a party in the book's honor at La Chapelle-Réanville at the beginning of March. He received his copy in Paris after checking out of the sanatorium and went to visit her.

Cunard's hopes for a communist solution, reflected in many aspects of the anthology, re-energized Crevel for the political struggle. The entire Surrealist Group identified with a Marxism that was radical, strongly Hegelian, and receptive to psychoanalysis. In the surrealist/Marxist interchange of those years, Crevel—along with

Breton, Benjamin Péret, Claude Cahun, and the Martiniquans Etienne Léro, Jules Monnerot and Pierre Yoyotte—made some of the most creative and lasting contributions.

There was no way for individual contributors to *Negro* to appreciate the full content, size, and impact of the volume before they saw it in print. Among other texts that may well have startled Crevel, he would have read the 23-page contribution by the African-American anthropologist and writer Zora Neale Hurston, whose understanding of the latent power of the cultural patterns that underlie the "sayings and doings of the Negro farthest down," as she expressed it elsewhere, was so in tune with his intuition.

The message of "Black Woman" belies Crevel's reputation as a misogynist. (It would seem that his mother was the only woman he hated; his letters reveal caring concern for both his sisters and numerous women friends.) In this essay, Crevel's "emotional imagination" (as Kay Boyle liked to describe it) creates a composite figure of the most degraded class—woman/Black/prostitute—and cries out on her behalf. The villains are the white male ruling class, the capitalist structure they maintain, and above all, the church. Crevel's anti-clericalism is profound and its language unabating. Catholicism's maintenance of the established order and what Crevel terms "domesticated mysticism," renders the church's call to the faithful one of total self-interest. Self-interest leads back to capitalism and its natural consequences: exploitation and social hypocrisy. It provides no asylum for the poor.

Crevel sees little distinction between the contempt in which the "Black woman in the brothel" is held and the way educated women ("Blue Stockings") are sneered at. "Philosophistic ladies," convinced that they have the better part, remain ignorant of their victim status. Crevel knew and respected, and was respected by, an international group of many strong and interesting women: Nancy Cunard, Claude Cahun, Gertrude Stein, Marie Laurencin, Marie-Laure de Noailles, Valentine Hugo, Adrienne Monnier, Gala Eluard (Dalí), Alice Halicka, Janet Flanner, Kay Boyle, Caresse Crosby, Choura Tchelitchew, Elise Jouhandeau, Violette Murat, and Yvonne George, among others. He was romantically linked with two: Théa (Mopse) Sternheim and Tota Cuevas de la Serna.

Born a slave in North Carolina in 1858, Anna Julia Cooper, whose *A Voice from the South* appeared in 1892, is widely recognized as the founding figure in contemporary writings bringing together race, class and gender. Hard at work as an educator in Washington, D.C., Cooper does not appear in *Negro*. However, her statement that "woman's cause is the cause of the weak; and when all the weak shall

have received their due consideration, then woman will have her 'rights,' and the Indian will have his rights, and the Negro will have his rights," could serve as an epigraph for René Crevel's writings on race and class. Cooper in 1925 was the first African-American woman to receive a doctorate from the Sorbonne, with a thesis in French on the slavery debate during the French Revolution.

René Crevel's own appraisal of Cunard's *Negro Anthology*, written shortly after its publication and discovered among other handwritten notes by his biographer François Buot, remains unpublished. Crevel affirms that the power and vital importance of the work are in direct proportion to the struggle between the work and its environment. Crevel abandons his favorite historical and literary metaphors to observe the history he knows, the context of his adolescent and young adult years, from 1914 to 1934.

There can be no knowledge without struggle. For more than twenty years, thought and its expression in art and science have been exposed to every blow. How many heads have been smashed, eyes gouged, limbs torn off, how many buildings caved-in, books burned, paintings censured, sculptures broken. More than ever, the greatness of a work is revealed as a function of the combative power of its author.

Here, Crevel says he is explaining Nancy Cunard's *Negro Anthology*. But in these same words, written barely a few months before his suicide, he is also setting out his own legacy, for us.

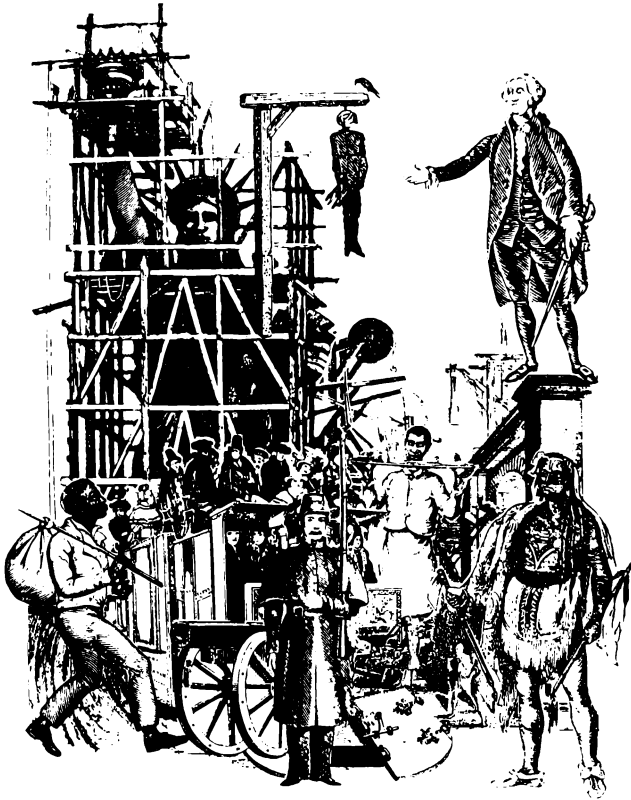
NOTES:

1. The article appeared in *Negro Anthology* under the title, "The Negress in the Brothel" (*La Nègresse aux bordels*).
2. Beckett had met Cunard through mutual acquaintances after his arrival in Paris in 1928 to take up a teaching fellowship at the Ecole Normale Supérieure. Cunard's Hours Press in Paris put out Beckett's first separately published work *Whoroscope* in June 1930. By the time Beckett began preparing the translations for *Negro*, he was back teaching at Trinity College, Dublin. He most likely finished the last of them after resigning from Trinity and before his father's death. Beckett was chronically short of money.

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From *The History of America*, collage by RONNIE BURK, 1998

THE BLACK WOMAN IN THE BROTHEL

by RENÉ CREVEL

In every metaphor—and the shining univocal 17th-century metaphor was no exception—an author discovers himself and his public.

Whatever France you are pleased to consider—France vibrating to the Homeric "Get rich" of her Guizot¹; France bankrupted before her Poincaré² and stabilized in one little sharp erection of that sacrosanct goatee; France meditating colonial expansion and reprisals, and, once a week, after a quick Mass, the charms of her estate—at no period, not even when she cast aside her legendary woollen stocking³ in favor of one of artificial silk, did she relax that economy of word and image, that intellectual and sentimental sobriety, that bestowed upon Racine the letters patent of the poetry (?) of love.

It is natural enough that a nation whose practical ethics never lost sight of at least one transcendental proposition: *Un sou est un sou* (a penny's a penny) should gladly remember now, in the fine flower of her genius, the fully licensed purveyor of passion, privileged to apprehend at the court of his King the whines of Princess X and the snarls of Princess Y and the paralyzing ballast of falbalas common to them both, who saw fit to crystalize the delirium of their royal gallants and catalogue them: objects of desire.

Such a formula had only to become current to set in motion the shabby and pitiful erotic machinery destined to produce a new love and a new notion of love, sapless and withered and lamentable in the bathchair of some preposterous qualification, "divine" for example.

The lecher in his lust to possess, even with the creature of his choice, cannot rise above the simple notion of an act of annexation. And when we find the instinctive articulation of sexual pleasure in such an affirmation as "You are mine" or "I possess you" and in such an acquiescence as "I am yours" or "Take me," it is clear that the idea of inequality has been finally and definitely admitted by and between the elements of the couple. Hence the notion of love-servitude, love-hellfire, if we accept all the implications of remorse on the part of the master who abuses, and recrimination on the part of the slave who is abused. Love-hellfire, only to be expressed in incandescent formulae:

This article, translated from the French by Samuel Beckett, originally appeared in Nancy Cunard's Negro anthology in 1934.

Quoted passages of poetry untranslated by Beckett appear here in translation following the French text. These bracketed translations, and all the notes (except for one by Crevel) are by Myrna Bell Rochester.

Brûlé de plus de feux que je n'en allumais [Inflamed with more fires than I lit]—a grand old high and mighty Alexandrine, but pyrogenous, smelling of roast pork.

Man in the middle, obedient to God, obeyed of women—chaplet of subordinations.

A corporation of hypochondriacs banishes this intimacy from its midst, except in the form of a sacramental privilege. So the libertine is converted and Maintenon exults, and social and religious orthodoxy flourishes within the not intolerably narrow limits of the morganic union.⁴

So much then for our ideas, our Christian ideas, whose faculty of arbitrary restriction twenty centuries have not exhausted (notwithstanding a God that is the Supreme Being, Spirit, notwithstanding a progressive atheism and the thinking that calls itself free), and that still claim the right to direct a world that they have so competently trampled to death. The white male takes his Mediterranean heritage, whose most fascinating characteristics were a contempt for women (prostitution—civil incapacity) and a contempt for barbarism (colonization), flavors it with a little gospel sauce and proceeds to exercise his millennial prerogatives.⁵ In France Norman guile is no longer a regional phenomenon, but general. Which accounts for our national miasma of fatuous credulity as well as for that tolerance which, ever since the Valois,⁶ has encouraged an intersexual free trade in ideas and at the same time the poisonous obligation to sneer at every educated woman as a "Précieuse" or a "Blue Stocking." Safely entrenched behind that fine old tradition of French gallantry, they sneer and sneer. Ergo, all subsequent social tomfoolery—flirtation, marivaudage, etc.

Objects and subjects of conversation, as their less fortunate sisters were objects of desire, the rich philosophistic ladies incurred the same frustration. There wasn't much good holding the high cards when hearts never turned up trumps. (And how much longer, by the same token, must we wait for the psychoanalysis of games?) The only escape from the paralyzing constraint of their position, unless they chose to be branded *à la Récamier*,⁷ lay in the shilly-shally of an adultery, and adultery, at least in the decrepit theory of our decrepit code, is punishable by imprisonment.

No, for the woman in this society there is neither solution nor evasion, in spite of the patriarchal misconduct of such thinkers as Rousseau and Diderot, who only required the stimulus of a tuppenny-ha'penny notoriety to withdraw, in favor of a polite world, from the humiliating inadequacy of the marriage contracted in youth.⁸

Thus our civilization splits up into the holy and divided kinesis of:

In the Brothel: Sexual intercourse.

In the Drawing-room: Social intercourse.⁹

"Using" prostitutes translates only one aspect of masculine complexity: establishing foci of contempt and respect in the hierarchy of blue stockings translates another.

On the reverse of the medal we find an aspermatic Baudelaire in the alcove of his official Egeria,¹⁰ Madame Sabatier, the "chair-woman."¹¹ The chairwoman belonged to the spiritual system, not to the physical, and it was out of the question to pass from the one cosmogony to the other. But she bore him no ill-will, whether out of goodness of heart or a clear vision of our old friend the main chance, for having failed to mitigate her inflammation. And he has merely to refer himself and his indignity to Jeanne Duval, his mistress, the harlot. Not even his enduring hypochondria can prevent him now from acting the male with a sense of superiority, of superiority over the woman, over his woman. And with the same stone he kills the suppliant bird of those velleities that were so real a part of him (cf. *Mon Coeur mis à nu* [My Heart Stripped Bare]), in so far at least as he anticipates his milk-and-water critics whose mawkish more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger deprecation of his liaison with this whore, an offence doubly deep in the eyes of society since she was not merely a whore but a colored whore,¹² was already in his mind to consolidate the axiom of her subordination. Thus the circumstances of what the aesthetic canaille is pleased to accept as a providential dispensation conferred upon the destiny that suffers to the point of lyricism is no more than the poet's self-imposed ordeal. If we must cling to the worm-eaten image of the cross that was borne, at least let it be applied as a testimony to the naiveté of a humanity that gives itself away even in the most subtle movements of its sharp practice. The father on earth of the Son of God was a carpenter, and of crosses, inter alia: which means, if it means anything, that parents are at some pains to carve and plane and polish the misfortune of their children. The Christian symbol is a statement of that sadism that relates old to young, man to woman, rich to poor, white to Black, in the ratio of torturer and victim.

Charme inattendu d'un bijou rose et noir [The unexpected charm of a pink and black jewel]: Baudelaire adores the dark flesh of Jeanne Duval, the charming convolutions of this dark, rose-tinted shell. The Taylor system with division of labor.¹³ The other, the cerebral Madame Sabatier, has the monopoly of his ethereal devotion and the proud conviction that hers is the far, far better part.

At last we are beginning to understand, in spite of the torrents of Dostoyevskian colic concerning the rehabilitation of loose women,

that all these condescensions and artificial gallantries that stoop to the whore for the favor of her caresses are nothing more than a hypocritical servility before things as they are. We are concerned neither with the compassion inspired by the spectacle of a creature in the gutter, nor with any adventitious homage that she may receive from a manifestation of man's so-called sacrosanct "virility," but with the very elementary justice (neglect of codified injustice) that cannot regard this social degradation as of any importance. But since such an attitude is impracticable in capitalist societies stinking of class consciousness (colored men and women being assimilated to the proletariat because they happen to have suffered colonization), it becomes necessary to annihilate the imbecile ideology that is precisely the cause and the sanction of that social degradation. In the meantime let no man weep or rejoice because he happens to have desired, enjoyed and perhaps even married a Black woman out of a brothel: the very considerable epithelial advantages of such an intimacy absolve it from the need of apology or justification. And finally we may succeed in reducing to its grotesque essentials that pernicious literary antithesis between soul and epidermis, culminating in every case, the Baudelairean not excepted, in the triumph of the church.

What can be wrong with Baudelaire's Black woman and the brothel, a home away from home, when the Turkish ladies rendezvoused with the Crusaders round the holy sepulchre (which seems to me worth two of the unknown warrior under his Arch of Triumph)? Oh I could tell you where the Kimmerians¹⁴ itch when they emerge from their horizons of spleen under a sun in a blue sky.

I think you will agree with me, Victor Hugo, that it was only right and proper that the labors of our blessed company of infected settlers and cut-throat Jesuits, punctuated so gloriously by St. Louis, Lyautey and the Duc D'Aumale¹⁵ (who conferred, by the way, his name and titles of nobility on one of the most highly esteemed propositions in brothelian geometry) should culminate in the colonial anthem of *Les Orientales: Sarah belle d'indolence se balance*.¹⁶

The very and proudly European bawd claps her hands and calls upstairs: "A customer, Sarah! Sarah, a customer!" And Sarah, beautiful and indolent and African, the jewel of the collection, duly imparts tone to the depraved manoeuvres of white erethism. Which brings us back to our object of desire, with this difference, that now, thanks to the scenic organization of venal love, the object of desire has become an object in the décor of desires. The Black woman of the metropolitan brothel, at least, in the eyes of the pertinent consumer is as appropriately situated as her sister in bronze on the stairhead, holding aloft her light to lighten the red carpet and its golden rods in a

petrified testimony to the ineffable self-sufficiency of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

And Sarah need not be homesick. For what are they doing, governors, generals and even the Imperial Roman marshall himself? Playing with the "picaninnies": which is only tit for tat. The heart of so prosperous a family shall not be troubled.

After that I propose to withdraw my subscription from the Society for the Diffusion of the White Man's Moral and Physical Complaints among Savage Peoples.

The mind of the Frenchman who gets clear of his country, of his continent and his continence experiences a liberation (hence the success of Morand, Dekobra¹⁷ and others). But even when for one reason or another he is obliged to remain at home he demands to be entertained and debauched by the exotic curiosity that lifts him clear of the national fact into an illusion of renewal. Hence the popularity of Martinique jazz, Cuban melodies, Harlem bands and the entire tam-tam of the Colonial Exhibition. *Nowadays the white man regards the man of color precisely as the wealthy Romans of the Late Empire regarded their slaves—as a means of entertainment.* And of course it is no longer necessary to go to Africa. The nearest Leicester Square, now that our livid capitalism has instituted the prostitution of Blacks of either sex, is as free of European squeamishness as was thirty years ago the oasis of André Gide's *Immoralist*.¹⁸ Then again the average Frenchman who is not interested in depravities, who is merely seeking the picturesque, can go to the brothel and meet a thoroughbred "Negress."

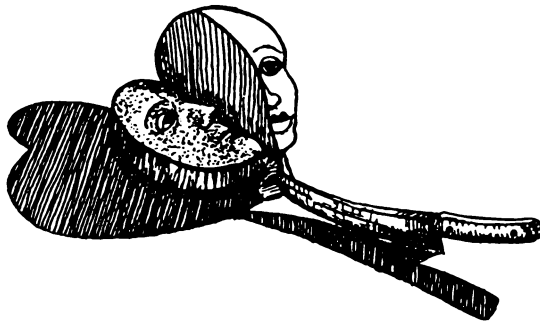
Now, if, instead of appropriating the value of his money with the traditional member of his nauseating person, he could be persuaded to approach those hired nymphae not merely as the exquisite negation of the regrettably proliferous article on tap, so to speak, at home, but rather as the shell that imprisons the music of the sea, it is just possible that he might be favored, for all his cloacal labyrinth, with the inexorable vibrations of a distant wave that hastens to engulf every capitalist fortress, from brothel to cathedral.

And then at last good-by to geographical symbolism. The old saying: Truth our side of the Pyrenees, falsehood the other, will appear nonsense even to the survivors of a carious Chartism,¹⁹ and paleontologists will no longer attempt to justify the sordid and implacable imperialism that has the insolence to outrage with its rag-bag the naked splendor of Black peoples.

NOTES:

1. François Guizot (1787-1874), French bourgeois historian and minister under Louis-Philippe.
2. Raymond Poincaré (1860-1934), Third Republic president of France

(1913-20) and later prime minister. 3. Representing the French Revolution. 4. Crevel is referring to the 17th century Jansenist community of Port-Royal, near Paris. Mme de Maintenon (1635-1719), known for her piety, was governess to the children of Louis XIV and Mme de Montespan and married Louis XIV after Mme de Montespan's death. Under the double influence of the Jansenists and Mme de Maintenon, Racine turned to writing religious drama and history. 5. In French, *millénaire*. In both languages, the term refers to the thousand-year period during which Jesus and his followers are to rule the Earth. 6. Line of French kings (1328-1589) that ascended to the throne with the legal ruling that women could never reign. 7. The much admired Mme Récamier (1777-1849) was famous for her salon, attended by important Napoleonic and Restoration writers and politicians. 8. Both Rousseau and Diderot neglected and abandoned their wives. 9. Surely the case of the young man who, having met with a misfortune at the outset of his sexual investigations, marries from a need of comfort and security, is identical with that of the licensed free-lance prostitute settling down in a red lamp. (*R.C.'s footnote*) 10. Roman nymph or goddess, advisor to the legendary Roman King, Numa Pompilius; thus, any woman counselor or advisor. 11. Known as La Présidente (the Chairwoman), Mme Sabatier, a former artist's model, gained fame in the mid-19th century for her Sunday evening gatherings for writers and artists, among them Baudelaire. 12. Jeanne Duval was known as "la Vénus noire." 13. A technique of production efficiency (speed-up) developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915), American industrial engineer. 14. Nomadic people of Thracian origin who invaded Asia Minor in the 7th century BC; of the same name described by Homer as a mythical people inhabiting a land of perpetual darkness. 15. St. Louis was Louis IX (1215-70), the Capetian king killed in the crusades; Maréchal Lyautey (1854-1934) set up the French protectorate of Morocco, was minister of war during World War I, and chief organizer of the Paris Colonial Exhibition of 1931; the Duc D'Aumale (Henri d'Orléans) (1822-97), a son of Louis-Philippe, a general and historian, known for his role in the 1843 war in Algeria. 16. From Victor Hugo's 1829 collection of poetry. 17. Paul Morand (1888-1976), French writer of exotic novels and career diplomat; Maurice Dekobra (1885-1973), prolific travel and adventure writer. 18. In Gide's first novel *L'Immoraliste* (1902), a celebration of sensual freedom he discovered for himself in North Africa. 19. Workers' political reform movement, active in England (1838-48); to the bourgeoisie, it came to represent a revolutionary threat for all Europe.



Drawing by ROBERT GREEN

MURDEROUS HUMANITARIANISM

by THE SURREALIST GROUP OF FRANCE (1932)

For centuries the soldiers, priests and civil agents of imperialism, in a welter of looting, outrage and wholesale murder, have with impunity grown fat off the colored races. Now it is the turn of the demagogues, with their counterfeit liberalism.

But the proletariat of today, whether metropolitan or colonial, is no longer to be fooled by fine words as to the real end in view, which is still, as it always was, the exploitation of the greatest number for the benefit of a few slavers. Now these slavers, knowing their days to be numbered and reading the doom of their system in the world crisis, fall back on a gospel of mercy, whereas in reality they rely more than ever on their traditional methods of slaughter to enforce their tyranny.

No great penetration is required to read between the lines of the news, whether in print or on the screen: punitive expeditions, Blacks lynched in America, the white scourge devastating town and country in our parliamentary kingdoms and bourgeois republics.

War, that reliable colonial endemic, receives fresh impulse in the name of "pacification." France may well be proud of having launched this Godsent euphemism at the precise moment when, in throes of pacifism, she sent forth her tried and trusty thugs with instructions to plunder all those distant and defenseless peoples from whom the inter-capitalistic butchery had distracted her attentions for a space. The most scandalous of these wars, that against the Riffians in 1925, stimulated a number of intellectuals, investors in militarism, to assert their complicity with the hangmen of jingo and capital.

Responding to the appeal of the Communist Party, we protested against the war in Morocco and made our declaration in *Revolution Now and Forever!*

In a France hideously inflated from having dismembered Europe, made mincemeat of Africa, polluted Oceania and ravaged whole tracts of Asia, we surrealists pronounced ourselves in favor of changing the imperialist war, in its chronic and colonial form, into a civil war. Thus we placed our energies in the service of the revolution—of the proletariat and its struggles—and defined our attitude toward the colonial problem, and hence toward the color question.

Gone were the days when the delegates of this sniveling capitalism might screen themselves in those abstractions which, in both secular and religious mode, were invariably inspired by the Christian

This declaration, written in 1932, first appeared in Nancy Cunard's Negro anthology (1934), translated by Samuel Beckett.

ignominy and which strove on the most grossly interested grounds to masochize whatever people had not yet been contaminated by the sordid moral and religious codes in which men feign to find authority for the exploitation of their fellows.

When whole peoples had been decimated with fire and sword it became necessary to round up the survivors and domesticate them in such a cult of labor as could only proceed from the notions of original sin and atonement.

The clergy and professional philanthropists have always collaborated with the army in this bloody exploitation. The colonial machinery that extracts the last penny from natural advantages hammers away with the joyful regularity of a pole ax. The white man preaches, doses, vaccinates, assassinates and (from himself) receives absolution. With his psalms, his speeches, his guarantees of liberty, equality and fraternity, he seeks to drown the noise of his machine guns.

