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## THE SLEEP OF REASON PRODUCES SURREALITY. SURREALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF DREAMS

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Surrealism, developed by André Breton, Philippe Soupault, and Louis Aragon, one of the best recognizable avant-garde forms, has paid the price for its pop-cultural popularity – it has been overworked, devalued, and stripped of its original dimension. Today, the word “surreal” is used to describe dreamlike photographs, graphics, or movies; in the contemporary culture the notion of the *bizarre* has been replaced by Guillaume Apollinaire’s term *sur-réalisme* even our conversations and TV commercials are sometimes “surreal.” This apparently bottomless bag contains everything: from the *Architect’s Brother* series of photographs by Shana and Robert Park Harrison to the 2009 movie *Parnassus* by Terry Gilliam. Where does this conceptual chaos, or – in other words – continuous (over)use of the term “surrealism,” which has remained in fashion despite the passage of several decades, come from? If we define this form only as an artistic direction and consider the operation of oneiric images (or the use of the strategy of loose associations) as its distinctive characteristic, then the borders of the acceptable use of the term become very much blurred. The specificity of Surrealism should not be determined only by compiling an index of its stylistic features, such as identifying everything that is “dreamlike” with the surreal. Surrealism was not (although it is presented in this way, in spite of the fact that it disregards the complexity and cultural scope of this phenomenon) only an artistic direction (which was noted by Walter Benjamin<sup>1</sup>) and did not, just as Dadaism, developed a coherent style. Surrealists (operating in different domains of expression and in different ways) also shared philosophical convictions<sup>2</sup>. Only the analytical mode accounting for concepts at the base of surrealist artistic practice allows us to separate *un rêve surréaliste* from onirism.

The definition of Surrealism as a philosophical form is supported by a number of premises; above all, avant-garde artists sought to initiate a socio-cultural revolu-

<sup>1</sup> See W. Benjamin, *Surrealism. The Last Snapshot of European Intelligentsia* [in:] *Modernism. An Anthology*, ed. L. Rainey, Malden 2005, pp. 1087-1094.

<sup>2</sup> This is the way Krystyna Janicka approaches Surrealism. See K. Janicka, *Światopogląd surrealizmu*, Warsaw 1969.

tion and treated art only as a “means”, and not the aim of their actions