It is no good objecting that these periods of rapine are only a necessary phase and pave the way, in the words of the time-honored formula, "for an era of prosperity founded on a close and intelligent collaboration between the natives and the metropolis!" It is no good trying to palliate collective outrage and butchery by jury in the new colonies by inviting us to consider the old, and the peace and prosperity they have so long enjoyed. It is no good blustering about the Antilles and the "happy evolution" that has enabled them to be assimilated, or very nearly, by France.

In the Antilles, as in America, the fun began with the total extermination of the natives, in spite of their having extended a most cordial reception to the Christopher Columbian invaders. Were they now—in the hour of triumph, and having come so far—to set out empty-handed for home? Never! So they sailed on to Africa and stole men. These were in due course promoted by our humanists to the ranks of slavery, but were more or less exempted from the sadism of their masters by virtue of the fact that they represented a capital which had to be safeguarded like any other capital. Their descendants, long since reduced to destitution (in the French Antilles they live on vegetables and salt cod and are dependent in the matter of clothing on whatever old guano sacks they are lucky enough to steal), constitute a Black proletariat whose conditions of life are even more wretched than those of its European equivalent and which is exploited by a colored bourgeoisie quite as ferocious as any other. This bourgeoisie, covered by the machine guns of culture, "elects" such perfectly adequate representatives as "Hard Labor" Diagne and "Twister" Delmont.

The intellectuals of this new bourgeoisie, though they may not all

be specialists in parliamentary abuse, are no better than the experts when they proclaim their devotion to the Spirit. The value of this idealism is precisely given by the maneuvers of its doctrinaires who, in their paradise of comfortable iniquity, have organized a system of poltroonery proof against all the necessities of life and the urgent consequences of dream. These gentlemen, votaries of corpses and theosophies, go to ground in the past, vanish down the warrens of Himalayan monasteries. Even for those whom a few last shreds of shame and intelligence dissuade from invoking those current religions whose God is too frankly a God of cash, there is the call of some "mystic Orient" or other. Our gallant sailors, policemen and agents of imperialist thought, in league with opium and literature, have swamped us with their irretentions of nostalgia; the function of all these idyllic alarms among the dead and gone being to distract our thoughts from the present, the abominations of the present.

A holy-saint-faced international of hypocrites deprecates the material progress foisted on the Blacks; protests, courteously, against the importation not only of alcohol, syphilis and field artillery but also of railways and printing. This comes well after the former rejoicings of its evangelical spirit at the idea that the "spiritual values" current in capitalist societies, and notably respect for human life and property, would devolve naturally from enforced familiarity with fermented drinks, firearms and disease. It is scarcely necessary to add that the colonist demands this respect for property without reciprocity.

Those Blacks who have merely been compelled to distort in terms of fashionable jazz the natural expression of their joy at finding themselves partners of a universe from which Western peoples have willfully withdrawn may consider themselves lucky to have suffered nothing worse than degradation. The eighteenth century derived nothing from China except a repertoire of frivolities to grace the alcove. In the same way the whole object of our romantic exoticism and modern travel lust is of use only in entertaining that class of blasé clients sly enough to see an interest in deflecting to his own advantage the torrent of those energies which soon, sooner than he thinks, will close over his head.

ANDRÉ BRETON, ROGER CAILLOIS, RENÉ CHAR, RENÉ CREVEL, PAUL ELUARD, J.-M. MONNEROT, BENJAMIN PÉRET, YVES TANGUY, ANDRÉ THIRION, PIERRE UNIK, PIERRE YOYOTTE

RACIST CLICHES IN THE U.S.A.

by RONNIE BURK

Hula girls, Aunt Jemima, Stepin Fetchit, the Frito Bandito, the Disney version of Pocahontas: racist stereotypes prosper in the U.S. more than anywhere else in the world. As this short list suggests, they are especially brought forward to sell products and services. It is a sign of the times that the Point-of-Purchase Advertising Institute (P.O.P.A.I.) has revived the old cigar-store Indian as its official trophy; dubbed the "OMA" (for Outstanding Merchandising Achievement) it is awarded to firms for the "excellence" of their point-of-purchase exhibits in stores— based, of course, "on the display's ability to increase sales." Typically, the attitude of industry and business is that racism is fine and dandy as long as sales keep going up. (It's not for nothing that these people are also known as the exploiting class!) The consumer is expected to forget that way over 50% of Black Americans under the age of twenty-one are unemployed, that the "lazy Mexican" is currently the lowest-paid worker in the country, that Hula dancers sell plane tickets to luxury vacations no real Hawaiian could afford. Just spend your money and have a nice day!

How much have things really changed since the days of the "old" colonialism? The language of the white colonizer, quickly adopted by his financiers and political representatives in the mother country, reduced whole peoples—the great majority of the world's population—to vulgar, hateful, one-dimensional caricatures, abusive characterizations that affected mass psychology and helped determine the destiny of nations.

Today's cultural colonialism is a bit more subtle and incomparably more hypocritical—more likely to refer to minorities as "dysfunctional" than "inferior"—but otherwise the same old repulsive show goes on. In addition to its big part in advertising and sales, the racist cliché is also highly visible in entertainment (the "fun" way of selling ideology). The most sophisticated techniques of a multi-billion-dollar commercialized culture industry are used to perpetuate the pretense, on the part of those who have appointed themselves white, that their lack of pigmentation somehow makes them "superior," and to keep the marginalized, disaffected, unruly minorities "in their place"—that is, wherever they are no threat to white delusions of grandeur.

Surrealist poet and collagist, Ronnie Burk is also noted for his scandal-provoking direct actions as a member of San Francisco ACT-UP. His publications include Father of Reason, Daughter of Doubt (1996) and The History of America (forthcoming).

At the end of the nineties one is still hard-pressed to find an authentic portrayal of the Latino experience out of Hollywood. To this day the broken English of a domestic or the "Latina spitfire" *puta* is more likely to be encountered. Star roles go to whites in brownface. Black men continue to be portrayed as buffoons in TV sitcoms, and demonized as cruel, evil criminals on the news. Quentin Tarantino's *Jackie Brown* may have set a record for the number of racist slurs used in one movie. Malevolent Asians and West Indians are still stock figures in many films.

Innumerable works of fiction, textbooks, comic books, politicians' jokes, best-selling crackpot pseudo-science (*The Bell-Curve* and others), radio talk-shows and slick newsstand travel magazines convey the same sickening message: that whiteness mysteriously (in truth, dishonestly and arbitrarily) confers privilege and power.

By word or image, the racist cliché is always a message of domination, and thus a reminder that the historic bases of U.S. capitalism—slavery, genocide and land theft—are still plaguing us all. For those with white skin, such words and images are confusing and disorienting enough, but for people of color they are infinitely worse. For those who belong to the less populous minorities in the U.S., from childhood on the process of accommodation to white society is formatted in such a way as to liquidate all sense of *who we are*. For too many of us, years of bombardment by whiteness leads to cynicism, self-hatred, lack of confidence, despair, and submission to the white christian cross of western imperialism.

Let's face it, we live in a white supremacist society, and white supremacists control, to a horrifying extent, the words and images we use. The hard lesson—hard to swallow, hard to digest—is that minorities outside the colorless zone of whiteness will never (token exceptions aside) be portrayed with dignity, authenticity, and intelligence until the oppressed themselves seize the means of production.

It is in this light that we can begin to appreciate the surrealist movement's subversive and revolutionary role. Surrealism is an excellent guide to seizing the means of production because that is where the experience of surrealism begins—seizing the means of production *of language itself*. Disregarding esthetic criteria, social conditioning and other inhibitions, surrealists immediately recognized that the practice of automatic writing and free association topples mental blocks, dissolves reified notions, liberates the imagination, and makes countless electrifying connections that otherwise would be impossible to make. First on the poetic plane, and then in painting, collage, sculpture, film and dance, surrealism began unleashing new, unheard-of, defiant images—images of the Marvelous, of revolt, of

revolution, of *freedom*—in dazzling contrast to all that is banal, servile, cheap, and deadly to humankind and planet Earth. And ever since then, an inexhaustible supply of new surrealist games, experiments and techniques to provoke inspiration has immeasurably multiplied this liberated territory.

As the Czech and French surrealists wrote in their joint *Platform of Prague* in April 1968: "The role of surrealism is to tear language away from the repressive system and to make it the instrument of desire. Thus, what is called surrealist 'art' has no other goal than to liberate words, or more generally the signs, from the codes of usefulness or entertainment, in order to restore them as bearers of revelation of subjective reality and of the essential intersubjectivity of desire in the public mind."

Is there a better way to start the Revolution?

For me, as a Mexican of Indian ancestry, born on this side of the border of reality constraints, it is the *practice of poetry* that has allowed me to explore, beneath the surface world, the meaning of my Indianness. As a *geni'zaro* (detribalized Indian), having no elders, no history, no tribe, no genealogy, no language and certainly no nation, I say that it is *surrealism* that has enabled me to penetrate the uncharted areas of my own being. Nothing is lost, everything can be found, in the marvelous game of pure psychic automatism. It was this *miraculous weapon*, as Aimé Césaire so brilliantly put it, that first gave me some leverage with "the master's" language.

Seizing the means of production of language and images is no mere abstraction, but a living process that can only be the beginning of true life for all of us who live and struggle outside and against the miserabilist cliché-ridden destitution of official "whites-only" reality.

DREAM CONSTELLATIONS (for Antaine)

by IRENE PLAZEWSKA

washed over with dream constellations
 the dreamer arises flowers
 cascade to petal untouched
 mates.
 halves are wholed and realignments
 adjust curious insects
 who never touched before.
 past lives merge to drive powerful
 ravaging flood currents.
 the severed right hand is renewed by the left.

Chicago-born Irene Plazewska currently lives in Ireland.

PSYCHIATRY'S WHITE PROBLEM: Racism As Therapy

by PAUL GARON

*What race is said to be "so stupid, and so utterly incapable of being taught," and to "never reach maturity," but "are of great stature...? They lack all sharpness of wit and penetration." The first quotes are from Cicero about the British; the second group is from the Moor Said of Toledo, speaking about races North of the Pyrenees in Spain.*¹

In psychiatry as in any other field, an enemy of freedom is an enemy of surrealism. While surrealism has drawn enormous inspiration from the discoveries of Freud and his coworkers, we have no fond feelings for therapy and institutional psychiatry, i.e., those forms of psychoanalytic or psychiatric thinking that the individual citizen is most likely to confront. Recognizing the potential of a greater comprehension of mental processes enabled the surrealists to understand the great revolutionary power of many psychoanalytic insights, especially the notion of unconscious mentation. Psychoanalysis remains important today for precisely this reason: it still provides the most stimulating model of the mind, and still provides a stimulus to surrealist inquiry, as the Czech journal *Analogon* makes clear. But radical analysts have failed to mine surrealism for *their* own inspiration, in spite of the insistence of French psychiatrist Gaston Ferdière, who, in a 1966 lecture, asserted that it was the surrealists "who have led us psychiatrists to profoundly rethink the problem of madness. . . . It is the surrealists who have taught us to rethink psychiatry."² The early days of psychoanalysis were marked by the presence of a few other revolutionaries like Wilhelm Reich and Jean-Frois Wittmann, whose proclamations were also ignored, and even the modern era could boast the presence of an Otto Fenichel or a Robert Lindner,³ in spite of the conservative direction psychoanalysis was following.

Causes célèbres in which the early surrealists publicly came to the support of mental patients caused them to be roundly denounced by the psychiatric press of the day. The denunciation was so vitriolic that a reply was necessary. Speaking of a psychiatrist (M. Clérambault) who had become Physician-in-Chief of the infirmary of the receiving prison, André Breton wrote, "It would be strange if a conscience of this mettle, a mind of this quality, had not found the means of placing

Paul Garon is the author of Blues and the Poetic Spirit (City Lights, 1996) and Woman with Guitar: Memphis Minnie's Blues (written with Beth Garon).

himself entirely at the disposal of the middle-class police and middle-class justice. May I say, however, that in the eyes of some people such a post is sufficiently compromising for it to be impossible, without insulting science to consider as *scientists* men who. . . are foremost bent on being instruments of social repression."⁴ The psychiatrists, in spite of their reputations as "healers," could not resist the opportunities of power and social control that their positions made possible. And like psychiatrists today, their insistence that their discipline was indeed a *science* failed to convince the world at large.

Decades later, the surrealists formally intervened in the Conference on Madness held in Toronto, in February of 1972. I presented a paper there, "Fate of the Obsessive Image," which was included in the pamphlet we prepared for the conference, as were texts by Franklin Rosemont and Conroy Maddox, together with some earlier historically important texts.⁵ From the surrealist point of view, much of organized psychiatry remains unchanged from Breton's early days, and in fact has become even more conservative. Surrealism, as an enemy of repression in its various guises, has a special sensitivity to psychiatric and psychoanalytic issues, and it is from this perspective that we'd like to survey the interaction between psychiatry and issues of racism. Let us begin with an historical survey.

The 1840s were an important decade in the attempt to provide a racist foundation for psychiatry. The 1840 census figures indicated that Northern (free) Blacks had a much higher rate of insanity than Southern (slave) Blacks. Could it be that freedom causes insanity, as so many Southerners were eager to believe? The "fact" held that 1 in 14 Negroes of Maine were insane, whereas only 1 of 4310 Louisiana Negroes met the same fate. For years these census figures were used to bolster claims of the mental health of slavery.

Massachusetts physician Dr. Edward Jarvis found the statistics hard to believe, and he began to study them closely. He found gross evidence of fabrication (yes, this was the U.S. Census). Many of the Northern towns reputed to have varying numbers of insane Blacks turned out to actually have no Black population whatsoever. E.g., all white Scarsboro, Maine, was given 6 mentally ill Blacks. Of Ohio's 165 cases of Black insanity, 88 were said to come from towns that reported a total of only 31 Black residents. Worcester, Massachusetts, was said to have 133 Negro lunatic patients, but as it turned out, this figure represented the total number of patients (white) in the Worcester State Hospital.⁶

Early psychiatric opinions on race were, like the 1840 Census, largely attempts to justify the current social and political order with a "scientific" basis. The most blatant attempt, in 1851, was no doubt

Dr. Samuel Cartwright's notion that the desire for freedom among the enslaved was a disease! He gave this disease the name "drapetomania," and he noted that it was often accompanied by "dysaesthesia aethiopsis," a related condition symptomized by having no respect for property, breaking tools, and laziness. The cure for this respiratory ailment—that only struck Blacks—was chopping wood and splitting rails.⁷

But Cartwright was by no means the only physician touting this line. Dr. John S. Wilson of Georgia contended that Negro disease was so unique to the Black that it could only be treated by a southern physician. (Talk about putting the fox in charge of the henhouse!) G. Stanley Hall repeated this nonsense in 1905 when he insisted that Negro and white medical treatment were entirely different.⁸ Hall, who brought Freud to America for the famous Clark University lectures, had already noted that Indians, Chinese and Blacks were "adolescent" races that had not yet completed growing, and he specified that dark skin and crooked hair, i.e., physical differences, were certain signs of psychological differences between the white and Black races.⁹

The first psychoanalytic journal in English, *The Psychoanalytic Review*, carried a number of racist articles in its early issues (c. 1914). Arrah B. Evarts, in "Dementia Praecox in the Colored Race," wrote that the child should be allowed to develop in synergy with "his race trend," i.e., don't expect too much of the Negro, who has "learned no lessons in emotional control." John E. Lind, in "The Dream as a Simple Wish-Fulfillment in the Negro," states that 84 out of 100 Black subjects had wish-fulfillment dreams of a "juvenile" character. One example consisted of a prisoner dreaming of freedom. Other medical journals contained articles just as ridiculous. Thus we read in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* (1921) that Negro children are intelligent and lively, but that their development stops at puberty; after that it's debauchery in all its forms.

Analytical psychologist Carl Jung, notorious for his controversial statements on Jews and his support for Nazism, attributed American sexual repression to whites living together with "lower races," especially with Negroes,¹⁰ and he felt that the influence of Blacks on the white unconscious was profound, indeed "contagious."¹¹ Famous Harvard psychologist William MacDougall insisted that Blacks have an "instinctive need" to be pushed around by whites. And Freud's first U.S. translator, A. A. Brill, could conceive of no other role for Blacks in American theatre than that of clown or buffoon, noting that "Everybody likes to laugh at a Black man."¹²

The use of psychiatry as a racist tool wasn't always simple nonsense like C. B. Davenport's (1923) claim that race-mixing increased

the number of "new centers of epilepsy."¹³ Sometimes unmistakable evidence of Black superiority was willfully ignored, as in a late 19th century experiment, reported in the *Psychological Review*, comparing the speed of sensory perception of Native Americans, whites, and Blacks. When white scores turned out to be the slowest, this was attributed to white *superiority*: according to the "researchers," the scores actually showed how deliberate and reflective whites were. Similarly, in more modern examples, several prominent sociologists hypothesized that "racist" feeling (on the part of whites) was an "instinct," and as such, quite natural. Worse was Brian Bird's 1957 article, "A Consideration of the Etiology of Prejudice," published in the prestigious *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*. Bird suggested that race prejudice can be an ego defense mechanism against unconscious aggressive impulses, and as such, can be positive for the individual and, therefore, for society as a whole.¹⁴

Of course "prejudice can be an ego defense mechanism against unconscious aggression," but this example superbly characterizes how even the most "neutral" psychiatrists can find themselves in the service of white supremacy. Most psychiatrists conceive of their work as helping the patient to solve inner conflicts, and they do not consider it their job to change the patient's social attitudes. What do you do with a patient who is severely depressed, but who, when well, actively campaigns against African Americans and Jews and leads the local "white power" party? Psychiatry's answer: Give him an anti-depressant.

Racial and social attitudes have improved in the modern era, but we are confronted with new problems, along with some sadly familiar ones. Perhaps the most enduring success of the Civil Rights Movement has been the widespread change it effected in the climate of opinion on race matters; the great majority of the U.S. population soon was convinced of the justice and desirability of desegregation and full equality for Blacks. Consequently, racists have had to turn to ever more subtle actions to carry out discriminatory practices. This, along with current government and media campaigns insisting that prejudice against African Americans is no longer a problem, makes it even more difficult to combat racism.

While oddities like "Drapetomania" do not appear in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, certain diagnostic errors tend to haunt psychiatric characterization of African American patients. A 1969 study of female patients requiring psychiatric hospitalization in Maryland found a distinct tendency to diagnose whites as neurotic and Blacks as psychotic,¹⁵ although the new DSM has made the term "neurosis" obsolete. The most common—and the

most documented—of diagnostic errors involving African American patients is the tendency to diagnose hallucinating and delusional Black patients as schizophrenic,¹⁶ thus missing other diseases also characterized by hallucinations and delusions like mania, psychotic depression, chronic alcoholism, and acute organic brain syndrome.¹⁷ This not only leaves the real condition untreated but the patient may end up permanently damaged by long term treatment with anti-psychotic drugs.¹⁸ These same drugs might even be over-prescribed if the doctor is fearful of the patient, or if prejudice on behalf of the doctor scares the patient and leads to an exacerbation of symptoms.

Over-diagnosing schizophrenia in Blacks, especially paranoid schizophrenia, leads to under-diagnosing major depression in the same group of patients. The notion that Blacks suffer less than whites from depression has a long and depressing history. But a close look at these findings reveals serious problems with the premises of at least one typical study. The paper reported finding a lower rate of depression among Blacks at one southern state hospital, but never approached the questions of 1) whether "depression" was considered sufficient reason to hospitalize Blacks in that area, 2) whether depressed Blacks actually sought (and were able to find) medical help, and 3) whether such help was actually available. A later study that set out to confirm the above analysis ended up proving the opposite: more Blacks than whites suffered from depression in the same state (North Carolina).¹⁹

As late as 1957, one prominent psychiatrist blamed the end of slavery, as well as communists and agitators, for the increase in the Negro population of Virginia's asylums, an increase that led to more Blacks than whites among the Virginia insane.²⁰ Not surprisingly, a closer look at the figures tells a different story: The author used state hospital statistics which reflected a much higher Black population since Blacks usually could not afford the private hospitals that treated so many whites; in fact, there were not more Black mental patients than whites in Virginia, but only more in state hospitals. Further, Blacks often received the least therapy in such institutions, thus prolonging their incarceration (and raising their statistical presence).

The fact that Black patients tend to have lower incomes and thus tend to be treated by state and public hospitals has many ramifications. Blacks are over-represented in public mental health facilities where patient populations are often used for large-sample studies, so the findings are probably skewed in that direction. Black people are also less likely to be given psychotherapy (and other treatments) and are discharged sooner. They are more likely to be seen only briefly for medication.²¹ The non-white poor are often given substance abuse disorder diagnoses²² as a primary diagnosis instead of as a secondary

one. In one case, Black psychiatry residents reported that many Black patients were not referred to their clinic as they were selected out as not being good candidates for psychotherapy. By the same token, even those Black patients admitted for treatment were unlikely to be given the same course of psychotherapy as white patients. Blacks received briefer therapy or therapy from less experienced therapists.

Another important consideration in race-biased diagnosis is the role of the police. Often, the police play a role in screening patients, and they frequently route white patients to clinics and Black patients to jail. One study has shown that Black subjects need to show greater symptomology than white subjects before the police route them to treatment. Once there, the Black patient will be treated for a shorter time.

Certain diagnoses seem never to be given to Blacks: Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD, now called Dissociative Identity Disorder) is one. Significantly, this diagnosis seems to be awarded only to upper-class patients, perhaps because the only treatment recommended by those who countenance this disease is long, drawn-out and expensive. There are few MPD case reports of African Americans and few that are drawn from lower class milieus. Even more blatant is the diagnosis of so-called kleptomania, reserved exclusively for rich white women whose families can buy them out of jail. Blacks who are kleptomaniacs—i.e., who compulsively steal items they do not need, who feel tension before the act and pleasure or relief during the act, and who do this repeatedly while not having a Conduct Disorder, according to DSM-IV—are sent to jail, without diagnoses. A Black kleptomaniac is diagnosed as a thief.

In a recent paper, Harold W. Neighbors has summarized many of the studies of misdiagnosis of African Americans.²³ Noting that whites tend to be diagnosed with mood disorders and Blacks with schizophrenia, he also points out that Blacks are more likely to be misdiagnosed, period. One study found that Black patients that appear with symptoms of agoraphobia and panic disorder were either hospitalized unnecessarily or, as in another study, the diagnosis was missed entirely! For those interested in the question of misdiagnosis, Neighbors has included an excellent bibliography, and his paper is available on the World Wide Web.²⁴

Published in 1951, *The Mark of Oppression*, by Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey²⁵ exerted a considerable influence. Their view, briefly, is that the Negro has been irreparably damaged by oppression, and this disfigurement partially explains the alleged Black failure to advance. This book helped establish the trend, also promoted by sociologists, of pathologizing the entire African American popula-

tion by superficially examining a highly selective "cross section" and superficially misevaluating the data. This trend, currently enjoying a revival among the "racism has ended" set, has been subject to merciless and convincing criticism in Robin D. G. Kelley's *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional*.²⁶ This pathologization of social problems is dehumanizing and abusively negative, creating new subjects of victimization, as it sees people totally in terms of their deficits. While the overwhelming majority of Blacks see themselves positively, you wouldn't know it from Kardiner and Ovesey, nor would you realize the scope and diversity of Black personality functions.²⁷ In effect, Kardiner and Ovesey are the "good cop" to *The Bell Curve's* "bad cop." At best, their view exemplifies the pitiable inadequacy of even the best-intentioned and ostensibly sympathetic white liberal researchers who refuse to come to grips with the systemic racism embedded in their social *and scientific* presuppositions.

Interestingly, even as *The Mark of Oppression* was criticized by Black writers for failing to see anything strong and healthy in Black life, the wrongheadedness of the Kardiner/Ovesey view was being demonstrated by the Black liberation movement, a movement founded precisely on the strength and health of a people. Yet in their 1962 preface to the reissue of the book, the authors only emphasized the fact that time had proved them correct! They wrote with a smugness rarely equaled, that using the American white man as their model, or "control," was sufficient to guarantee the validity of their findings.

The Kardiner and Ovesey approach characterizes an article entitled "Cultural Determinants in the Neurotic Negro."²⁸ This essay used only three case studies that were said to nonetheless represent "a large class" of problems in African American males. The three cases are typified by unconscious feminine trends and pseudomasculine defenses (alcoholism, etc.), but what, we may ask, are "feminine trends"? A classic test instrument, the MMPI, gives a high feminine rating to subjects who give a positive reaction to the statement, "I would like to be a singer." The California Personality Inventory gives low femininity ratings to girls who don't fear thunder and don't want to be librarians. Low masculinity ratings are given to boys who have no desire to drive racing cars or read *Popular Mechanics*.

While Kardiner and Ovesey needlessly pathologize the Black experience, others take the opposite road and assume that the Black experience in the U.S. has given African Americans no special stressors. Yet the effect is the same: both methods ultimately pathologize. While Kardiner and Ovesey assume Blacks have been mentally damaged by oppression, the opposing view fails to see the normality in Black suspicions of white motives and calls such suspicion paranoia.

(Remember, paranoid schizophrenia was the diagnosis most often given to Black males in one study. One wonders if the overdiagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia reflects a white analytic attitude about Blacks that is itself a form of paranoid thinking.)

The pivot upon which the whole psychiatry:race opposition turns is white supremacy itself, a cause rarely considered in clinical settings. Indeed, this is a primary weakness of psychiatry in general and psychoanalysis in particular.

Psychopathology is clearly associated with poverty and powerlessness, but these relationships are not acknowledged by DSM-type diagnostic schemes and very little by most psychiatrists. The DSM doesn't provide sufficient information to distinguish behaviors with economic, social and political causes from those behaviors caused by "mental disorders." Yet one must accurately assess the impact of such social factors as segregation, poverty and hunger on Black psyches; indeed, involuntary unemployment can cause a rise in mental hospital and clinic admissions.²⁹

Whether treating African Americans or white racists, Freudian analysts treat dream references to race as if they were "really" about something else, i.e., mother, father, birth, death, etc. and not really about race. The emphasis on intrapsychic conflict overpowers the possible social meanings. Analysts must treat race as a significant issue and not just a symbolic one.³⁰

This is especially important when treating white supremacists. Treating racists as if oedipal (or similar) conflicts lie at the core of their problems removes the social problem of racism from the social structure and recasts it in terms of individual responsibility, or in the structure of the nuclear family, where little can be done.

There are other ways in which analysts can support the white power structure instead of social change. Psychoanalyst Helen V. McLean once wrote that Blacks who call others Uncle Toms were themselves intensely envious of the white acceptance achieved by the latter and were denouncing them for their success in typical "sour grapes" fashion.³¹ It is possible that McLean did not consider herself a racist in the ordinary sense of the word, yet she was willing to use psychoanalysis to support those Blacks who conformed to the status quo and were more tolerated by the dominant group (whites in power), while Blacks who were more interested in freedom were assigned a pathological status: jealous and envious. This attitude on the part of the analyst suggests an unresolved fear of Blacks, compensated for by an intense identification with the white bourgeoisie.

One of the most infamous examples of emphasizing the psychological over the social was the influential Moynihan Report

(1965) which described the Black family as a "tangle of pathology," characterized by "maternal domination." Thus while the Joint Commission on Mental Health of Children (1970) found that the most significant factor associated with family breakdown was poverty, Moynihan focused attention on so-called Black pathology instead of the "sick" society that caused the problem.

Yet there are multiple institutions within the social structure itself that are failing to serve African Americans. Poor and Black communities are not only served by underfunded government clinics and state hospitals, but have few Black psychiatrists in practice in the neighborhood. Improving service in these neighborhoods would be an important first step; affirmative action in hiring and recruiting Black psychiatric residents is another important task; and an improved rate of white doctors referring patients to Black psychiatrists would also be a significant and welcome change.

Regarding referrals, one study showed that many white doctors felt that Black psychiatrists were better at treating children, adolescents, and counter-culture types. The same doctors worried that Black psychiatrists might not be able to handle the racist attitudes of some of their patients, and felt Black psychiatrists would probably be more comfortable treating working-class patients. In other words, white psychiatrists would generously keep the high-paying patients and send the poorer ones to their Black colleagues.³²

Most psychoanalysts are white and they see very few Black patients, no doubt partially due to the expense of psychoanalytic treatment.³³ There are few Blacks practicing psychoanalysis or analytical psychology, although now that their ranks are open to PhD's and social workers, the number of Black practitioners is increasing. There are certainly more Black psychiatrists than Black analysts.

It is easy—almost inevitable, given the prevailing values of white society—for white clinicians' preconceptions to lead them to errors in assessment. If the therapist thinks Blacks are normally impulsive and emotional, he may regard psychiatric symptoms as "natural" and thereby miss a real illness. On the other hand, if he does not consider environmental factors that affect Black patients, the therapist may determine that what is in fact normal (justifiable) hostility and suspiciousness is a symptom of paranoia, a disease the person may not have. There are also many possibilities for counter-transference errors in the white psychoanalytic treatment of a Black patient. Michael Vannoy Adams' analysis of how Carl Jung feared being taken over by the Black psyche of a patient, or "going Black," is a glaring example.³⁴ All the negative stereotypical associations that so many whites have about Blacks, e.g., dirt, anality, night, darkness, etc.³⁵ both

consciously and unconsciously, are bound to interfere with any therapeutic effort. Too often whites project onto Blacks their own primitive fears and desires. The Black man easily symbolizes the evil, the phallus, sexuality—or what Fanon calls the dark side of the soul, the lower emotions, "sin, wretchedness, death, war, famine."³⁶ Even some progressive doctors who are cognizant of the social causes of mental illness may feel that it is useless to treat a patient who will return to a pathogenic environment. Yet we are justified in asking why so few radicals who are familiar with psychoanalytic thinking have used it to further Black liberation. No work attempts to link Black liberation and psychoanalysis the way Juliet Mitchell has linked psychoanalysis and feminism.

Many doctors are not progressive, of course, and these practitioners do not hesitate to use IQ scores to diagnose mental retardation in African American children, in spite of the well-known impossibility of bias-free IQ testing. Alas, this practice is not confined to self-declared reactionaries. In many cases, the social and coping skills of Blacks are ignored because they seem rough, hostile, streetwise, and obscure to white assessors, even though they reflect the same level of accomplishment and intelligence that more docile whites display. Many aspects of Black culture that can be considered oral culture, like blues, gospel, rap, the dozens, and more, reflect a stance, which, if it is not understood, will always undercut white comprehension of Black psychology.

While recent controversy over race and IQ make it seem a new issue, it is not. Lewis Terman, in *The Measurement of Intelligence* (1916), and Dr. Robert M. Yerkes (1921), both examined results from standard intelligence tests and drew the conclusion that the lower scores attained by Blacks and hispanics were signs of racial "dullness" (Terman) and "inferiority" (Yerkes). Less known is the fact that Princeton psychologist Carl Brigham endorsed these findings in 1923 only to repudiate them totally in 1930 in the *Psychological Review*.³⁷ Brigham's repudiation gets far less press than his earlier endorsement.

The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray is perhaps the best known of many right-wing diatribes disguised as academic studies; published in 1994, it actually reached the best-seller list. It suggested that low intelligence was a principal contributor to everything from poor child-rearing to unemployment and poverty. IQ was presumed to be an easily quantifiable measure that was largely inherited, rather than a complex and controversial measure that is difficult to quantify. The authors do not overtly belabor the notion that Blacks inherit low intelligence, but through innuendo and implication they draw a pic-

ture of society's structure that equates lower classes with underachievement and both with African Americans. And according to *The Bell Curve*, low IQ scores are what draws one into the lower classes. Thus, it's easy for the reader to draw the same conclusion that Herrnstein and Murray have spent their lives proclaiming, that Blacks are inferior. To avoid being called racists, however, they smite themselves repeatedly for having to be the bearers of such bad tidings. But the true motivation behind their "study" is clear: Their "research" was partially financed by The Pioneer Fund, a white supremacist crank organization that gives grants only to "researchers" of white ancestry!³⁸

Criticism of *The Bell Curve* has been extensive and devastating. Stephen Jay Gould was one of the first to point out that *The Bell Curve* was neither an academic essay nor a scientific work but a racist neo-conservative manifesto disguised as science. As many critics have shown, the statistical claims of *The Bell Curve* are extremely weak—correlation coefficients [R^2], or measures of confidence as to the relationship between variables, are as low as .1 or .2 in most cases. When one combines Herrnstein and Smith's pseudo-science with the dull itemization of the usual conservative demands—reduce welfare, eliminate school help programs, drop affirmative action—one sees that the work is no more than a right-wing political platform with a "scientific" coat of white paint.³⁹

For right-wing and racist readers, one of the most attractive features of *The Bell Curve* was the claim that low IQ members of the population (read "Blacks") were those most likely to commit crimes. This notion appealed deeply to the law 'n' order, lock-em-up members of (white) society, since it appeared that *The Bell Curve* was actually offering scientific evidence of the criminal propensities of Blacks. However, the *Corporate Crime Reporter* notes that "white collar and corporate crime injures society far more than all street crimes combined." How many street crimes would it take to add up to the billions looted by white yuppies from savings and loan associations?⁴⁰

IQ testing isn't the only aspect of the testing process that carries racial bias. Just as such prejudices are often built into IQ testing, there are other ways in which psychology accepts white performance as the norm. In research on topics unrelated to race (e.g., perception or memory), non-white subjects only appear in research contexts where they are being scrutinized or their taken-for-granted pathology is being subjected to analysis. Their absence from study thus becomes the norm.⁴¹

Surveys and survey technique are also vulnerable to racial dis-

crimination. One of the most important contemporary data-gathering initiatives was the Epidemiological Catchment Area study, and many subsequent studies have used ECA data which included many African American respondents. But as one researcher has noted, African American males have low response rates on such surveys, and the degree to which they are truly represented is debatable.⁴² Nonetheless, the ECA has provided an important data set. Unfortunately, the first study on African American mental health to grow out of the ECA study was carried out by a biased research team. They found that there was an increased risk of alcohol abuse among the sample of rural Black men at the North Carolina study site. While acknowledging that the data offered no way to determine *why* this was so, they speculated that it was because of intermarriage and genetics, not because of poverty, economics, and social pressures resulting from racism.⁴³ A modern version of "drapetomania"!

We have seen that from nearly every perspective, racism has the opportunity to enter psychiatric practice. From a revolutionary perspective, many of the works we've cited can also be faulted for emphasizing therapy and accomodation instead of social change. We are not suggesting that every mental health practitioner is a racist, however, and books like Elaine Pinderhughes' *Understanding Race, Ethnicity, and Power: The Key to Efficacy in Clinical Practice*⁴⁴ are no longer alone in trying to fight racism from within the psychological sciences. In fact most of the critical works cited here have this as their aim. Especially valuable are Thomas and Sillen's *Racism and Psychiatry*, Gaw's *Culture, Ethnicity, and Mental Illness*, and McGoldrick's *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*. A recent article from the *American Journal of Psychiatry* reveals how much current perspectives are undergoing change:

The hypothesis behind this study—"Eating Attitudes and Behaviors in 1,435 South African Caucasian and Non-Causasian College Students,"—was that more whites than Blacks would show symptoms of anorexia and bulimia since these disorders have been thought to be a disease of Western civilization largely effecting white women who feel pressure to be thin. Blacks have been thought to be "protected" from this disorder by a tolerance for weight in African American culture. Examining a group of South African college students, the researchers were surprised to find that "Black subjects demonstrated significantly greater eating disorder psychopathology. . . than Caucasian, mixed race, and Asian subjects."⁴⁵

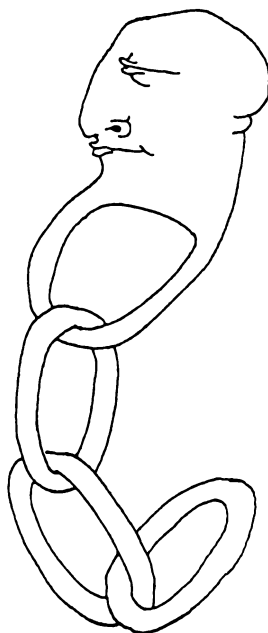
Of course, these results may reflect the fact that the worst tendencies of white, Western civilization are increasing their impact on the rest of the world, but we see a positive sign in the very undoing of an

old stereotype. As revolutionaries, however, we must remember that the psychological is never removed from the social, and that as Fanon has written, inducing a patient to live in oppressive surroundings is itself a social illness. It is the structure of society that must be changed, and locating the problem within the province of each individual's symptoms will never illuminate the social source of the symptoms as the true cause of our current despair.

NOTES:

1. The quotes are taken from Alexander Thomas and Samuel Sillen, *Racism & Psychiatry* (Secaucus: Citadel, 1974), 23. I will note here that I have borrowed liberally from this book in the paragraphs that follow, and not every instance is cited; I kindly thank the authors for their unknowing generosity. 2. Quoted by Franklin Rosemont in the Preface to *Surrealism and Madness* (Chicago: The Surrealist Group, 1972). 3. Russell Jacoby, *The Repression of Psychoanalysis. Otto Fenichel and the Political Freudians* (New York: Basic Books, 1983). 4. André Breton, et al., "Surrealism and Madness," *This Quarter* V, no. 1 (September 1932): 114. 5. "Fate of the Obsessive Image" is available in a collection of automatic texts, Paul Garon, *Rana Mozelle* (Cambridge: *Radical America* and the Surrealist Group, 1972). Other important contemporary surrealist writings on madness are contained in the exhibition catalog, *Surrealism in 1978. 100th Anniversary of Hysteria*. Introduction by Franklin Rosemont (Cedarburg, WI: Ozaukee Art Center, 1978) and in *Surrealism and Madness*. 6. Thomas and Sillen, 17-18. 7. Samuel A. Cartwright, "Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal* 7 (1851), 707. 8. Thomas and Sillen, 3. 9. Michael Vannoy Adams, *The Multicultural Imagination* (London, NY: Routledge, 1996), 81. 10. Herb Kutchins, and Stuart A. Kirk, *Making Us Crazy* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 218. 11. Adams, 113. 12. Ralph Matthews, "The Negro Theatre," in *Negro*, edited by Nancy Cunard (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1970), 194. 13. Thomas and Sillen, 109. 14. Thomas and Sillen, 29; 15-16; 117. 15. Thomas and Sillen, 64. 16. M. Loring, and B Powell, "Gender, Race and DSM-III. A Study of the Objectivity of Psychiatric Diagnostic Behavior," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, no. 29 (March 1988): 14-19. 17. Ezra E. H. Griffith, and F. M. Baker, "Psychiatric Care of African Americans," in *Culture, Ethnicity, and Mental Illness* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1993), 160. 18. Griffith and Baker, 157. 19. Thomas and Sillen, 131-132. 20. D. C. Wilson, and E. M. Lantz, "The Effect of Culture Change on the Negro Race in Virginia as Indicated by a Study of State Hospital Admissions," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 114 (1957): 25-32. 21. Monica McGoldrick, et al., *Ethnicity and Family Therapy* (New York: Guilford, 1982), 101. 22. Paula Caplan, *They Say You're Crazy* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1996), 280. 23. Harold W. Neighbors, "The (Mis)Diagnosis of Mental Disorder in African Americans," *African American Research Perspectives*, Winter 1997. 24. www.isr.umich.edu/rcgd/prba/persp/win97/win97.html 25. Abram Kardiner, and Lionel Ovesey, *The Mark of Oppression* (New York: Norton, 1951). 26. Robin D. G. Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional*. (Boston: Beacon, 1997). 27. The Black psychiatrists Grier and Cobb, in *Black Rage*, while propounding a more accurate thesis than Kardiner and Ovesey, nonetheless make the same mistake of generalizing about Blacks based on a small sample, and a sample of psychiatric patients at that. 28. Cited by Thomas and Sillen, 95. 29. Esther D. Rothman, Laura J. Solomon, and George W. Albee, "A Sociopolitical Perspective of DSM-

III," in *Contemporary Directions in Psychopathology: Toward the DSM-IV*, eds Theodore Millon and Gerald L. Klerman (New York: Guilford Press, 1986), 168; 171. 30. Adams, 209. 31. Cited in Thomas and Sillen, 63. 32. Cited in Thomas and Sillen, 152. 33. Exceptions to this are analysts like Neil Altman whose *The Analyst in the Inner City* (Hillsdale: Analytic Press, 1995) attempts to overcome many of the obstacles confronting the white analyst who treats Black patients. 34. Adams, 74-76. 35. Joel Kovel, *White Racism* (New York: Pantheon, 1970). 36. Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 190-91. 37. Thomas and Sillen, 35; 36. 38. Gregg Easterbrook, "Blacktop Basketball and *The Bell Curve*," in *The Bell Curve Debate*, edited by Russell Jacoby and Naomi Glauberman. (New York: Times Books, 1995), 40. 39. Stephen Jay Gould, "Curveball," *The Bell Curve Wars*, edited by Steven Fraser. (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 20-21. 40. Andrew Hacker, "Caste, Crime and Precosity," in *The Bell Curve Wars*, edited by Steven Fraser. (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 102. 41. Graham Richards, "*Race, Racism, and Psychology. Toward a Reflexive History*." (London and New York: Routledge, 1997). 300 (quoting A. Phoenix). 42. David R. Williams, "African American Mental Health: Persisting Questions and Paradoxical Findings," *African American Research Perspectives*, Spring 1995. 43. Kutchins and Kirk, 226. 44. Elaine Pinderhughes. *Understanding Race, Ethnicity, and Power. The Key to Efficacy in Clinical Practice*. (New York: Free Press, 1989). 45. Daniel le Grange; Christy F Telch; Jason Tibbs, "Eating Attitudes and Behaviors in 1,435 South African Caucasian and Non-Causasian College Students," in *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 155:2 (February, 1998), 250-252.



Drawing by RIBITCH

MISERABILISM & THE NEW EUGENICS

A Critical Look at the Human Genome Project

by ERIC BRAGG

At each turn of its thought, society will find us waiting.
—Paris Surrealist Group, 27 January 1925

The Human Genome Project (HGP), when completed, will provide a map of all human genes, in sequential order, within the human chromosomes. Although many of the actual protein-coding sequences of these genes (not to mention their purposes) will for the time being remain unknown, their general locations, in relation to neighboring genes within the chromosomes will have been determined. As David Shenk writes: the HGP is "this generation's race to the moon, but we're not quite sure what we'll do when we get there."¹

What would one do with a complete map of all human genes? For health purposes, such a map could be beneficial in the diagnoses of genetic diseases such as Duchenne muscular dystrophy, sickle-cell anemia and diabetes. For instance, the map could enable doctors to search the genome of a fetus for any fatal or deleterious mutations in particularly sensitive genes which might later cause either sickness or death. There is no doubt that a thorough knowledge of the genome could be used to cure, prevent or at least keep a genetic disease in remission. The problem is that, in the existing state of society, this knowledge will be used unfairly and dishonestly, especially in terms of race, gender and class. The sorry historical record leaves no room for doubt in this regard. Science and technology, despite their apologists' pretensions to objectivity, are never "neutral," and genetic science is certainly no exception.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the eugenics movement advocated the idea that different races had unique hereditary characteristics, and that these characteristics should be augmented and intensified through "selective breeding," for the purposes of what eugenicists called "bettering" society—*i.e.*, "weeding out" the influence of allegedly "inferior" races. As Linda Gordon points out in her classic history of birth control, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right*, the eugenics movement supported immigration restriction as well as the enactment of antimiscegenation laws, and the KKK and other racists "used the respectability of eugenics to further the development of segregation."² This movement was in fact an attempt to distort the scientific principles of heredity to justify a campaign of racial slavery, and as such contributed to the formation of Nazi ideology. A particu-

Surrealist painter Eric Bragg has an M.A. in Biology from the University of New Orleans. He is currently completing a study titled Clowns, Surrealism and Gender Revolt.

larly grisly offshoot of the eugenicists' program of dehumanization was the notorious Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, in which more than 400 Black syphilis patients were deliberately untreated for decades (1932-1972), so that white medical researchers could "observe" the course of the disease.³ Although public awareness of the dangers of rationalist-inspired racism is much greater today, we are now confronted by what can be called a "new eugenics," which is at once more subtle and potentially more dangerous than its predecessor.

But what is this new eugenics? How could the HGP be used for anything other than socially beneficial purposes? Consider the people who would be denied employment because they have been classified as "predisposed" to genetic disease—a new version of the old problem of employers who would rather not pay for the "maintenance" of "their" employees. Consider also the scenario in which an unborn child is predicted to develop a genetic disease at a young age. Should the parents decide to abort the child or carry it to term? Better yet, perhaps there is a new gene therapy which could improve the condition of the child. But can the parents *afford* this gene therapy? Will their insurance cover the costs? Inversely, perhaps genetic techniques will be developed to augment a child's chances of survival. In the case of "intelligence," as ill-defined as that trait is, genetic neurological research might yield secrets which could ensure "normal" mental development or even "improve" one's mental abilities. The question is: *Who* will have access to these new augmentative treatments? How will these services be regulated, and by whom?

The HGP has created its own Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications (ELSI) Program, designed to examine the effects and relationship that the HGP has to society. This committee has stated that "reproductive genetic services should not be used to pursue eugenic goals, but should be aimed at increasing individual control over reproductive options," and that a "broad public understanding of the role of genetics (and its limits) is essential to avoid genetic reductionism and a 'new eugenics.'"⁴ The committee also stresses, in regard to genetic testing and treatments, its belief in "autonomy, privacy, confidentiality, and equity."⁵ Although this *sounds* good, long experience with the promises of politicians leaves us unconvinced.

What is crucial is the social context in which the HGP research is being conducted. All science in capitalist society suffers from the deterministic presupposition that knowledge evolves according to the metaphysical timetable of "progress," as if scientific discoveries somehow evolve by themselves, without human intervention. "Progress," however, is truly just a myth and not an inherent blueprint for the elaboration of scientific inquiry, much less of social betterment. In

practical terms, science is not only carried out under the direction of well-meaning and curious minds, but is also heavily influenced by politics, economics, the military, the CIA, and—by no means least—the ideology of race. Although this situation rarely manages to raise more than a few squeaks of protest from the scientific community, who prefer to think of themselves as "apolitical," the *fact* itself is always acknowledged, however reluctantly.

And it is here where the new eugenics can be found: rather than verbally advocating the isolation and differential treatment of certain racial groups, present-day white supremacist society lets its economics do the talking. We all know that so-called "white" people are more likely to benefit from this society's technologies and services than people of color. Since scientific research today is controlled by capitalist economics and since capitalist economics ensure the profits of the white exploiters, then it follows that scientific thought and accomplishments are used to sustain the privileges of whiteness.

Throughout history, capitalism has ruthlessly exploited anyone and anything capable of generating profit. In a society such as that of the U.S. today, which condones the degradation of humankind and the entire biological environment, there is absolutely no reason to expect that corporations and their government henchmen cannot and will not use genetic technologies for purposes of exploitation and genocide. If genetic services come to be used eugenically only by those who can afford them, then "genetic privacy" will be of no advantage to anyone but the white ruling class. And since the public will not have legal access to the genetic records of those in power (who may be "improving the chances of survival" of their own children), genetic manipulation can be easily concealed.

Needless to say, insurance companies would be delighted to have genetically "superior" clients, and they too could uphold the democratic ideal of "genetic privacy." Thus the very concept of "genetic privacy," seemingly so beneficial to the underprivileged, could backfire. Legislation to protect workers and minorities against eugenic discrimination cannot be counted on, because such laws can simply go unenforced (as has so often happened in the past), ultimately allowing those in power to do whatever they like. As for those who maintain that the needs of democracy can be met by making genetic treatments available *on a lottery system*,⁶ the proposal itself exemplifies the New World Order's all-pervasive inequality. "Biocapitalism" is a great money-making and power-reinforcing prospect for U.S. corporations, and as long as capitalism exists and the oppressive ruling minority can make money from genetic services and products, we have every reason to expect the worst.

The HGP and other advances in genetic research also have specific

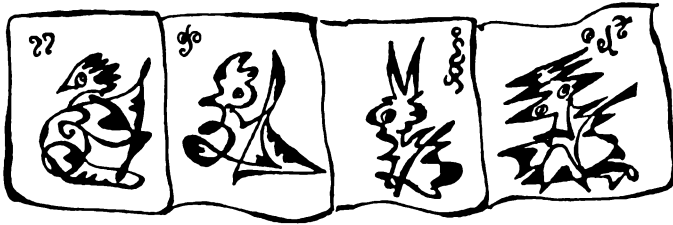
implications for surrealism. Of all known genetic diseases roughly twenty-five percent are diseases of the brain; it is therefore speculated that a corresponding portion of our genome also serves the brain. It will be several decades before the complex interactions of brain genes are identified, but as these interactions begin to be unraveled, and as ideologists of the system of domination attempt to interpret the data in such a way as to serve that system, and therefore to attempt to devise new ways to obstruct the free imagination, surrealism will have yet another showdown with biological science.

The contemporary scientific establishment tends to take a reductionist approach toward biology, likening human beings to walking bags of chemical reactions. This approach in effect denies all possibility of justice or freedom, for to regard people as biochemical throwaway items is to regard them as objects of absolute degradation. Such degradation in turn defines the essence of the ideology of late capitalism known as *miserabilism*: the systematic depreciation of reality instead of its exaltation—*i.e.*, the rationalization of the unlivable. In the struggle against miserabilism our task as surrealists is to show that we—that is, all of humankind—are *more than the sum of our parts*, and that it is poetry and the Marvelous which most clearly point the way to freedom and a better life for all of us. As surrealists, too, we must lay special emphasis on the fact that miserabilism today is inextricably intertwined with the cult of whiteness—that the struggle against miserabilism is therefore, in science as in everything else, at all times a struggle against whiteness.

Biologically, surrealism aims at the dialectical resolution of the arbitrary and socially-enforced contradiction between mind and body, and in broader terms, the contradiction between the human and natural worlds. Just how much a deeper knowledge of the molecular basis of human thought will induce humanity to reevaluate its prejudice against its own subjectivity remains to be seen. Meanwhile, the only way assure that genetic or any other scientific research will benefit all humankind and the Earth itself is to *abolish white supremacy in all its forms*.

NOTES:

1. Shenk, David. 1997. "Biocapitalism: What Price the Genetic Revolution?" *Harper's* 294 (1771):37-43.
2. Gordon, Linda. 1977. *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: Birth Control in America*. New York: Penguin, 278.
3. Jones, James, H. 1981. *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment—A Tragedy of Race and Medicine*. New York: The Free Press.
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5. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
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Drawing by PENELOPE ROSEMONT

OH SISTERS OF HAITI

by LARRY ROMANO

the moss on the sill
 the silver in your eyes
 parliamentary addiction
 I'll wake to delineate
 enumerating
 the black marginalia of Poe
 "c'est evidentment une lacune"
 —the truce of returning
 white gerrymander of the world
 —two sets of Americans explain
 —in daylight terms
 purveyors of plague
 the American family, jettisoned
 words for sleep I place these
 at your doorstep
 more spaces than kings are
 breathe through your eyes
 the arsonist's wings paint your revolver
 I've come to avenge Apollo



collage by JOEL WILLIAMS

"Riddle of the Occident,"

Surrealist poet Larry Romano lives just outside Boston, where Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison once fanned the flames of discontent.



"Take the A Train," Exquisite Corpse drawing
by ARTUR DO CRUZEIRO SEIXAS,
FRANKLIN ROSEMONT and PENELOPE ROSEMONT, 1993

MY ESCAPE TO AFRICA

by ARTUR DO CRUZEIRO-SEIXAS

I left Portugal for Africa in 1950. I could tell many, many things about the fourteen years I spent there, but first I want to point out that I went to Africa because I was already fed up with the literary and artistic life in Lisbon.

In Africa there was opposition to fascism even in the ruling bureaucracy. The democratic idea was so incipient that even Portuguese dictator Salazar gave the problem some slight attention. However, it was only when the struggle ignited in the neighboring Belgian Congo that a large detachment of the political police, the PIDE (the Portuguese Gestapo), with a staff at least as large if not larger than in Portugal itself, was set up in Angola.

Even I, despite the fact that my intervention had hardly been spectacular, was called in for interrogation by the PIDE. This was the reason: At that time I was a member of the Museum of Angola, and I had exhibited there a large canvas by the Mozambique painter, Malangatana Valente, who was then at the full apogee of his inventiveness. To exhibit the work of a Black African at the Museum was considered "something impossible."

At that time I also used to draw and paint on the envelopes of the letters I sent to my parents and others. The PIDE seized and retained these envelopes because my drawings seemed to them to be "suspicious."

I found it very difficult to convince the colonialists of the inevitability of the events for which they were not prepared. The great majority accepted the Government's line, that the colonies were "overseas provinces of Portugal," nothing less. Even the supposed opponents of Salazar wanted only an autonomous settlers' state of their own, not independence.

Portugal was then a country living on its past and I think jazz had very few supporters there. But jazz has always been a part of surrealist activity in Lisbon. Obviously jazz, with its enormous social and other significations, should not be ignored by surrealists. All of us had the perception, the *intuition*, of this music, although recordings were very rare. Do not forget that the dictatorship then exercised all its power and banned all collective demonstrations and gatherings, except football. Then, too, our lack of material resources troubled us

A co-founder of the Surrealist Group in Lisbon in the 1940s, Artur do Cruzeiro Seixas, who is now in his eighties, is widely recognized as Portugal's foremost surrealist painter as well as an important poet. This text is excerpted from his letters.

to a degree that certainly must be difficult for you in the U.S. to imagine. If we [surrealists in Lisbon] wanted to read, for example, we had to run the risk of stealing books from book shops, and we hardly had energy to spare to try to steal gramophone records as well! Moreover, the local Gestapo, the PIDE, maintained severe control over the importation of books and records.

Once established in Angola I developed a more and more passionate knowledge of jazz and its interpreters. I always sought work that permitted me to go in all directions through the enormous spaces of the continent, when there were no roads but *picadas* (beaten paths), and no bridges but simple rafts, improvised from empty tin boxes. The number of kilometers I traveled corresponded to a more or less equal space of adventure. But it was the African people who interested me most. Many nights, far from "civilization," I danced with them in the "batuques" all through the night. I have always felt that their music and rhythm, insisting on an exiguous sum of sounds, penetrates us to our bones. Similarly, the African landscape, so utterly different from Europe's, seems to me to be made entirely of enchantment.

During these journeys I included in my luggage a very simple gramophone, and records by Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Sidney Bechet, Duke Ellington and others, which I listened to at the awful rooming-houses where I sometimes passed the night, or while traveling, when my car broke down or was stuck in the mud. I have no technical knowledge of music, but I surrendered to the beauty of the voices and the rhythms and their significance.

I feel myself attached to jazz because of the vastness of its improvisation, or automatism—so important for surrealism—and also its *color*, which, for me, is so much more intense and definite in jazz than in any other music. It is not the exotic or folkloric aspects that I admire, but rather, on the contrary, the immense charge of humanity that seems to me so *visible* in jazz.

I regret that a more adequate knowledge of jazz has not been possible for me. A study of surrealism and jazz could make a long essay, but I am not prepared to write it. I do not know how far music is "only" music, or painting "only" painting. For me, jazz is something we also hear with our eyes.



Bluejay (11 in. long)

JACQUES VACHÉ: A One-Man War Against Whiteness

by FRANKLIN ROSEMONT

Only by becoming humor can language become critique.
—Walter Benjamin

Of the many inspirations that shaped André Breton and surrealism, Jacques Vaché's personal example was by far the greatest, as Breton himself always insisted. The special humor Vaché developed for his own use, and which he called *Umor* (humor without the h), prefigured a large part of the project for total subversion outlined in the first *Surrealist Manifesto*.

Jacques Vaché (1895-1919) was born in Nantes and grew up bilingual (French/English) in a military family. For several years as a child he lived in Vietnam; his later interests included Far Eastern thought and "savage" cultures. As a teen-aged anarchist dandy in a Nantes gang, the "Mimes and Sârs," he took part in pranks against the local clergy and bourgeoisie, and in anti-racist actions against the protofascist *Action française*. His father was a career officer, but in the Mimes' argot "General" was the lowest term of abuse.

At some point Vaché discovered the works of Alfred Jarry, and became his most rigorous and original reader. Jarry's Ubu cycle and pataphysics, "the science of imaginary solutions," hastened Vaché's own insurrectionary self-awareness. Out of what he called his "decidedly incoherent life" he elaborated the sense, or sensation, of Umor: a sense of "the theatrical and joyless uselessness of everything"—the sense "WHEN ONE KNOWS"—a wildly different humor capable of pulling the plug on what Jarry termed modern society's "debraining machine."

Umor's finest hour came during the imperialist slaughter called World War I. As a conscript, Vaché realized that "the war of the white tribes" (as Africans called it) was not *his* war. Instead of open insubordination (which would have meant his death, for this was long before even "conscientious objection" was recognized in France), he practiced *desertion from within*, which Breton described as "a deliberate choice of total indifference with the added aim of being absolutely good for nothing." To this technique of making himself inconspicuous by his presence he added *disservice with diligence*, a "polite" form of "absolute divergence" (the term is Fourier's) effected by the systematic application of doubletalk and the artful lie. All this and more is in his posthumously published *War Letters*, a veritable crypto-slackers' manual which in fact consists of the letters he sent Breton and his friends.

Vaché's umorous methods seem to me to resemble the "evasive,

cunning forms of resistance" used by Black Communists in Alabama in the 1930s, as described by Robin D. G. Kelley in his important study, *Hammer and Hoe* (1990). And as Kelley points out, these strategies go back to the days of slavery. It would be interesting to know what acquaintance Vaché had with Black people. As a stevedore on the Nantes docks he may well have encountered Black fellow-workers, and it seems likely that he met Black soldiers while serving as interpreter with U.S. troops toward the end of the war. Alas, his exceedingly sketchy biography tells us nothing about it. Strikingly, however, as Georges Sebbag has shown in *L'Imprononçable jour de ma naissance* (The Unpronounceable Day of My Birth, 1988), Breton identified Vaché with blackness, along with other distinctly non-European qualities, and specifically with "the mysterious wind of jazz" invoked in his *Introduction to the Discourse on the Paucity of Reality* (1924). The 1950 *Surrealist Almanac* lends weight to this affinity, for its chronological panorama for the year 1919 links Vaché and the "introduction of jazz into Europe."

Hopefully further research will provide more tangible evidence of Vaché's awareness of the Black world. It is already abundantly clear that long before war's end he had advanced far on the path of self-Europeization. Against the dominant xenophobia of his time, he practiced his own *xenophilia*. Although he was a French citizen, during the war he always identified *himself* as a foreigner. His dreams took him to the North Pole, to the Arizona desert, to a Chinese secret society in Australia—as far as possible from Europe. Umor's momentous momentum carried Vaché on a spiraling series of ever-widening deserts: from the French armed services, from France itself, from the Allies, from Europe, from Western Civilization, from whiteness, from stereotyped "masculinity," and even from the ignoble dualism that makes humankind the enemy of all other animals. On the underground railroad leading from the slavery of the imagination to its freedom, Jacques Vaché was one of the great conductors.

The inventor of Umor did not live to see the formation of the Surrealist Group. For reasons far from clear, the deserter-from-within who had written "I object to being killed in time of war," took his own life *via* an overdose of opium on the twelfth day of Christmas, 1919, a few weeks after the Armistice.

Jacques Vaché personified *possibilities* the world needs to dream about. In surrealism, his life and letters remain a real force. André Breton named "the mind's highest revolt" *black humor*, and he championed Vaché as one of its major exemplars. In the irrepressible conflict between freedom and whiteness, this merciless, unsparing humor—with or without the h—is a decisive liberating factor.

As Vaché asked: "Where do we go tonight?"

LORD BUCKLEY: Laughter in the Face of All Capitulation

by JOSEPH JABLONSKI

Lord Buckley entered popular culture to stay during the darkest days of the 1950s, when "Cold War" hysteria and "existentialist" gloom permeated everything. Censorship of comic books, yet another "revival of religion," the "Legion of Decency" and the omnipresent McCarthy were some of the moralistic frauds that repressed youth had to confront then, in their efforts to create a suitable future, or just to express their own minds and feelings. You could not legally read a Henry Miller novel in the good old "land of the free," and even an aging Bertrand Russell was too subversive to the soil of North America for the followers of Cardinal Spellman and Billy Graham.

Bop music and its greatest practitioners—Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, Dizzy Gillespie and others—were harassed and ridiculed while cultural reaction demanded a cooling off of the jazz atmosphere. For their unwelcome irreverencies, Slim Gaillard and Harry the Hipster Gibson were jumped on by the courts and their songs banned from the radio waves. It is clear to us, and it will be clear to all, that Lord Buckley won his title to glory by blowing smoke and laughter in the face of that era of absurdist capitulations, and reincarnating a freer, superior way of life. That smoke and laughter will rise up again, and that way of life *will be*.

* * *

Richard Buckley, who later became Lord Buckley by his own decree, was born in California around the turn of the century to a part-Indian family. His career as a stand-up comedian and humorist began in the 1920s in the speakeasies of Chicago, where for a period of time he is said to have enjoyed the direct protection of the Capone gang. At the time of his death in the early Sixties, he was the most noted of the "hip" or "bop" comedians who performed their routines in jive slang. At one juncture or another he had been obscure, ignored, imitated, and applauded.

Like many of his routines, Lord Buckley's own life was a hectic and chaotic parody of grandiosity. He held court constantly and he had willing courtiers because he was, for many admirers, the Living Presence of Swing. According to Charles Tacot's liner notes to the

Surrealist poet, playwright, theorist and photographer, Joseph Jablonski lives in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. This article draws on his Introduction to Lord Buckley's Hiparama of the Classics (now out of print), with additional material from The Hipsomantic Times.

album *The Best of Lord Buckley*, he once marched a troupe of sixteen nude persons through the lobby of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. He inaugurated his own "religion"—the Church of the Living Swing—which featured, besides his uproarious monologues, two belly dancers. The "church" was raided by the vice squad. Ironic as it may seem to some, Lord Buckley in his humor took up the sword of the many lay prophets through history who fought to free humankind's inner gifts from the repressive and authoritarian deformation of them contained in religious ideology. His boisterous hedonism, challenging bourgeois morality at every turn, fits the same context. It is the Pleasure Principle allied to poetry which fights against the Reality Principle allied to religious "truth": "There's someone bigger than you on the block, boy, so kneel." Lord Buckley gave proof of an immense awareness of the grandeur that existed outside of him, but he did not think it would represent any tribute to that grandeur if he groveled in front of an altar.

Lord Buckley was capable of doing many things to get an audience to listen, to dig. The most astounding thing of all was what he said when he got their attention. An example is the "Gasser" routine. At the conclusion, Cabeza da Vaca, the lost explorer-soldier who became a famous healer among the Native Americans, writes a letter to the king of Spain to explain his unaccounted years in the New World. Buckley addresses the words of this letter to his audience, and the way he pronounces them evokes a most eloquent affirmation: "There is a great power within, that when used in beauty and immaculate purity, can cure, and heal, and cause miracles; and when you use it, it spreads like a magic garden, and when you do not use it, it recedes." Lord Buckley's entire career was a continuing tribute to an exalted gift which, if it is not the same thing as the poetic Marvelous sought by surrealism, is certainly a close cousin to it.

The humorist's affinity with African America (which he himself acknowledged) is enormous. It is one that he developed on the entertainment and jazz circuits, as well as in his private experiences through association with Blacks and exposure to their influence. It is palpable not only in his rhythmic-oral style and street lingo, but it is deeper than that, in the spirit of his work which shares the enthusiasm and aggressively impossibilist orientation of African American art, culture and mythology.

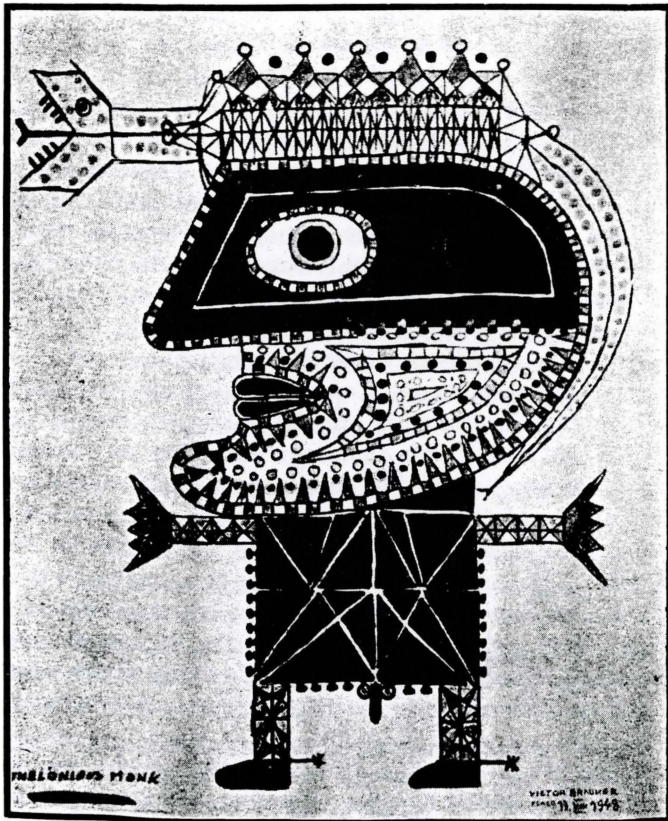
It was this most ebullient vein of Black existence that Lord Buckley mined for moral gold, so that his magic was directly inspired by the poetic vales of that tradition. On this plane the question of a rip-off does not arise, for Buckley himself not only would acknowledge his debt, but would actually proclaim it. To see his work side by side

with its primary sources is to enjoy the signal illumination produced by the symbiosis.

* * *

Lord Buckley spanned several "new waves" in jazz, in show business, in humor, in youth culture and lifestyles. If he were with us today, he would still be on top of things, because he apparently operated from the spiritual center of this century.

That which refuses to go away, stays. The Ghost of Lord Buckley—a very unbustable ghost, it seems—is still jousting with oblivion. Alas for the poor exorcists and demythologizers! There are great days yet ahead for Lord Buckley, and for all of us.



"Thelonious Monk," drawing by VICTOR BRAUNER, Paris, 1948

**HARRY SMITH'S AMERICAN DREAMSCAPE:
The Anthology of American Folk Music
 as Surrealist Subversion**

by RON SAKOLSKY

It was the genre-busting genius of the late Harry Smith to combine the artificially segregated musics of early "hillbilly," cajun and blues recordings in his *Anthology* (reissued by Smithsonian/Folkways, 1997) under the categories: "Ballads," "Social Music," and "Songs." As a visual artist and experimental filmmaker, Smith was sharing his perception of American folk music as a marvelous sound montage whose patterns combined to form a whole that was bustling with interaction and creole vitality rather than market separation. Each component was quite capable of standing on its own, but could also be seen as interdependent. After all, as Bill Monroe once acknowledged, without the influence of African American guitarist Arnold Shultz on his music, there would have been no bluegrass, and that kind of unacknowledged interracial cross-pollination had been going on for a long time. As Smith gleefully revealed to John Cohen in a rare 1968 interview in *Sing Out* magazine (reprinted in full in *American Magus: Harry Smith, A Modern Alchemist*, edited by Paola Igliori, Inanout Press), "It took years before anybody discovered that Mississippi John Hurt wasn't a hillbilly." In the best spirit of creative destruction, Smith's *Anthology* was a lyrical affirmation of the rich diversity of our fundamentally mulatto culture, and therefore a mighty blow against the repressive reifications of white supremacy.

Smith was a trickster whose cleverly orchestrated version of America was designed to turn its image of itself upside down. Though these recordings, culled from over 20,000 in his personal archives, date from 1927-1932, the *Anthology* itself was not released until 1952. By the very nature of its construction, it resisted the moribund strictures of the McCarthy Era and attempted to rescue the iconoclasm of American mythology from sliding into the clutches of deadening conformity. The "culture wars" are nothing new, and Smith seemed to realize at a gut level that what was at stake was the heart and soul of America. What a sly fox to give his creation the generic title, *The Anthology of American Folk Music*. Surely, many of those innocents who bought it hoping for a nostalgic glimpse of Americana were

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sorely disappointed, but others had their eyes/ears opened to an American dreamscape alive with the rhythmic pulse of hot-blooded rebellion, lust, mayhem, and the promise of redemption. This is no officially sanitized history of American folk music but a mid-Twentieth Century ghost dance along the fault lines of the American psyche.

Harry knew, in the words of some of the artists on *The Anthology*, that "a poor boy a long way from home" could find his way to the Light only by exploring the "dark holler where the sun *refuses* to shine." Within *The Anthology* is a roots music about rootlessness (*i.e.*, an *American* roots music). The music he chronicles features the exploits, wry laments and trenchant humor of America's most passionate marginals and outcasts—drifters, rounders, scoundrels, drunkards, con-men, hoboes, bums, outlaws, bankrobbers, murderers, bad men and fallen women of all kinds. American yes, but without a hint of jingoism. In "White House Blues," when you hear Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers sing "Roosevelt's in the White House, he's doing his best. McKinley's in the graveyard, he's taking his rest," it's abundantly clear that this is not meant to be a patriotic ballad. Who's being celebrated here—Roosevelt or McKinley or neither one? Is it the singer getting the last laugh on both presidents or is it Leon Czolgosz, McKinley's anarchist assassin? This song is every bit as much about the results of a crime of passion as a murder ballad like "Fatal Flower Garden" is about the personal circumstances of such an act. And when the song "When That Great Ship Went Down" appears, it's very clear that this is a take on the sinking of the *Titanic* that seizes the chance to warn about the political iceberg on which the American ship of state has foundered, not in some overblown sentimentalized Hollywood way but as apocalyptic prophecy!

One reading of *The Anthology* in fact is as an occult or hermetic document. The songs included therein often call up the supernatural, with British Child ballads from the previous century (reimagined in the hills of Appalachia) about birds that refuse to help knights in distress, and other tunes which feature demons lurking in spooky suicidal nightmares, or men who shed their masks to shapeshift into moles, lizards and rabbits in order to tell you their gripping tales, or eerie "cookoo birds" who must be supplicated at any cost. These creatures are joined here by larger-than-life chthonic archetypes embodied in crusty hobo bluesmen like Henry Thomas, playing guitar while accompanying himself on a set of panpipes (an instrument dating back to the dawn of time) held in a harmonica-holder around his neck—the apotheosis of blues mythology.

As to Smith's own personal mythology, both his parents were Theosophists, though one story he spread was that he was really the love-child of Aleister Crowley, which wasn't entirely impossible since his mother had once met Crowley under mysterious circumstances, and she herself on occasion claimed to be Anastasia, the long lost Czarina of Russia. Madame Blavatsky was a family friend, and Harry was not a stranger to the Gnostic Church (of which he was made an honorary bishop), the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor (associated with African American spiritualist, Rosicrucian and sex magician Paschal Beverly Randolph), and the OTO (Ordo Templi Orientis). Consequently, it is no accident that *The Anthology* features on the cover of each recording a seventeenth-century engraving by Theodore de Bry, of "The Celestial Monochord" (out of a book by Rosicrucian leader Robert Fludd), an instrument envisioned as forming, through the awe-inspiring powers of music, the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. *The Anthology*, which was originally to be issued in four parts, one for each element, was only issued in green, blue and red—interestingly, the element left out was earth, perhaps because Harry was never grounded enough to complete it.

He also knew Kabbalah, which he studied for years with Rabbi Naftali Zvi Margoles Abulafia, and made recordings of the ancient songs of the latter's birthplace in Northern Israel (Galilee) for Moe Asch of Folkways Records to whom Abulafia first introduced him (giving *The Anthology* an impeccable genealogical mystique). These songs no doubt joined the international part of Smith's music collection along with the Scottish bagpipers, Tuvan throat singers and the West African kora players whom he was so fond of long before such music had reached the wider audience it has now attained.

His interest in the connection between music and ancient systems of wisdom had surfaced much earlier than his encounters with Abulafia. By 15, in 1938, he was hanging out at the ceremonies of nearby Native Americans such as the Salish and Lummi peoples of the Pacific Northwest, making field recordings of their musics and soaking up their cosmology and rituals at potlatch ceremonies. (He later recorded a Kiowa peyote meeting in Oklahoma for Folkways Records). Of these youthful excursions to Indian reservations Harry characteristically said, "There were hardly any white people there—if you want to classify people by color." Harry the obsessive collector of musics from myriad cultural contexts didn't think skin color to be very important as a classification if viewed outside the socially constructed cognitive boundaries of white skin privilege. His vast knowledge of the cultures of Native peoples was not arrived at in an academicized anthropological way for which he had little sympathy.

As an anthropology drop-out student he favored direct experience as his path to understanding.

It was during his teenage visits to the reservation that he first became interested in patterns in relation to music. By the mid-1940s, he had begun drawing on film, exploring the alchemical connections between color, light, pattern and sound. As he put it, "I was looking for rhythmic designs to put into my films which at that point were based on the heartbeat." His first films used forms that were abstractly organic and sexual. His later works were more complex abstractions with dancing circles, batik designs and geometric shapes. He even worked at one time with 3D, in "Number 6," before turning to superimpositions and collage.

His fascination with the esoteric connection between design and music wasn't always easy to explain to the uninitiated, which could be very frustrating to him. Once, he visited the home of Sara Carter (of the Carter family whose music appears on *The Anthology*) where she was making quilts (and where he coincidentally ingested his first peyote). As he recounted the story to John Cohen, "I tried to get her to name certain designs which she thought resembled certain songs. She didn't understand me or what I was trying to say." Yet as a visual artist, filmmaker and modern alchemist, Smith was interested in the correspondence between certain color and sound patterns, seeking to correlate them diagrammatically. "My essential interest in music," he once said, "was the patterning that occurred in it."

When based in San Francisco his interest in this regard had found an affinity in the bebop rhythms of jazz improvisation—particularly Bird, Diz and Monk—and the Afro-Cuban music of Chano Pozo and Prez Prado. By the late Forties he had created what he called a new art form, paintings somewhat reminiscent of Kandinsky which were painted along with and were meant to be watched to specific musical recordings. At his exhibitions, he would put on an album and then, with his pointer, successively point to one small area after another, wildly speed-conducting in this way as the music unfolded in both linear time and all at once. Of "Manteca" (created from the Chano Pozo-Gillespie composition which features Pozo's abacua drum rhythms), he said "Each stroke in the painting represents a certain note in that recording. There's a dot for each note and the phrases that the notes consist of are colored in a certain way or made in a certain path."

That this art form was not an act of appropriation but of collaboration was evidenced by the fact that Bird, Diz and Monk, as well as other jazz musicians, would themselves come to Jimbo's Bop City in San Francisco (where he once did a mural, now destroyed) to see his

handpainted films. In fact, "No 4" begins with a shot of his painting to the tune of "Manteca." Later, in New York during the Sixties, he would sit at the bar of the Five Spot during one of Monk's extended visits, scribbling away, madly notating the syncopation, whether or not the notes came down before the beat or after it, as well as how the distinct variations of syncopation related to the human heartbeat or pulse. He once said his most complex painting was to one of Bird's records. It took five years, and he gave up the process after that, exhausted from the effort.

He was "scoring" a jazz record or performance in reverse of the way films are scored. Instead of the visuals coming first, he was constructing the visuals in relation to the music, tapping into both the psychic automatism already embedded in the grooves and the immediacy of his own interpretation as a listener/participant in the creative process. This reversal was built on an early interest in film music. As a young man, it has been reported that he was once phoned by an anxious film program director at the San Francisco Museum of Art's "Art in Cinema" series wondering what music to play with the Buñuel-Dali surrealist silent film classic *Un Chien Andalou*. Smith replied immediately, "'Tristan and Isolde'—Wagner," which was in fact the music played when it was originally shown.

His knowledge of, and attraction to, surrealism was lifelong, though perhaps most intense in his young manhood. Beginning with his early interest in surrealist film, and his concern with the unleashing of the Imagination using such nonrational modalities as automatic writing, randomness, and surrealist games like Exquisite Corpse, he sought as an artist to channel the subliminal. Later in life, he was to share an exhibition in Paris with Marcel Duchamp, where his handpainted films were shown in an explicitly surrealist collaboration. How well he knew the work of presurrealist Raymond Roussel is difficult to say, though he almost certainly would have read the translations in *View* magazine in the 1940s. But critic Harald Szeeman was surely not exaggerating when he remarked, in the 1975 exhibition catalog *Junggesellenmaschinen* (The Bachelor Machines), that Smith's films are truly "the closest cinematic equivalent of the Duchampian and Roussellian imaginations and magics."

The Anthology itself exemplifies a surrealist strategy for releasing the Marvelous from the fetters of the massification of American culture in the Fifties. Smith's was a relentless quest for what was beneath the surface of America's hegemonic cultural facade—the unconscious and the repressed; desire, fear and abandon. So it is that Furry Lewis' lengthy rendition of "Cassie Jones" evokes what folklorist/guitarist John Fahey calls in the liner notes, "the most surreal version of the

'Casey Jones' theme, which keeps digressing into talk of other things and Freudian dream imagery." Lewis himself was noted for his dark surrealist humor in the seminal book *Blues and the Poetic Spirit*, by Paul Garon, a stalwart member of the Chicago Surrealist Group. Likewise, Garon celebrates the surrealist qualities of other *Anthology* blues musicians, from the unbridled sexuality of Charlie Patton (appearing here in the guise of The Masked Marvel) and Blind Lemon Jefferson, to the Eros-drenched dream-imagery evoked not only by Jefferson, but also by Sleepy John Estes and the Memphis Jug Band, to the subversive humor of flight evidenced in a tune by Cannon's Jug Stompers. Thanks to the excellent CD ROM capabilities of *The Anthology*, we can even briefly get to hear Lewis as well as Gus Cannon and Will Shade in a series of 1959 interviews with *Anthology* musicians. As for Smith himself, we get to see, via the enhanced CD, visual examples of his artwork, illuminating textual materials, and even photos of his wonderful collections of Seminole patchwork quilts and Ukrainian Easter eggs.

Fahey, by the way, was only one of many musicians in the Sixties folk revival who view *The Anthology* with cultish reverence as a sort of combination of the Holy Grail and the Rosetta Stone. It unquestionably established the folk canon for future musicians whose music resounded/resounds with the soundscapes of *The Anthology*. Even the Fugs had their first recording (as *The Village Fugs*) produced by Harry Smith.

In his characteristically anarchic spirit, Harry never bothered to ask permission from the record companies whose recordings he originally found as thrift-store 78s, making *The Anthology* the most famous bootleg of all time. As he remembers the circumstances of the pivotal moment that launched this legendary project, he needed money for his expensive film-making habit and approached Moe Asch with an offer to sell him some of the records from his own vast personal collection, but Asch refused, preferring that Smith issue them on Folkways instead. Neither Smith nor Asch felt any qualms about violating proprietarian copyright laws that benefited the record companies (rather than the artists), since it was those same companies that had destroyed the original masters and failed to keep the records in print which made them so rare in the first place.

Through Harry's powers of resurrection this forgotten music would take on a new life rather than sink into an obscure death. His fervent dream was to change America through the poetry of song and music. To paraphrase one of the Blind Lemon Jefferson tunes on *The Anthology*, please see that his grave is kept clean.

WHITEWASHING THE BLUES

by CHARLES RADCLIFFE

"We were discriminated against all the time. If we were colored we'd really be able to kick up a stink about it. I'm not—so I have to put up with it. Everyone with long hair does." —Jimmy Page (Led Zepellin)

"Skip's been and gone from places you ain't never going to get to." —Skip James

As a fourteen year old WASP public¹ schoolboy, listlessly becalmed in the post-war doldrums of mid-'50s Britain. I led a cloistered life, alternating between an imprisoned education in a military boarding school (whose purpose was to land me with a commission in the army but which actually equipped me fairly well for little else but subsequent spells in prison) and vacation life in married officer's quarters within barracks. Naggingly aware that something more ecstatic must lie beyond the enveloping atrophy it was neither surprising that first hearing Elvis Presley was some kind of milestone in my life nor that I liked him at least as much for what he symbolized as for how he sounded.

Several months later I first heard Little Richard. Discovering that what I liked about Elvis' music was actually the pale residual trace of the Black music from which it was derived reduced the now naked "king" to largely sociological significance in my mind. The wild, sexually omnivorous Richard Penniman was the *real thing*—the piano hammering, the banshee wail, the make-up and the pompadoured hair were just the start. Here was the true, abundantly (and, I hoped, indiscriminately) dionysiac King of Rock'n'Roll. I knew nothing about the history of popular music and even less about the history of Black people. (I'd never met any Blacks and had only seen a few in the distance as I passed through the Suez Canal on a troop ship, aged 5!), but I knew at once that I *loved* the Georgia Peach. The overall impression of raucous cacophony had the profound merit of creating massive adult distaste but beneath this superficial veneer was real subtlety. Richard's gospel-tinged voice was a marvelously controlled instrument, intense, passionate, soul-drenched, the band a thunderous

A frequent contributor to anarchist and blues publications in the 1960s, Charles Radcliffe co-edited the Anglo-American edition of The Rebel Worker (1965), edited Heatwave, and joined the Situationist International, from which he resigned in November 1967. He currently resides in the British countryside.

storm flashing raw electrical power, the effect immediate and overwhelming. Elvis' music suddenly sounded soft, almost effete; Richard's reached parts that nothing else touched. As importantly in the long term, I knew that I had been sold a pup, and that everyone else too seemed to have bought into the big lie of Elvis the King.

Some years later I'd escaped school, and journalism in Middlesbrough (the scene of nationally significant "race riots" in 1961), and had moved to London. I was smoking one of my first reefers when someone played an imported copy of *The Best of Muddy Waters*. I had listened to a lot more music by then but none of it had truly prepared me for what I was now hearing. From the awesome electrified power of "I Just Want To Make Love To You" to the empathetic grace and subtle but driving swing of "Louisiana Blues" this music spoke to me in a way that not even Little Richard could achieve. I wept, not just because I was in the presence of real magic but because I felt I had at last come home.

Ever since first hearing Little Richard, most of the defining, transcendent moments of my younger days—those moments when time seems to evaporate and kaleidoscopic dreams and future possibilities spin free from the web of constraint and conditioning, up for grabs in myriad ways, some crystal clear, some seductively opaque—had been associated with Black American music. Listening to Muddy Waters for the first time forty years ago now seems to contain the essence of all those moments—Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Lester Young, Billie Holiday, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Memphis Minnie, Charlie Patton, Skip James, Bukka White, Robert Johnson, Elmore James, Howling Wolf, Big Mama Thornton and countless other "lesser" figures. I knew that life could never be the same again and I wanted desperately to put flesh on those bones, to discover more, to understand why and what I felt, why music that I knew even then I would never fully understand or even fully feel meant so much more to me than that created by my own peers in my own society.

There is no denying the social and historical importance of Elvis Presley. It is difficult now to relive the shock of hearing a white boy singing such raw and sexually direct material, even if most of us didn't understand that it was derived from rhythm'n'blues. This was after all the post-war dead zone of the '50s, the era of the Crewcuts, Perry Como and Doris Day in the USA and of Eddie Calvert, Ruby Murray and the Beverley Sisters in Britain. Only Johnny Ray offered even the slightest respite from the pap. Elvis certainly opened the door to countless performers. Despite the white-owned American record companies promoting sanitized white covers of Black material

(e.g., Pat Boone, the McGuire Sisters) through often racially-segregated radioplay there was no holding back the tide. Black records were selling in huge numbers to Black *and* white teenagers. The logic of capitalism demanded that if Black artists were selling, white entrepreneurs should be around to skim the proceeds.

Unlike most whites using Black material, Black stars—Richard, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Fats Domino (who outsold everyone save Presley during the rock era)—usually wrote their own material, drawing on vibrant Black musical styles and evincing a confidence and inventiveness that post-war white popular music would not even approach until the mid-'60s and then with discouraging rarity.

Since the very earliest days of recording American Black popular music (jazz, blues and gospel, themselves born of forced marriages between traditional African musical forms and the European musical traditions and instruments of the dominant white society) has breathed life and ideas into white popular music. Only exceptionally (e.g., Jimmie Rogers) has it worked the other way. (The current use of "scratching" on country & western singles and the emergence of trip-hop in Bristol (UK) indicate just how pervasive this process still is.)

The Inkspots, now largely ignored by critics but once loved by Blacks and whites alike, were among the first groups to crack the popular music color bar—back in the '40s. But rock was a lot nearer the knuckle than their sweet balladry. White kids in the '50s were listening to music which *was* blatantly erotic and reeked of forbidden delights, that *was* also the same music that excited Black kids, and *was* the musical mainstream, neither a one-off nor an exception to the general rule. Things would never be quite the same again.

By the early '60s the successful white rockers had done very well, often on minimal talent while even the most successful Blacks earned far less and were inordinately prone to being ripped off in a music business whose attitude to Black artists predictably tended to echo the attitude of the status quo to Blacks in general. Of the white rockers only Jerry Lee Lewis had the slightest vitality. The great white hopes Buddy Holly and Eddie Cochran were dead, and even the Burger King was being fattened for the kill. Further, a fresh delivery of homogenized white bread was on the market, guaranteed pure and inert—Frankie Avalon, Bobbie Vee, Fabian. British rock (Adam Faith, Cliff Richard and the Shadows, Heinz and the Tornados) was a still paler imitation of a pale imitation. These guys were already so devitalized that they didn't need bumping off. Distinctly Black music had been largely contained and stuffed back in its ghetto—for a while.

One of the many ironies of the development of "white blues" is that, for the most part, it grew countless miles from its roots—in the art colleges and small "jazz" clubs of Britain. (Perhaps it was hardly

surprising that the resulting plant was so enfeebled.) By the early '60s British cities had a disaffected rebel generation, enjoying full employment potential (in those days you could tell your boss to fuck off on Friday and be in a new job by Monday) and a new affluence which encouraged new attitudes to work and play. "New" ideas and names were about: dada, surrealism, Kerouac and the beats, Parker and the boppers, zen buddhism, existentialism, Sartre, Camus, Bergman, Brando, Dean.

In part a revolt against post-war austerity, this new, defiantly scruffy romanticism was also a barely conscious celebration of new possibilities. By a further irony, living in the economic comfort zone of a "society of plenty," allowed some of these exceptionally privileged² young whites the opportunity to explore blues, a musical form which might be said to have emerged from a diametrically opposite set of economic and social circumstances, but which nevertheless touched these white kids like nothing else did. Blues (and "white blues") were a large part of the constant aural backdrop of the broad, atomized and disparate social movement—loosely *for* art, poetry, music, sex, dope, experiment and cheap thrills, *against* war, racism and authority—which has provided the basis for most progressive activity then and since. Blues in Britain was a classic case of an idea whose time had come. Muddy Waters had completed a seminal tour in 1958 and hundreds of young people were listening to imported blues albums, often in isolation. Several were sufficiently thrilled by the music to start their own bands, following the example of Lonnie Donegan's enormously successful '50s "skiffle" group. There is little doubt that these first-generation blues copyists *were* inspired by love of blues (as a previous British generation had been inspired by love of Kid Ory and Sydney Bechet to form "trad jazz" bands), but despite proclaimed determination to achieve "blues authenticity" and open acknowledgement of their sources, they were neither greatly interested in the Afro-American society which was blues' cultural base nor in the provenance of what they played—more or less contemporary (Berry, Diddley and to a lesser extent, Waters, Howling Wolf, John Lee Hooker and Jimmie Reed provided the club staples) or taken from collector anthologies of pre-war artists as the search for "original" material became more challenging. With such uninhibitedly promiscuous borrowing the "r'n'b" clubs resounded to a bewildering array of Black material, played for the most part with loud and loving incompetence and taken, more or less at random, from the whole long history of recorded blues. Most of the audiences came to dance; for the most part they cared even less than the bands about the provenance

of the songs, let alone their underlying social history.

It may be claimed that for the best of such bands blues was a starting point from which they moved on to a more inventive, personalized music, while acknowledging, often fulsomely³, a creative debt to Black artists. This claim is vitiated by a marked reluctance to share the financial rewards and an absolutely intransigent refusal to accept the improbability (to put it no stronger) of their being able to perform blues without themselves being any part of the highly distinctive ethnic culture which found such clear and singular expression in the rich tapestry of this music. It is accepted, of course, that sharing the financial rewards of this wholesale plunder of Black culture would not have been an easy proposition for the "white blues" bands. It wouldn't either have solved the underlying problem—the essentially racist terms on which all Black artists work in a racist society. The problem—had any of them wished to do anything about it on other than a patronizing, piecemeal (and very limited) basis—was, in any event, further compounded by the white performers' total lack of political insight. Such false consciousness is illustrated as clearly by Rod Stewart's view⁴ that "it's as easy to have the blues in (London's) Archway Road as it is on a deep south railroad" as by Jimmy Page's asininely delusional assumption, quoted above, that the bourgeois prejudice incurred by a comfortably insulated art student's self-conscious fashion statement is even remotely comparable to an officially imposed and rigidly executed pattern of social and economic exclusion based on the unalterable accident of birth as a Black.

The claims, made at one time or another by almost all "white blues" proponents, that "white blues" is in essence "an anti-racist statement," "an act of love" or a "gesture of solidarity" because the music is "beyond color," are further instances of truly staggering political naivete, and a grossly patronizing and paternalistic denial of the deep complexity of the issue of race.

How very nice to have the luxury of being "beyond color." Did they try this enlightened line out on their Black mentors or try to pass on the condition? What sort of response did they get? Did they consider how devastatingly insensitive and patronizing such attitudes must seem to those whose art had been shaped and honed by the unceasing, quotidian adversity of being born Black in a society dominated politically and economically by whites, an adversity quite clearly beyond the imagining of even the most sympathetic white? Couldn't they see the generosity of spirit of bluesmen like Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker and BB King who almost unfailingly praised the dessicated efforts of their copyists? It is hardly surprising that those who earn astronomical fortunes from plundering Black

music are reluctant to see the vastly deeper implications that lie beyond such easy (and ego-boosting) conscience-salving; to do so would inevitably shake the whole fragile edifice of "white blues," as well as illuminating somewhat harshly the vomit-inducing farce of plagiaristic whites topping bills which include Blacks who just happen to be among *the leading global cultural figures of the century*. The startling success of "white blues" in polls and award ceremonies on both sides of the Atlantic, oft-cited as proof of the coming of age—and therefore, by a logic that defies analysis, authenticity—of "white blues" is as much a mark of underlying bad faith as it is of white economic dominance in every sphere, even to the extent of selecting winners in a field, like blues, where being Black would seem to be a logical prerequisite or, at the very least, a distinct advantage! (In Britain not only do whites regularly win blues awards, but "two-tone"⁵ bands like UB40—who have long since outgrown their radical roots and now purvey a saccharinized schlock-reggae custom-built for shopping malls—win reggae awards too!) The whining response to the argument that whites cannot play blues by blues magazine readers—who perhaps see themselves as the next Eric Clapton (so much more profitable than being the next Otis Rush)—indicates, as Paul Garon has pointed out in these pages previously⁶, that for these "color-blind" whites Black approval is clearly required. (All the courteous generosity of the BBs, the John Lees and the Muddys can never quell the doubts *they* so clearly entertain and that so clearly cloud *their* self-portraits as authentic bluesmen/women.)

It is often claimed that the white pasticheurs did at least make blues known to a far wider audience than would have otherwise discovered it and that many of their fans subsequently sought out original recordings. The latter claim (and its subsidiary claim that it was mostly white British rockers who introduced white American youth to blues) may well be true but was this an intrinsically beneficial development? And, although "white blues" *may* not necessarily be a *conscious* attempt to rip off of Black creativity we should give white artists who do systematically rip off Black music the benefit of the doubt *on nothing else—whatever their declared motivation!*

Even if it is argued that the involvement of whites has extended the life of blues—in its most extreme (and most revolting) form the claim is that fresh blood revitalized the music—it still seems to amount to praising a poisoned chalice. Because by now blues is actually a largely academic exercise; virtually dead in the Black community at large and certainly so among Black youth. Far from giving new life to blues these purportedly generous whites actually helped administer its kiss of death.

For copyists, particularly those craving the validation of an *authenticity recognized by Blacks*, the constant restless inventiveness of Black music makes difficulties.⁷ American Black music has always been fugitive; as soon as any style reaches a quintessential point of evolution it tends to be dropped and replaced by something new. And if there are copyists in the offing the process tends to speed up. (The same phenomenon can be observed with, for instance, Black street slang—once it is copied or understood widely beyond the community in which it evolved it will be ditched and replaced by something new, less easy for outsiders to understand or copy, thus restoring and preserving the unique relevance of the argot *within* and *for* its unique community. This protective cultural exclusionism is doubtless in part a direct reply to the institutional exclusion practiced by "the system" against Black communities.) While Black music endlessly, anarchically invents, white tends to formalize, to codify and to establish stylized traditions, from which to recycle. The British "trad jazzers" of the '50s were recycling music that was, for Blacks, already at least 20 years past its sell-by date. Elvis' Black blues sources (eg Big Boy Crudup) were already "old hat" when he got around to recording them. By the time the second wave of white blues copyists came on stream a decade later the time-lapse was still longer. (Thus, even if whites had been able to accomplish their aim of creating authentic blues it would have been an achievement devoid of merit or purpose, like an exact copy of an old master, a comprehensively inauthentic authenticity.)

Younger Blacks were acutely embarrassed by a perceived Uncle Tom-ism in blues; soul music was the *now* Black sound and young enough not to be compromised by painfully uncomfortable historical associations. Bluesmen swept up in the "blues boom" of the '60s and '70s found it tended to cut them off even from older Blacks, who still liked the blues but didn't care to visit concert halls where the bulk of the audience would be young whites. A few, like Lightnin' Hopkins, intelligent, confident, deeply centered and retaining an almost umbilical attachment to his own Texas community (whose continued appreciation was always vastly more important to him than either white adulation or money) were articulately aware of this process even as it happened, but the belated opportunity to earn good money playing for whites (an inevitably ambiguous act in the context of a racist society and one which could only lead to dilution, absorption and diminution of their work) effectively severed the links between many blues artists and their constituencies. Of course they deserved the belated financial rewards but the circumstances in which they were obliged to gain them were those demeaning ones imposed by

institutionalized racism.

(Jimi Hendrix, the single most significant and compelling figure of the psychedelic rock era, played superb blues which spotlighted mercilessly the artistic, emotional and technical limitations of coeval white "guitar gods." Hendrix did not need to worry whether his magical blues were authentic; he was so deeply immersed in Black musical culture that the issue simply didn't arise. But even Hendrix couldn't sell blues to young Blacks. For them blues was already dead; the sound of a plangent lead guitar, the very feature of urban blues that Hendrix built on and developed so extraordinarily, was as embarrassingly archaic as blues' lyrical obsessions. The Black artist who *did* reach Black youth was Sly Stone whose life style and glittery image, predicated by the white hippyworld in which both moved, was closely akin to Hendrix's, even to the extent of using some white musicians. Sly wasn't as scintillating a musician, as charismatic a personality or as inventive a song-writer as Jimi but he evolved his music from a different and less dated base—gospel, soul and borrow-backs from rock—and it reached Black and white youth alike. The blues-based Hendrix, however, found himself in the same position that Chuck Berry had a decade earlier—veneration by whites was never good for Black street cred.⁸ Furthermore, whereas you could dance to Sly's entire band-based oeuvre you couldn't to most of Jimi's super-individualistic, hallucinogenically polymorphous, and asymmetrically wiggled-out work-outs.)⁹

Then there is the vexed question of rights.

Surely we live in a democracy, boasting a few basic freedoms glittering dimly among the piled nets of restriction, and if whites really like blues and enjoy playing them, why shouldn't they, and if people buy their records it must be because they like them so that's okay too, isn't it? To be honest, no, it *isn't* okay. And the *more* people that want this ersatz product the *less* okay it becomes. Furthermore, the same strictures apply wherever. A few years back, Paul Simon¹⁰, doubtless with noble intentions, recorded *Gracelands* with Black South African musicians: was he doing them a favor by linking his prestigious name to their playing, or was he resurrecting a stalled career with a hot new sound? That much controversy followed this venture does at least indicate that the issues surrounding such cultural expropriation—like, for instance, who got what at the pay out—are at last beginning to get discussed. No doubt such situations will recur and those troubled by them should ask as many loud and pertinent questions as possible.

White boys have spent the last few years trying to rip off rap and hip-hop culture—presumably because they love it—just as their predecessors unwittingly screwed blues because they loved it.

Nowadays *white* companies, who are heavily involved with rap despite its low status among politicians, promote ever more bloodcurdling rap lyrics because *Black hate* is what the very substantial number of *white kids* who buy rap records apparently want to hear. And as ownership of the global entertainment industry becomes concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, the situation can only get worse. Creativity is just more grist to capital's mill. It will only be freed when creators control their own creativity and its production. So, while whites do—of course—have the *legal right* to sing blues (and kwela, ragga, reggae and rai, etc.,) those angered by them doing so (and the underpinning false consciousness) have the *duty* to say how they feel about it.

Many Europeans, who tend to view the USA as the first major world "power" to have progressed from barbarism to decadence without stopping at civilization in between, have no doubts in considering Black music to be the USA's single most important contribution to world culture, and look on its rape with an eye-stinging mix of embarrassment and rage, a feeling not lessened by awareness of our own complicity, directly or indirectly, in the process, nor by the knowledge that some of the specific questions raised become increasingly academic or historical, as the blues' significance in the life of Black Americans diminishes. Whether or not blues is dead or dying, the broad issues raised by white "copy catting" (in its many forms) of Black culture remain absolutely relevant.

The developing global capitalism involves us all in a system which is determined to keep profits high no matter the penalty thereby imposed on the damned of the earth. The fate of blues is but one example of a universal expropriation of vibrant ethnic cultures by a dominant white global system. Countless other examples may be found of cultural and economic expropriation and of the neo-colonialism underlying the growing disparities between haves and have-nots, not only *within* both developed and developing countries but, still more catastrophically, *between* developed and developing countries. This is symbolized by international 'environmental' conferences where rich nation global despoilers pass high-minded judgments on poor nations, forced to ravage their own people and countries, with no perceptible advantage to themselves from doing so (and manifold long-term and possibly irreversible disadvantages), simply to pay huge "debts" "owed" to the rich—"debts" to cover the expenses incurred by the rich in removing the poor's resources and thereby ensuring the poor stay poor. "Quando merda tiver valer pobre nasce sem cu," as the old Portugese dictum says.¹¹

Old colonialism, with its ethos of duty, leadership, service and

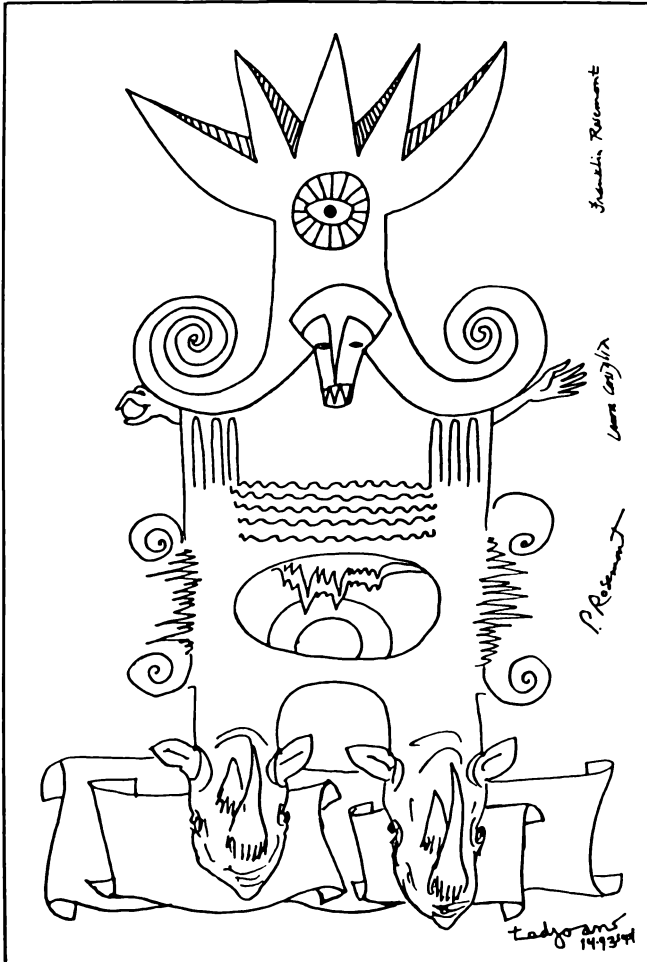
mission civilizatrice, did at least pay lip service to some degree of responsibility towards its subjects, however autocratically and patronizingly. The new colonialism has no such scruples and feels no obligations whatsoever towards the nations in which it operates: the only responsibility is towards profit and greed—the enrichment of the rich, the exploitation of the poor and the lasting impoverishment of the global future. Gary Snyder calls this the culture of the preta¹², one that deliberately fosters craving and fear as instruments of control—craving for what we don't need and fear of what we don't understand. This global system—a kind of resurrected feudalism with robber barons revamped as transnational corporate operators—viciously distorts all human potential and simultaneously degrades the ecological fabric of survival. The new world order is a global reinstatement of feudalism with the robber barons revamped as transnational corporate bandits. Race traitors beware. It's not getting any easier.

NOTES:

1. In British double-speak "Public School" means "private (fee-paying) school"! 2. White youth were possibly at an apogee of privilege—in *global terms*—during the '60s, though they were not necessarily particularly *individually* privileged in terms of the larger society in which they lived. 3. The Rolling Stones, on first arriving in the USA, told bewildered American journalists that their favourite American singers were Muddy Waters and Howling Wolf, names then entirely unknown to the witless scribes. 4. Stewart built his entire career on Black music and claimed in early interviews to be a "white spade." In the '70s he shocked even the most apolitical of Black music fans by offering verbal support for the racist conservative politician Enoch Powell, who died in February 1998: "I think Enoch Powell is the man. I'm all for him. This country is overcrowded. The immigrants should be sent home. That's it." To give Stewart his due he also later said "I want to sing a song from My Fair Lady. *You can leave the blues to Muddy Waters.*" (my emphasis—CR) though some might feel less than reassured, thinking this statement comes dangerously close to dismissing altogether his gigantic debt to Black artists. 5. The original two-tone bands of the late '70s came from the British midlands and played a hybrid music, derived in equal measure from ska, bluebeat (the Jamaican precursors of rock-steady, reggae and ragga) and from British punk rock, which was avowedly nihilistic in outlook. Two-tone songs had an overtly social and political content and were fiercely radical in outlook; the bands styled themselves "two-tone" because they had both Black and white members. 6. Paul Garon; "White Blues;" *Race Traitor 4* (Winter 1995) 7. . . . and still does, as evidenced in white "mimicry" of house music, rap, hip hop, swingbeat etc 8. see Nelson George; *The Death of Rhythm & Blues* (Pantheon, 1988) 9. At his famous February 1969 concert at London's Albert Hall Hendrix's free-flowing improvisations owed as much or more to free jazz as to rock and left his sidemen floundering in his wake, as they played musical catch-up. Any dancing to this was strictly in the head! It's no surprise that while Sly is still a living influence on Black popular music, Jimi's innovations have inspired white guitar virtuosos or jazzmen like Miles Davis but have had little or no discernible impact on the Black mainstream. 10. Simon, many years earlier, had attempted to copyright the English folksong Scarborough Fair, despite its very considerable antiquity and its clear, long-term establishment within the (non-copyrighted) "public domain." 11. "If shit were to become valuable the poor would be

born without arseholes" 12. "They (governments) try to create populations of preta —hungry ghosts with giant appetites and throats no bigger than needles. The soil, the forests and all animal life are being destroyed by these cancerous collectivities; the air and water of the planet are being fouled by them." Gary Snyder; "Buddhism and the Possibilities of a Planetary Culture," *Deep Ecology*; Gibbs M. Smith Inc., Salt Lake, 1985. (Preta originate in the marvelously bewildering [to westerners] cosmology of Tibetan Buddhism.)

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"Thank You, Thelonious Monk," Exquisite Corpse drawing
 by LAURA CORSIGLIA, TED JOANS,
 FRANKLIN ROSEMONT, PENELOPE ROSEMONT, 1993

ARE YOU CRAZY?

Mental Illness & The Belief in Whiteness

by DANIEL C. BOYER

*"I have grown to womanhood in a world where
the saner you are, the madder you are made to appear."*

—Hannah Nelson,

in John Langston Gwaltney, *Drylongso* (1980)

"Way out people know the way out."

—Bob Kaufman

The ideological fabrication known as the "white race" is a device to enforce social and economic privilege based on so-called "racial" distinctions. But it is also the framework and model for other means of degrading, silencing and destroying those who challenge dominant values and behavior. Its method is arbitrary exclusion—exclusion of certain people, their identification as the "Other," and their forcible subordination.

The juggernaut of the white power Establishment, which oozes blood as it progresses, relies on a basic complicity—on *trust*. It *trusts* that the great majority will on some level continue to play its game: not only those who are behind it and pushing it, but also those it runs over. So-called criminals must sit quietly through the sadistic rituals called "trials." African Americans must keep silent about *de jure* "equality" and factual segregation, repression and violence. Workers must participate in company-union joint initiatives which obscure the irreconcilable struggle between wage-earner and boss. Students must submit to a boring, irrelevant curriculum that trains them to perpetuate the existing system of inequality. Those who play the game (and participation is mandatory) must show sufficient reverence for the awesome power of the white miserabilist bourgeoisie and its state. The excluded and oppressed are not allowed to partake of the elite's privileges, but their silence buys their survival.

There are always those, however, who refuse to make even minimal concessions to whiteness, law'n'order, puritanism, capital, or other authoritarian hypocrisies. I am thinking here not so much of the conscious rebel, revolutionist, or race traitor, but rather of a certain type of declassed or lumpenproletarian eccentric, or "lowlife" drifter: those who, as Fenton Johnson put it in a wonderful poem, are "tired of work . . . tired of building up somebody else's civilization." These are people who have gone off to live "in their own world," "on the

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edge," "outside." Some live wholly in their thoughts and manage to get by without anyone knowing what they really think about anything. Others—"outsider" artists, for example—find creative outlets which, as long as they behave themselves otherwise, allow them to live without too much persecution.

Many, however, especially those whose refusal to sustain the ruling ideology reaches what are considered to be unacceptable "excesses" of imaginative extravagance, are commonly called "insane." Pushed by varying desperate situations, they sometimes become dangerous persons: those who have nothing left to lose. Anyone who dreams too fervently, or practices poetry too fanatically, or is "carried away" by enthusiasms that have not won the white-housekeeping seal of approval, can get into this kind of trouble. Most want simply to be left alone, to follow their inner lights, to elaborate or realize the imaginary solutions they have worked out to their very real problems. But white society's bureaucrats can't leave anybody alone, least of all those officially certified as "insane." Drastic, extralegal methods are used against such people: commitment to institutions, forced medication, electroshock.

Some resist this psychiatric slavery. Most of their names are unknown. We may never know, for example, the identity of a middle-aged man in downstate Michigan who is supposed to have done "hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage" to mental hospitals before his arrest and disappearance in the summer of 1993. Some of their names are notorious. In the fall of 1997, a middle-aged widow named Shirley Allen, shotgun in hand, held off a large Illinois police force for over a month as she tried to prevent her "concerned" children's attempt to have her locked up.

Needless to say, people who really *do* have serious mental disturbances, and truly are dangerous to their communities—police, the military, prison officials, politicians, and a large number of university administrators—tend to be successful in eluding psychiatric observation because they are almost always uncomplaining players of the "white" game.

And then there are those who are labeled "insane" only for reasons of political expedience. In Jamaica on the eve of World War II Rastafarian Leonard Howell organized a movement to support the Ethiopian struggle against fascist Italy, which was then a British ally. For this gesture of solidarity, as Horace Campbell explains in *Rasta and Resistance* (1987), "Howell was placed in a mental asylum . . . for in the eyes of the colonial State any Black man who told Black people to turn their back on the white imperial king of England must have been a *madman*."

In the U.S., the MOVE massacre in Philadelphia, and the military annihilation of an interracial religious sect in Waco, Texas, were prepared and officially "justified" by propaganda designating these

nonconformists as dangerous "cranks."

Thus the white capitalist state can easily see to it that any recalcitrant or rebellious individual—the "uppity" Black, "bad" girl, sexual dissident, high-school dropout, class-conscious worker, army deserter, drug-user, tax-refuser, animal-rights activist, Earth First!er, race traitor, and all those who, for whatever reason, refuse to stay in "their place"—are branded "mentally ill." Of course the media are only too willing to repeat the slander and whip up hostility against them.

The fact that all rebels against the *status quo* are likely to be declared "insane" by someone, sometime, does not mean that everyone confined to a mental institution can be counted on as a revolutionary ally. But it does mean that conscious seekers of revolutionary social change should start thinking about what André Breton in 1928 called "the well-known lack of frontiers between non-madness and madness." As race traitors, we must begin to look critically at just what "mental health" is in a white supremacist society. We must challenge the conventional wisdom according to which the current quasi-fascist way of dealing with "mental illness" is the only possible way. After all, many so-called "primitive" societies provided a valuable role (as did Charles Fourier in his utopia) for the very same kinds of people "our" society straitjackets and shoots full of Thorazine.

People who are confined to mental institutions may not all be comrades in our struggle, but certainly they are not our enemies, and when they are subjected to state terror they deserve our sympathy and our solidarity. In many cases—I would not be surprised to find that it is a great majority—the real source of their problems lies in the widespread form of socially acceptable and legally-enforced insanity known as *whiteness*.

For there is every reason to believe that whiteness itself—with all its built-in hypocrisy, double standards, and sickly mysticism—is a major, probably *the* major, fomentor of mental disequilibrium today. Indeed, I do not think it would be an exaggeration to say that "white" society drives *everybody* crazy. Surely the belief in "whiteness" is sicker, more dangerous, and deadlier, than any psychosis.

Hannah Nelson points out that when white society is weakest, Blacks (and no doubt all oppressed minorities) suffer least. Our task, then, is clear: *to do all we can to weaken and smash the machinery of whiteness*.

To defect from the "white race" is to escape from the worst loonybin of all.

Nine out of ten doctors agree (or *should* agree): The best prescription for mental health is: *Abolish whiteness!*

In the cry of the "lunatics" breaking free from the asylums we shall hear some of the most thrilling music with which we shall greet the long-awaited dawn of marvelous freedom.

FOR TYREE GUYTON

by THE SURREALIST MOVEMENT IN THE U.S. (1992)

I see art as a way of saying, seeing, and feeling all the things I never had a chance to do when I was coming up. . . . It's the kind of magic I dreamed about as a boy, but am only now able to express creatively.—Tyree Guyton

For five years Tyree Guyton—assisted by his wife Karen and his grandfather, Sam Mackey—has transformed the flotsam and jetsam of America's urban nightmare into the stuff that dreams of a better life can be made of.

In the spirit of collective improvisation and potlatch, these African American artists turn abandoned houses into marvelous assemblages, resonant with wild humor. The basic materials of their art are the broken parts of a broken-down society, the odd pieces left behind by a civilization in decay: old toys, bicycles, shoes, a telephone booth, discarded tires, tin cans, a football helmet, dolls, mousetraps, street-signs, birdcages, playing cards.

Built with things that others have thrown away, their colorful collages-in-the-form-of-funhouses challenge the mounting misery of these times. Not surprisingly, they aroused interest that soon became international. Heidelberg Street on Detroit's East Side—the street where Guyton grew up, and the site of his constructions—was recognized as one of the few outstanding attractions in a city that has long suffered the ravages of economic decline.

For his services Guyton was officially rewarded with court appearances, insults from politicians and the daily press, and the destruction of his work. On November 23, 1991, without prior notification, bulldozers and wrecking crews demolished the last four houses that he and his co-workers had so painstakingly transformed.

Applauding this inexcusable devastation, the *Detroit News* labeled Guyton's houses "eyesores," and cited neoconservative critic Hilton Kramer's old chestnut that art is too fragile to be burdened with solving society's problems. There are words for such posturing, and for those who adopt it: *stupid, hypocritical, cowardly* and *loathsome* are a few that come to mind. Is it not as plain as day that the real "eyesores" in Detroit are precisely the buildings that Tyree Guyton has not touched?

It is further alleged that Guyton's neighbors objected to his art. If true, this would be one of the strongest reasons not only for letting his works stand, but for protecting them as well. Are neighbors to stand as judges, juries and executioners of art? Add up all the artists in history who enjoyed the approval of their neighbors, and the total would not suffice to fill a drug-store. It is virtually an axiom: In matters of poetry, freedom and love, ninety-nine out of a hundred neighbors are wrong. However—and this is only one of the many ironies in the Heidelberg Street affair—the charge that Guyton's neighbors are hostile to his art may well be unfounded. In transforming their neighborhood, Guyton and his collaborators have also done much to transform their neighbors—or at least have helped several of them to liberate themselves from conventional fears and prejudices. Some, who contributed objects to be added to the assemblages, have made no secret of the pleasure and pride the "Heidelberg Project" has given them. Since the infamous Day

of the Bulldozers, others have come out strongly in Guyton's defense.

Indeed, Guyton's organic relation to the other residents of the Heidelberg Street area—as well as to Detroit's large homeless population, and, more particularly, to the growing homeless *movement*—is almost certainly what provoked the authorities to take such extreme punitive measures against him. In an exploitative society, the barriers between art and community—between the practice of poetry and daily life—are indispensable to those who hold the power. Anyone who helps break down these barriers—anyone who aids and abets the *free expression of an oppressed minority*—helps subvert the existing power structure.

At a time when the "official art" of the U.S. is mired in ludicrous irrelevance, Tyree Guyton has hurled a bright red sackful of monkeywrenches into the repressive machinery of white racist America's politico-cultural vapidty.

His first houses have been reduced to rubble. But every day more houses are abandoned!

And what are all the bulldozers in the world against the unfettered imagination?

We salute the exemplary courage of Tyree Guyton, who, in the face of bureaucratic harassment and threats, admirably refuses to cease and desist.

We declare our total solidarity with him in his struggle against the corrupt and venal officialdom of Detroit.

We protest the destruction of his houses as a particularly glaring example of *government censorship*—censorship in its most brutal form, and *absolutely without justification*.

For the Surrealist Movement in the United States,

CHRIS BENEKE, LES BLANK, DANIEL C. BOYER, ERIC BRAGG, RONNIE BURK, LAURA CORSIGLIA, JAYNE CORTEZ, GUY DUCORNET, RIKKI DUCORNET, J. ALLEN FEES, LUIS GARCIA-ABRINES, BETH GARON, PAUL GARON, ROBERT GREEN, MAURICE GREENIA, MIRIAM HANSEN, JOSEPH JABLONSKI, TED JOANS, PHILIP LAMANTIA, NATHAN LERNER, GINA LITHERLAND, MARY LOW, THOMAS MAGEE, TRISTAN MEINECKE, LUIZA FRANCO MOREIRA, NANCY J. PETERS, IRENE PLAZEWSKA, HAL RAMMEL, RIBITCH, DAVID R. ROEDIGER, LARRY ROMANO, FRANKLIN ROSEMONT, PENELOPE ROSEMONT, MARK ROSENZWEIG, RON SAKOLSKY, CATHERINE SEITZ, LOUISE SIMONS, MARTHA SONNENBERG, ERIN SNOW, CHRISTOPHER K. STARR, CHEIKH TIDIANE SYLLA, DEBRA TAUB, DALE TOMICH, THEODORE WATTS, JOEL WILLIAMS

Editor's Note: As it happens, the foregoing 1992 declaration (reprinted here with additional signatures) is of more than historic interest, for as this issue of *Race Traitor* goes to press, we are informed that the most recent of Tyree Guyton's houses are scheduled for demolition.

Originally issued as a poster/tract, this statement was later endorsed by the Surrealist Groups in Sao Paulo, Madrid, Paris and other cities, as well as by several U.S. intellectuals, including Dennis Brutus, Diane DiPrima, David Finkel, B. H. Friedman, Archie Green and Douglas Kellner.

WE'RE SORRY HE'S NOT SORRY The Stolen Generation in Australia

by HILARY BOOTH

The Carl Perkins song "I'm sorry I'm not sorry" contains a lot of delightful double, and even quadruple negatives. The Prime Minister of Australia (little Johnnie Howard as he is referred to down-under) spoke in a singularly negative voice when he refused to say sorry to the aboriginal people of Australia last year. He was refusing to apologize for the harm done to several generations of children who were stolen from their parents throughout the 20th century in Australia—the stolen generation. Yes, I did say the 20th century—hard to believe, isn't it? The children were taken from their parents, ostensibly, for "health" reasons. To be sure, it is not so healthy to be a Black child in Australia!

Crimes against the populace must be acknowledged. It is no use saying "It was my grandfather who did that, not me!" In fact, the practice continued right into the '70s—yes, the 1970s, when little Johnnie was a member of parliament. So even if one were tempted to pass the generational buck, the abductions were in fact still occurring.

Now let's give some background into Black and white Australia. It will, of course, have to be painted with a very broad brush, but the scenario will be familiar to people of colonized and enslaved nations.

The aboriginal drummer Bart Willoughby has many aunts. One of them, in the film "Wrong Side of the Road" referred to whites in Australia as "Captain Cook bastards." The white invasion of Australia occurred from 1778 onwards, and its consequences are lived by aboriginal people on a daily basis. White Australians don't think about Captain Cook much anymore but you can bet that Koories do. (Koorie, Murray, Nunga are some of the names by which the aboriginal people of different regions describe themselves. With a characteristic lack of pompousness, these terms are translated into Australian English as "Us mob".) So Captain Cook and his mob arrived at Botany Bay (now part of the city of Sydney) and were politely received by the locals. The English disembarked without a battle. More ships followed, more people and their animals, such as sheep, were brought to Australia. Still there was no battle—just polite curiosity, and a sharing of the local grasslands, previously occupied by the kangaroo—a vital food source for the Koories. Captain Cook

Hilary Booth, a mathematician, co-founded the Surrealist Group in Australia in 1978, and co-edited its initial journal, The Insurrectionist's Shadow. She is the author of I Am Rain (poems and drawings, 1984), and Quantum Mathematics Without Time (1992).

and his mob no doubt shot a few kangaroos. Still no battle. The war began when the "heathens" speared a sheep for dinner.

A guerrilla war that continued for many years began in the Sydney region. This war was never recorded in the history books, and there is a very good reason for this. The colonists were dividing the lush grasslands around Sydney amongst themselves. They were called "squatters"—an eminently respectable term for an eminently respectable occupation. To alert the queen in England that there was a war going on in Australia would have had two drastic implications. Firstly, it meant that in fact there were people already inhabiting the continent, which contradicted the claim of *terra nullius*—that this was an unoccupied territory, and hence the English had no right to claim it. Secondly, it would bring more troops to the country, which would have meant that there were more people with whom to share the land. Greed overcame concern for personal safety, and the colonists pretended there was no war going on, but in reality, the Koories fought hard for their land. In the end they were not able to prevent the spread of the English, partly due to the geography which was difficult to defend.

Aboriginal people were pushed out of the prime real estate and lived either on the fringes of white society or out in the desert. Today Koories are referred to as a desert race. And indeed some aboriginal people are from the desert. Many, however, lived near the coast on the lush grasslands, but these people were either killed or pushed aside during the white occupation. To top the whole thing off, with typical blindness for irony, the colonists, when seeking a nice name for a new town, river, or cultural event would ask the Koorie for some pretty aboriginal word relevant to the situation. Melbourne, for example, has an annual festival during which a street carnival is held. Needing a nice name for this event the local Koories were consulted. Call it "Moomba," they said. Yes, Moomba has a nice ring to it, and so the event was named. Years later, we discovered that "moom" means bum and "ba" means up, and so the carnival roughly translates as "Up your bum!" In another instance a town in Queensland was named by the local Murrays "Cunnamulla." This one translates as "pile of shit"! One can only guess at the real meanings of place names all over the country from Wharoonga to Kootingal, reflecting the depth of aboriginal disdain for white civilization. Towns, cities and suburbs built on a foundation of fully informed aboriginal irony.

And so the squatters and their descendants took over the grazing lands of Australia. More people were needed, however, to defend the land, not only against Koories, but also against rival colonial powers. They had a brilliant idea: Send over *convicts*! And so from the late

18th century, many small-time criminals were sent to the colony. Interestingly, if you look at the court records of the time, it was quite often the mildest offenders who were sent—the type of people who might steal a loaf of bread if their kids were hungry. This was influenced by the English Puritans' desire to criminalize property crime, to put an end to the somewhat looser definitions inherent in pre-industrial England with its relative disregard for law and order.

Now it is a point of pride to many of us that we are descended from the convicts, rather than the squattocracy. And although, as a country, we are not particularly conscious of historical influences, I believe this to be a prime source of the national tendency toward "lar-rikinism," which involves disrespect for authority, impatience with pompousness, a disarming sense of humor and general earthiness of attitude. None of this "Mr. President" stuff. It seems that Australians as a whole are fairly critical of those in government—then again, could just be the people I know!

Another influence came from the influx of ten-pound-tickers in the fifties. This was a period when Australian capital needed more people—this time to work in the car manufacturing industry. Since convict-transportation was out of vogue, they decided to bring whole families over from Britain and Europe. It cost only 10 pounds to bring over the family. Once again, an influx of white misfits flooded the land. There seemed to be a conspiracy to people the country, over 200 years, with a generous mix of greedy squatters, corrupt naval officials, enterprising convicts, opportunists and ne-er-do-wells, Irish Catholics, fallen English and adventurous Europeans—although the Asian population has also increased rapidly in the last 20 years. It all spelt trouble for the aboriginal people.

But pushing Black people out of their land was not enough. Many years later, in this century, health experts became concerned about the poor sick children living in the bush (the Australian term for the out-back). They came up with another brilliant solution: Steal the children from their parents! Take the kids away and put them into clean white houses! (While they are there they can clean the white houses, too. That will do them good!) And that is what happened. Throughout the 20th century children were taken away and installed either into white families or into institutions. They were not allowed to communicate with their real parents, nor able to speak their own language or learn about their own culture. They were taken when young, if possible, to avoid memory of their early years. One would be rather surprised if the intention here were not to destroy the culture entirely, by cutting off inter-generational communication.

Incredibly, even this ploy was unsuccessful. Not only did the

people survive, but the culture has survived. Even more incredible is that the sense of humor survived as well as the generosity of spirit. I listened last week to the singers Archie Roach and Ruby Hunt tell their stories at the Adelaide Festival of Arts. Both were stolen as children. Ruby sang about her grief and her love, her culture, and reconciliation.

"From Paradise"

*She was born in the riverland, born of her mother,
into her mother's hands,
She was as free as the river was wild,
She was innocent, such a beautiful child.
They took her away from paradise,
where everything was beautiful and very nice.
They took away her mother's tongue....*

(from Archie Roach's "Jamu Dreaming")

The word here in Australia is *reconciliation*. And a lot of Australians today are moving toward it. It involves being sorry for everything that happened. For the invasion of aboriginal land. For sending practically innocent people halfway round the planet to be used as cheap labor. For the corruption and greed. For not acknowledging aboriginal people's rights. And most of all—for stealing the children. And it is a dried up little heart that cannot say it.

The reconciliation movement is not supported by the government. It is the people themselves saying that things have gone too far. Let's stop, while aboriginal people still live on land that has been occupied continuously for 40,000 years—and I don't mean on reserves, for there are still many aboriginal people living where and how they always have lived. This is what many Australians do not wish to have destroyed—the "dreaming" (*i.e.*, the aboriginal creation) of the land, the soul of the country.

So we are very sorry that little Johnnie Howard is not sorry. We are sorry he is such a sorry specimen of the human race. We are sorry someone voted for him—no one I know will own up to it. But then again, could just be the people I know!



Duckbill (about 1½ ft.
long)

REVIEWS

Note: The reviews in this special surrealist issue of RACE TRAITOR are of recent publications by participants in the Surrealist Movement, or of books of particular interest from the surrealist point of view.

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THE FORECAST IS HOT! TRACTS & OTHER COLLECTIVE DECLARATIONS OF THE SURREALIST MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, 1966-1976, edited with introductions by Franklin Rosemont, Penelope Rosemont, and Paul Garon. Chicago: Black Swan Press, 1997. Illustrated. 320 pages. Cloth \$35.00; paper \$15.95.

Reviewed by RONNIE BURK

The first sentence in the first document of the Surrealist Movement in the U.S., written in Paris in Spring 1966 at the request of the Surrealist Group in France, hails "the splendid Watts Insurrection of 1965," affirming the ongoing potential of true revolutionary action in the most militarized, automated and dehumanized state in the world. In the surrealists' search for a new, emancipatory myth to help bring about a new, desirable social reality—the reality of *freedom now!*—Africa and the African diaspora played and still plays an important role. It is no surprise, then, that from its first day the Surrealist Movement in the U.S. championed the cause of Black liberation and the abolition of whiteness.

In the Introduction to *The Forecast Is Hot!*—a kind of manifesto summing up surrealism's revolutionary outlook for our time—the editors state point-blank: "Like everything else that is revolutionarily good, beautiful and true, surrealism is treason to the so-called 'white race.' The realization of Lautréamont's 'poetry made by all' demands not only the affirmation of blackness but also the abolition of the repressive, racist myth of 'whiteness.'" Responding to the question "What does it mean to be surrealist today?" in the movement's first nationwide internal inquiry (1971), Guy and Rikki Ducornet wrote that "a surrealist should be *scandalized* by the world—by the fact that 99.999 percent of its civilized, white, stuffed components do not really give a shit about anything."

This scintillating compendium of leaflets, manifestoes, letters, polemics, denunciations, speeches and other documents is a treasure-trove of provocative ideas and revolutionary clarity. Like a crystal this book casts light in infinite directions, dispelling every one of the malignant distortions of surrealism promoted by aesthetes, critics, and other cops of the mind who like to pretend that surrealism is merely a literary/artistic school that died in or before 1945. Nothing is plainer at the close of the twentieth century than the fact that surrealism has served as a matrix or meeting-ground for practically every current of emancipation since 1924. If that sounds exaggerated, just consider: anarchism, libertarian Marxism, Negritude, the New Left, Black

Power, sexual freedom, radical ecology and many other great "causes" have benefitted from surrealism's inspiration and support. And at key revolutionary moments—from Abd-el-Krim's rising in Morocco 1925, through Spain 1936, Haiti 1946, the "Mau-Mau" rebellion in Kenya 1953, Hungary '56, Cuba '59, the struggle for Algerian independence, Detroit '67 and Paris '68, all the way up to Los Angeles '92 and Chiapas—surrealism *has been there*, sometimes as direct participant or even as leading instigator, but always as comrade, ally, and defender. Exemplifying poetry in its most exalted sense, and therefore by definition revolutionary, anti-Eurocentric, internationalist and anti-imperialist, surrealism persists today as a dynamic imaginative force, a powerful stimulant and catalyst of the most subversive and liberating thought and action.

This collection includes statements supporting the women's liberation movement, the Survival of American Indians Association, and the Black Panther Party (did you know that the Paris Surrealists, including Breton's widow Elisa, contributed to the Huey P. Newton defense fund?); polemics defending the revolutionary thought of such figures as Rosa Luxemburg, Malcolm X, C.L.R. James, and Herbert Marcuse; illuminating critiques of pseudo-radical pop psychology, Stalinism, zoos, and the philosophical journal *Telos*; and celebrations of Great Black Music, "from blues to bop to Free Jazz and beyond": Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor and the music/magicians of the Association for the Advance of Creative Musicians (AACM): Joseph Jarman, Douglas Ewart, Hamid Drake, Henry Threadgill and others. There are also lucid denunciations of the imperialist war in Vietnam, capitalist culture rip-offs such as "white blues," and various false poets; inquiries into new oppositional tendencies in popular culture and the workplace; ardent defenses of the freedom of the imagination and the poetry of revolt; and inspiring examples of surrealist games.

The volume emphasizes collective statements, but includes many texts by individuals (those which "expressed, at a given moment, the views of the group, the movement, as a whole") by Ted Joans, Philip Lamantia, Joseph Jablonski, Martha Sonnenberg, Paul Buhle, Pete Winslow, and Nicolas Calas, as well as the editors. Sumptuously illustrated, fully annotated and indexed, *The Forecast Is Hot!* extends from 1966, when the Chicago Surrealist Group was formed, through early 1976. Another volume will start where this one leaves off and will bring it up to the present.

If you are of the opinion that it's all *passé*, that revolutions don't work, that freedom is impossible, that the current dystopic Dr Strangelove White Power Police State Sexually Depressed Fascist Personality is all there is, *read this!* When the lid is finally blown off the deadly carcinogenic brainwashing compartment we all find ourselves in—life in the U.S.A.!— *surrealism will be there* in full bloom with freedom and the Marvelous. This book is nothing less than a weapon for that jailbreak. *The Forecast Is Hot!* is hot!

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BLACK ON WHITE: BLACK WRITERS ON WHAT IT MEANS TO BE WHITE, edited with an introduction by David R. Roediger. New York: Schocken, 1998. 353 pages. Cloth, \$25.95.

Reviewed by DENNIS BRUTUS

What an impressive collection of powerful voices! That's a first reaction, just checking the big names: James Baldwin, W.E.B. DuBois, Zora Neale Hurston, Ralph Ellison, Langston Hughes—they're all here. Also many personal favorites: Derrick Bell, Harry Haywood, Elma Stuckey, Alice Walker. Right away we know this is an anthology of unusual importance put together with unusual insight. David Roediger is a historian whose work has centered on race and particularly on the problem of "whiteness," past and present. He's the author of two very important books on the subject: *The Wages of Whiteness* and *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness*.

Black on White makes it obvious that if media attention to the problem of whiteness is new, criticism of whiteness is *not* new, and was certainly not started by whites. As Hegel was aware (perhaps inspired by Diderot's *Jacques the Fatalist*), slaves perceive truths about the masters that the masters don't know themselves. And so it is that those most subjugated by white supremacy can tell us so much about what it means to be white. Here is a critique that started in folktales and slave narratives and is still moving forward. Here are W.E.B. DuBois on "white civilization" as a Frankenstein monster, Ralph Ellison on whiteness as "moral slobbism," Ida B. Wells-Barnett and others on the whiteness of lynching, Jimmy Baldwin on "the lie of whiteness," and his profound warning: "As long as you think you're white, there's no hope for you." And so on through penetrating texts by Richard Wright, Toni Morrison, and Amiri Baraka to the most recent insights of Cheryl Harris ("Whiteness as Property"), Nell Irvin Painter, Greg Tate, bell hooks, and Mia Bay—all demonstrating a basic truth: that the most telling criticism of whiteness has been made by those best equipped to see it for what it really is.

So we come to the recognition, as the pieces in this book fall into place, that here, finally, is the solid basis for a long-needed discipline: "white studies." Up to now this much-talked-about discipline has been fraught with equivocation, based on the dangerous supposition that it is possible to study "whiteness" without criticizing it. Roediger's approach is refreshingly different, and may revolutionize what has so far passed for "white studies." In *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness*, he showed that "white culture" is a contradiction in terms, that whiteness is "not a culture but precisely the absence of culture. It is the empty and therefore terrifying attempt to build an identity based on what one isn't and on whom one can hold back." His conclusion: "Anti-racism" that doesn't criticize whiteness tends to be just another form of white supremacy. Like the authors in *Black on White*, Roediger goes beyond "white studies" to *merciless criticism of*

whiteness, with a broader intent of *abolishing* whiteness.

Roediger knows his Marx much better than most historians do, and is up on recent critical theory. Like Marx (but how unlike so many Marxists!) he's a man of ideas and imagination—his feel for poetry and paradox and humor is deep and real. With this collection—rich, passionate, full of artistry and beauty—we come to understand more clearly how "whiteness" is a social construct designed to legitimize and uphold racial inequality and white terror. We also come to see more clearly how it could be studied systematically. Thanks to Roediger, it's easy now to set about listing the required readings for "white studies" courses! His anthology should have a powerful impact on the study of "race." It should help us to move beyond "Black studies" to a new, critical field of "*whiteness* studies," and even further, to the desideratum of Human Society Studies.

But *Black on White* is a book of much more than academic importance. It is a book for all who are trying to get beyond the lie of whiteness so we can start solving our common problems together.

South African poet Dennis Brutus is Professor of Africana Studies at the University of Pittsburgh.

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BLUES AND THE POETIC SPIRIT, by Paul Garon. San Francisco, City Lights, 1996. 240pp., \$14.95

Reviewed by TOM MOON

When Sigmund Freud's monumental treatise, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, was first published in 1900, it was ignored by book reviewers, with few exceptions, and the few exceptions called it worthless. Garon's book, now published in a new edition by City Lights, draws its inspiration from surrealism and Freud's psychoanalytic theory, and has likewise been attacked with all the disciplined malice the outraged blues media has been able to muster since its original publication in 1975. Nevertheless, *Blues and the Poetic Spirit* has an enduring quality and remains one of the most intriguing and thought-provoking explorations of the blues tradition.

Garon begins this surrealist discourse by examining the creative processes at work in the psycho/poetic context. He postulates that "primitive instinctual impulses" play a primary role in the creation of artistic tension, a sort of power system which drives what he refers to as "poetic spirit." Like Freud, Garon links "desire, vitality and primary passion" to the unconscious mind, or the "id," wherein the everyday restrictions on thought—logic, reasonableness—do not hold.

He discusses further how these primary processes are impeded by an ego ideal imposed upon the blues artists, in this case, by "civilized, industrialized society," or the "pallor of bourgeois civilization" and "Christian morality." The repression, argues Garon, results in a kind of alienation, a state in which "creativity on a mass scale is short-circuited and smashed." He explains this in Freudian terms as the inability to render the unconscious conscious.

With the inherent tensions created by these conflicting forces in mind, Garon looks to the poetry of the blues as the equivalent of a surrealist "revolt of the spirit" or "an assault on the consciousness," whereby such repression is dispelled. The creation of a blues lyric is seen in the context of a "mass-based poetic activity" in which the discharge of id pressures takes place. In blues lyrics, he finds examples of the triumph of the imagination, an implicit overthrow of a reality dominated by white supremacy and oppression. He cites examples from the blues singer's "world of imagination" which hint at what *can be* when the critical, punitive aspects of "conscience" are subdued.

Recurrent symbols and motifs are explored in depth in a wealth of lyrical examples, not merely for the sake of analyzing surface content, but in order to get at the underlying psychological processes at work in the mind of the blues artist. In erotic imagery, Garon sees a stripping away of "the civilized disguise from humanity's [sexual] pre-occupation, thus allowing the content to stand as it really is: eroticism as the source of happiness." The celebration of sex in animal terms, he says, is even further indication of the blues' "distance from the dominant ideology" of puritanism.

Aggressive images, Garon contends, may contain reflections of socio-economic realities, but more importantly, the impact of these conditions on the mind. He notes that in the poetry of the blues, superego figures (police, church) are denounced, while deliberate repudiations of "law and order" and even outright celebrations of crime are often present. He marvels at the free rein of the poetic spirit in lyrical references to belligerence, hostility and their typical elaborations (depreciation, discrimination).

In his treatment of humorous blues lyrics, Garon, quoting Freud, concludes that comical lyrics arise when "the ego refuses to be distressed by the provocations of reality." Recurrent drug and alcohol themes are likewise seen as a "negation of despair, and the definite negation of bourgeois civilization as a whole."

Travel blues are dealt with in the context of a universal desire for mobility brought on by a repressive society, which is only strengthened, in Garon's view, by the "harsh, prejudicial system of the South." Work themes, similarly, are held to bear "a strong and unmistakable desire for freedom from toil." He goes on to say that "ultimately, the blues recognizes the tragedy of alienated labor, and its refusal is definite and final."

While most of Garon's focus is on what he calls the revolutionary nature of the poetic spirit evident in such blues lyrics, he touches upon the ego's ability to develop defensive tactics that allow for the discharge of id tensions while satisfying the moral standards of the superego and society, largely through "coded" lyrical content. However, he is quick to point out that current trends in the blues world have made even the ingenuities of sublimation a rare event. "This trend has already been designated dilution, by which I mean the increasing corruption by whites of the Black music world," he writes.

Garon also finds irony in the popularity of contemporary white blues artists, a subject to which an entire section of the book is

devoted. Garon returns to this topic in a new chapter written especially for this new edition. "The blues," he writes, "[was] formed in [a] crucible stirred and agitated by white racism. [It was] the product of Black creativity and genius under the pressures of racism, and as such, a unique cultural achievement. . . Whites fail to grasp that what they are appropriating is a music that Blacks created not only as entertainment, but as an eloquent and coded protest against white rule and appropriation. They seize the body's limbs and leave the heart behind."

One comes away from a book like this with new ways to hear the blues. Not only does it leave one with a greater appreciation of what is involved both consciously and unconsciously within an individual artist in the creation of a blues lyric, but also with a sense of understanding the important role played by the socio-economic cultural context in fomenting those unconscious currents and shaping the "poetic spirit." For Garon, blues is essentially about poetry, love and freedom. Many attempt to deny the revolutionary, poetic, and critical nature of the blues by emphasizing its acoustic aspects with the catch-phrase, "It's the music, stupid." In an age of so-called "colorblindness," white appropriation, and denial of the consciousness of race, I can think of no better challenge to these tendencies than *Blues and the Poetic Spirit*.

Tom Moon is an independent blues scholar who has written for Living Blues, Blues Revue, and other magazines.

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SOMEWHERE IN ADVANCE OF NOWHERE, by Jayne Cortez. New York: High Risk Books, 1996. 122 pages. \$12.99 paper.

Reviewed by FRANKLIN ROSEMONT

Poets are an endangered species because the language of freedom (and poetry is language at its freest, highest, wildest) is the single greatest threat to the language of Power—the language of TV news, advertising, and the endless droning of politicians, the courts, and the stock exchange: a language that exists solely to enforce the miserabilist barbarism that calls itself "Western Civilization."

"National Poetry Month" and other nausea-provoking hoaxes notwithstanding, the suppression of authentic poetry is a central function of the powers that be. Never before has the "real functioning of thought" been so subversive and so urgent—and so hated by those who have assumed control of the world's escalating misery. And that's why courageously uncompromising poets like Jayne Cortez are truly *indispensable*.

If you haven't read Jayne Cortez, you're missing some of the best that life has to offer. From Arizona to Brazil and New York to Zimbabwe, her poems take us places and show us who we might be if we stopped denying our own selves. Dancing through the gospel of Babs Gonzalez, diving head-first into the *Santeria*-drenched images of

Wifredo Lam, wandering through Mother Earth's dream-forest ("Every time I think about us women / I think about the trees"), hers is always a compellingly original voice of fire and freedom. Her surrealism—the hottest on record—is just what is needed in a world disastrously cold with whiteness and its side-effects: bureaucracy, greed, megadeath, money-making prisons and 9,763 forms of despair. Refusing to have a nice day, this is poetry that prefers to raise the roof and knock down the walls, and lets a future you might like to live in take over.

If you think you're a revolutionary, read Jayne Cortez and you'll be ten times *more* revolutionary!

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YO' MAMA'S DISFUNKTIONAL! FIGHTING THE CULTURE WARS IN URBAN AMERICA, by Robin D. G. Kelley. Boston: Beacon Press, 1997. 225 pages. Cloth, \$22.

Reviewed by DAVE ROEDIGER

If Robin Kelley were not quite so celebrated, smart and certain of his direction, an editor would surely have attempted to rein in the in-your-face funniness which begins in the title and courses through this remarkable book. Be careful, the editor's argument would have run, or the joking will undermine the serious purposes of your book. However, and this is one central point of Kelley's essays, the danger in this place and time always runs in precisely the opposite direction. Dead seriousness fully crowds out radical humor, leaving room for neither pleasure nor imagination.

Nowhere is this stultifying tendency more apparent than in reaction to African American culture and in particular Black humor. As Kelley shows, in a sustained and riveting analysis of the wild and surreal humor of insult in the "dozens," intellectuals of various political persuasions conspire to "reduce [African American] expressive culture to a political text to be read like a less sophisticated version of *The Nation* or *Radical America*." They hear the exchange of punchlines in the dozens ("Your mom's so fat she broke the food chain") as pitiful cries from shattered families, as bleak expressions of rage which scarcely conceal self-hatred, and as childhood training for a life of hurt. Such critics listen to rap not only as the ghetto's CNN (thank you, Chuck D) but as polling data and psychological profiles as well—in short, as everything but musical performance, pleasure and poetry. Locating pathology as the "authentic" Black experience, they can find artistry and a good laugh nowhere. "With careful listening one becomes suspicious of the laughter of the ghetto," Kelley quotes dozens expert David Schultz. "So much apparent gaiety has a purpose in the zero-sum contest . . . of interpersonal manipulation for personal satisfaction and gain."

Yo' Mama's DisFUNKtional! organizes itself around a series of quests, misguided and otherwise. The fierce criticism of philistine, phunktionalist and socialist realist approaches to Black culture is found in the initial chapter, "Looking for the 'Real' Nigga." Kelley

then pushes at boundaries between work and play in "Looking to Get Paid: How Some Black Youth Put Culture to Work," in a close examination of the transformation of urban space by new enclosures, and a rich account of ways in which African American youth have attempted to use basketball, music, sex work, aerosol art and break-dancing to survive and even to live. Refreshingly unsentimental about both the desire and the ability to step outside of market forces, Kelley nonetheless begins where we all sometimes must begin—with the possibilities already being imagined and tried.

The book then turns to two sure-to-fail efforts to look backward to find a way to the future. Kelley first offers a devastating critique of Black self-help ideologies, especially in their penitent and pro-capitalist variants. Historically informed, the chapter particularly sets its sights on contemporary "negrocon" self-helpers and on the Nation of Islam/Million Man March tendency to absolve capitalism and the state and to suppose, at the height of multinational corporate power, that refurbishing the bootstraps of Black men will rescue small business and the African American family.

The second of Kelley's puncturings of reactionary balloons will spark the most immediate controversy. With characteristic word playfulness, Kelley titles his discussion of highly image-conscious neoliberal academics and pundits "Looking Extremely Backward." Kelley pinpoints an unwavering and shamaniacal faith in "The Enlightenment" as the glue bonding former radicals, social democrats and Cold War liberals in a coalition which seeks to "transcend" campaigns for race and gender justice by emphasizing what proponents unseriously imagine to be class appeals. Kelley shrewdly notes that The Enlightenment which these enthusiasts treasure proves to be very slippery in terms of its own class content. One minute Locke, the next minute Jefferson and then fleetingly Marx, the analysis oozes in any handy direction, enabling proponents to be as progressive as they wannabe on any particular occasion.

Kelley's critique takes no prisoners, especially when it confronts the work of Todd Gitlin and Michael Tomasky, but it involves some risks. Hitting a contemporary and rightward-moving target can limit a book's shelf life. The tone can seem too harsh at one moment—after all, isn't Gitlin on the left?—and too gentle the next, as folks lap each other on the neoliberal/conservative fast track. (See, for example, the recent and chilling work of Richard Rorty.) Ultimately, it is the longer critique of the idea that The Enlightenment is a self-correcting and universalizing process, neatly separable from the slave trade, genocide, white supremacy and capitalist exploitation, which will be the enduring contribution of this section of Kelley's book.

In the final chapter, Kelley looks forward, describing recent struggles which show us something of the future in the present. For Kelley, it is "not the Democratic Party, not a bunch of smart policy analysts [and] not corporate benevolence" which can point the way, but "the new multiracial, urban working classes" (or, as he later writes, "folks like my mother"). Similarly, it is the transformation of rank and file workers, not of union leadership, which holds promise.

Surveying movements from the L.A. Bus Rider's Union to Justice for Janitors, to campaigns around class, race and the environment, Kelley finds a growing recognition that simple and immediate demands require new lives and new alliances.

The book's epilogue provides its wildest moments. Taking off from Edward Bellamy's classic *Looking Backward*, Kelley looks "B(l)ackward" after coming out of a century-long coma in 2097. He learns of the twenty-first century trajectory of Black Studies. The format affords lots of dozesque opportunities: negrocons Clarence Thomas and Thomas Sowell, for example, become Dr. Soulless Thomas (who asks, "Did Bill Clinton ever reveal his membership in the Republican Party?"). Historically Black colleges have become behavior modification centers. From Afrocentrism to postmodernist jargoneering, there's more than enough lampooning to go around. But the emphasis in the end is on long traditions of seeking freedom, with Kelley working in frequent nods to oughtabe classics in the study of race, and, as in the broader book, using what is to suggest what can be.

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THE STORY OF MARY MACLANE & OTHER WRITINGS, by Mary MacLane, edited & introduced by Penelope Rosemont. Illustrated. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1997. 224 pages. \$15.00 .

Reviewed by RACHEL BLACKWELL

One thing you have to give surrealists credit for: They are always sending out rescue missions into the depths of History and coming back with awesome characters everybody else forgot about ages ago, but who somehow turn out to be incredibly relevant today. Lautréamont is the classic example, but there are lots more. Only a few historians knew who socialist-feminist Flora Tristan was until André Breton wrote about her in the 1940s and '50s. And there's the anarchist novelist Georges Darien, German anti-religious playwright Oskar Panizza, and French silent-filmmaker Georges Méliès—all of whom languished in obscurity until the French surrealists started making a fuss about them.

The Chicago surrealists haven't done so badly, either. Bluespeople Peetie Wheatstraw and Memphis Minnie, laughing-gas philosopher Benjamin Paul Blood, Wobbly humorist T-Bone Slim and Wobbly Marxist Mary E. Marcy may not be household names yet, but they are a lot better known since the Garons and Rosemonts and their friends put together books about them. And here is a marvelous book on "Marvelous Mary MacLane," the bold young woman from Butte, Montana whose "full and frank Portrayal" of herself shook up the whole country back in 1902.

Penelope Rosemont wrote tantalizingly about MacLane in the City Lights anthology *Free Spirits* in 1983, and the accompanying MacLane excerpts made us want to see more. *The Story of Mary MacLane*—the author's first book, written when she was nineteen—is a deliciously zany book, and it is not hard to see why it created such a

scandal. Rosemont sees a lot of surrealism and feminism in MacLane, and it's there, along with a bit of anarchism, and some "wild west" eccentric, and just enough contradiction to keep us all mixed up. MacLane's mischievous "poetic humor," as Rosemont calls it, includes nose-thumbing defiance of authority, mocking disdain of custom, and sarcastic put-downs of puritanism.

With MacLane, in other words, the so-called vices of adolescence have turned into virtues. She pulls it off so well mostly because she really is a wonderful writer, with an imagination that spurned propriety, but also because she is terribly sincere. In the fascinating early reviews of the book reprinted in this volume, *Poetry*-magazine founder Harriet Monroe likens MacLane to Emily Brontë—high praise indeed! Gay novelist Henry B. Fuller also admired her no end, and Clarence Darrow thought *The Story* was "little short of a miracle."

This lovely collection also includes juicy excerpts from MacLane's other books and several essays (on suffrage, Wall Street, Coney Island, etc.), most of them never reprinted till now, plus a section on her short but stormy film career. In 1918 she scripted and played the starring role (herself) in a comedy called *Men Who Have Made Love to Me*. Most critics hated it and in some places it was banned.

MacLane flouted class pretensions and gender stereotypes, but aside from a breezy account of Butte's ethnic diversity, in which she contrasts the "swell, flashy-looking Africans" to the drabness of so many other inhabitants, she said little on race. Rosemont, however, tells us that MacLane's closest friend in later years was the African American photographer Harriet Williams, and that MacLane in fact lived in Chicago's Black community in order to be close to her. Thus MacLane, who was "surely one of the twentieth century's most adamant transgressors of reactionary social conventions, spent her last years flouting this country's horrendous racial taboos."

The first "New Woman" in literature, the first flapper, a foreunner of surrealism, and a first-class writer with an outrageous sense of humor, Mary MacLane is still good reading today.

Rachel Blackwell is a freelance writer and translator, based in Chicago.

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**FROM BUGHOUSE SQUARE TO THE BEAT GENERATION:
SELECTED RAVINGS OF SLIM BRUNDAGE**, edited & introduced by
Franklin Rosemont. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1997. Paper, 176
pages. Illustrated. \$14.00

Reviewed by WARREN LEMING

Watching Americans go glassy-eyed catatonic at the mere mention of the word history can be educational. Those looking for the real American past should anticipate insolvency, madness, and 24-hour Federally-funded surveillance. Brains clogged by corporate television, snowed by the po mo professors, and living in the midst of media-

driven confusion, it's doubtful that one in 10,000 Americans could identify the Nat Turner insurrection, the Ludlow or Gary Steel massacres, the Haymarket trial or Attica. They remain hard evidence of well-funded amnesia, forgotten stations on the path to class-war Golgotha.

America? Never has so much been fictionalized by so many in the interests of so few. Black America, anarchist America, Wobbly America: all consigned to the Po Mo memory hole or twisted and distorted into Heritage Foundation double-think. The resurrection of the real past with its legions of unnamed activists is a fundamental task—witness Franklin Rosemont's new book on the free-wheeling soapbox utopian bistro known as "the Playground for People Who Think."

Slim Brundage and his College of Complexes were legends among legends on Chicago's now-forgotten bohemian-Wobbly-flophouse front. Fifties Chicago, with its Daley machine, McCarthyite repression, and state-financed apartheid was not a town given to free speech and anarchist sentiment. "If you're white, you're all right. If you're brown, stick around. But if you're Black, get back, get back," as College regular Big Bill Broonzy put it.

Wobbly organizer, ironist, housepainter, hobo and barkeep, Brundage came out of the best of the old American traditions. He took his education where he found it: jailhouse, library, chain-gang, street, bar and Bughouse Square. The College of Complexes was a bar, replete with blackboards and a printed program (the "official neurosis"), and it became Chicago's most famous forum for uninhibited talk, multiracial conviviality and bohemian bombast.

Founded in 1950 amidst Red Scare hysteria, Cold War mongering and Chicago *Tribune*-inspired attacks on the working class, the College was the first evidence for many of us of spirited resistance to a joyless time. Like the Dil Pickle Club which preceded it, the College was home to radicals of all colors, poets, hustlers, Wobblies, anarchists, Beats, drifters, folkies, the chemically challenged and the "just interested." For those of us eager to escape suburban sleepwalking, educated mindlessness and racism it provided the first taste of revolutionary politics and uncensored debate: pure, sordid Beatnik subversion. In a single block on Chicago's near north side (State at Chestnut) one could find Bill Smith's bookstore, Brundage's College, and the site of the original Dil Pickle (once home to Anderson, Dreiser, Hecht, Bodenheim and Lucy Parsons). The site is now an uninspired highrise: progress as product.

True to his Wobbly instinct for tactical flexibility, Brundage supported Martin Luther King's nonviolent street-actions as well as the Black self-defense advocated by Robert F. Williams in his *Negroes With Guns*, and the College reflected this free-for-all radical pluralism. Neo-Garveyites, feminists, ban-the-bombers, nudists, Lesbians, and leftists of all kinds—Wobbly Fred Thompson, Communist Claude Lightfoot, freelance agitator Burr McCloskey, African revolutionist Eduardo Mondlane (a Northwestern student who became head of the Mozambique Liberation Front and was assassinated by agents of Portuguese imperialism), and scores of others harranged

the throng at Slim's open forum.

From 1958 to one of its ritual closings in 1961 Brundage's College was the midwest capital of the Beat movement and even fielded a Beatnik slate for the 1960 presidential election. Joffre Stewart was the Beatnik Party's anti-vice-presidential anti-candidate—a Black poet with impeccable anarchist credentials and two shopping bags stuffed with poems and radical literature.

Rank-and-file Beatniks of the College of Complexes variety laid the basis for something very different from the current Beat media myth of drug-fueled foundation-funded nomads spewing mysticism. The Beats, in a season of Cold War frenzy and Red Squad imbecility, were among the first white-skinned Americans to break away, openly and in sizeable numbers, from the world of whiteness, and to draw their inspiration primarily from Black culture: from free jazz to hipster cunning—antidotes to the numbing deadness of Fifties life.

Rosemont's introduction and Brundage's chronicles are the true and unofficial record of an amazing time and place now buried in well-hyped debris. This is the story of a real inter-racial radical intellectual underground that held out for a decade and more against preposterous odds.

A veteran of Chicago's Second City and the band Wilderness Road, Warren Leming is also a noted Bertolt Brecht scholar.

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PASCHAL BEVERLY RANDOLPH: A NINETEENTH-CENTURY BLACK AMERICAN SPIRITUALIST, ROSICRUCIAN, AND SEX MAGICIAN, by John Patrick Deveney, with a foreword by Franklin Rosemont. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997. Paper, 607 pages. bibliography and appendices. \$29.95

Reviewed by PETER LAMBORN WILSON

Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825-1875) used to be one of those mysterious figures glimpsed fleetingly in the footnotes of dubious tomes of occult lore—my first acquaintance with him came from an unpublished manuscript on Sex Magick by Robert North, a magician in Providence. I remember thinking that "someone" ought to get to work on Randolph and do a real book on this unique character. Well, somebody had already long since started—and this at last is the book.

Just as I (and of course Franklin Rosemont) suspected, Randolph turns out to be a key figure, a precursor of Surrealism, yes—a vital but forgotten influence on Theosophy and Rosicrucianism—an important African-American intellectual and Abolitionist crusader—a pioneer of the American "Voyage to the Orient"—an experimenter with hashish—and the secret source of a whole "tradition" in modern occultism, a kind of occidental tantra—a spiritualization of "Free Love," or a sexualization of Spiritualism. A list of his publications, secret societies, adventures, escapades, love affairs, dubious publishing schemes and highly original ideas would take up all the space provided for this review. And yet the man was ignored and then

forgotten in his own lifetime and ended as a suicide, as another (and—not by coincidence—Black) American Tragedy.

J.P. Deveney has obviously spent the last several decades tracking down every scrap of paper on or by Randolph. This is a *definitive* biography, an awesome work of scholarship (by a non-academic, hurrah!)—and a most compelling read despite its bulk. For me the most valuable material concerns Randolph's interest in Islamic heresies, especially the Nusayris and other Ismaili-influenced sects, and his attempts to transplant these mysteries to the West via his various secret occult orders. All this, plus the Rosicrucian/Masonic connections, suggest the possibility that links will be found between Randolph and early African-American Islamic figures such as Noble Drew Ali, founder of the Moorish Science Temple in Chicago in the 1920s.

SUNY Press is to be congratulated on its innovative and exciting publications in various series (*e.g.* "Western Esoteric Traditions") in the general area of History of Religions, which have outstripped even the University of Chicago for topicality, verve, and sheer quantity. I wish I had a grant just to keep up with their list! Probably no academic could ever have undertaken such a labor of love as Deveney's *Paschal Beverly Randolph*—but only an academic press could ever dare publish it. And an academic press with that kind of courage deserves our deepest salaams.

Peter Lamborn Wilson is the author of Scandal: Islamic Heresies, Ploughing the Clouds: The Soma Ceremony in Ancient Ireland and many other books.

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BED OF SPHINXES: NEW & SELECTED POEMS, 1943-1993, by Philip Lamantia. San Francisco: City Lights, 1997. 144 pages. \$12.95 paper.

Reviewed by FRANKLIN ROSEMONT

Ninety-six percent of what passes for poetry in the U.S. today has the same relation to poetry that this country's two big political parties have to freedom. In poetry as in everything else, it's the *exceptions* that are worth the trouble, as shown by this splendid new collection by one of the greatest poet-magicians of our time.

Poetry is the insurgent imagination's negation of the prosaic or it is nothing. Scattering all that is dull, insipid, conformist, obedient, respectable, and repressive to the nineteen winds, Lamantia shows us that poetry not only participates in but actually *precipitates* intransigent prefigurations of a world at last made liveable. With the dark utopian rhythms of beings and things pounced on by dreams and hurled smack into the intersection of Chance and Desire, his poems open up limitless wonders and *real possibilities* that are as wildly unexpected as they are defiantly vital.

Lamantia, who is Sicilian-American, joined the Surrealist Move-

ment in 1943 at the age of fifteen, and remains a surrealist militant today. He is also one of the first people I ever met who considered himself an Afrocentrist. His passionate attractions have always been amazingly wide-ranging—from Gnosticism, Alchemy and *The Shadow* to ornithology, Native American culture and Simon Rodia (whom he visited at his tower in Watts). Often subtle and never "thematic" (for his work makes no concessions to didacticism), the African presence in his poetry is nonetheless strong and continuous, from "The Islands of Africa," which André Breton published in *VVV* in 1944, through "Egypt," written on a voyage to that country in 1989, and which appears for the first time in book-form in this volume.

Indeed, it is hard to think of any other non-Black poet in the U.S. whose work reflects a deeper and more enduring kinship with Africa and the African diaspora. America's Black counterculture, especially the bebop scene which he frequented for years, has affected him profoundly; such mythic but real figures as Bird, Thelonious Monk, Slim Gaillard and Moon Dog are movingly invoked in his poems. The impact of Charlie Parker is particularly evident in two examples of the surrealist game Time-Travelers' Potlatch, in which players imagine *gifts* they would present to various figures of the past:

"For Charlie Parker: The materialization of his old green jacket re-forming the future republic of desire and dreams."

The second recipient is the great surrealist poet of Haiti: "For Clément Magloire-Saint-Aude: The cinematic projection from a hummingbird's eye of Charlie Parker's spontaneous musical session at Bop City, San Francisco in 1954, fixed in an order of black, white and red crystallizations volatilizing the human brain on the brink of an evolutionary mutation through a circle of blazing rum."

"To rebel!" young Lamantia wrote to Breton in 1943. "That is the immediate objective of poets!" His rebellion, which has only deepened over the years, remains exemplary, an inspiration for all true anarchists and seekers. To read Philip Lamantia is to know that poetry is always *the invention of freedom*.

Forthcoming This Fall

Surrealist Women: An International Anthology

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This anthology from the University of Texas Press is the first of its kind in any language. It features writings—theoretical articles, poems, dreams, tales, polemics, games, and responses to inquiries—by ninety-seven women who have participated in the international surrealist movement since 1924. The great majority of these women have been almost completely ignored by U.S. critics and historians. Nearly thirty countries are represented. Of exceptional importance is the work by surrealist women of color from Africa, the Caribbean and the U.S. Highlighting surrealism's basic anti-Eurocentrism and its affinities with libertarian Marxism, anarchism, Pan-Africanism, and ecofeminism, this book is a bright challenge to conventional wisdom, inviting readers to regard surrealism in radically new ways. 608 pages. Illustrated.

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WHAT WE BELIEVE

The white race is a historically constructed social formation. It consists of all who partake of the privileges of the white skin in this society. Its most wretched members share a status higher, in certain respects, than that of the most exalted persons excluded from it, in return for which they give their support to a system that degrades them.

The key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race. To abolish the white race means to abolish the privileges of the white skin. Until that task is accomplished, even partial reform will prove elusive, because white influence permeates every issue, domestic and foreign, in U.S. society.

The existence of the white race depends on the willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests above class, gender, or any other interests they hold. The defection of enough of its members to make it unreliable as a predictor of behavior will lead to its collapse.

Race Traitor aims to serve as an intellectual center for those seeking to abolish the white race. It will encourage dissent from the conformity that maintains it and popularize examples of defection from its ranks, analyze the forces that hold it together and those that promise to tear it apart. Part of its task will be to promote debate among abolitionists. When possible, it will support practical measures, guided by the principle, **Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity.**

Race Traitor publishes what we think will contribute to building a community of readers. Editorial opinions are expressed in editorials and unsigned replies to letters.

RACE TRAITOR

Race Traitor, an anthology of selections from the first five issues of the journal, won a 1997 American Book Award. It is available at bookstores nationwide, or you can order it for \$15 postage paid from P.O. Box 603, Cambridge, MA 02140-0005.

edited by Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey

RACE TRAITOR

journal of the new abolitionism

SURREALISM:

REVOLUTION AGAINST WHITENESS .

With an unbroken continuity from 1924 down to the present day, the surrealist movement has helped develop not only a revolutionary critique of whiteness but also new forms of revolutionary action against it.

The fact that white privilege is an inherently *irrational* phenomenon is proof that it cannot be overcome by rational means alone. Nothing less than surrealist revolution can abolish whiteness once and for all.

As surrealists, we are especially interested in how the "white problem" turns up in language, images, myth, symbols, popular culture, science, everyday life, the whole field of human expression. However, our goal at all times is to attack and abolish whiteness *and its institutions*—to attack and abolish the whole miserabilist social/political/economic/cultural *system* that has made whiteness the hideous emblem of the worst oppression the world has ever had to endure.

from the Introduction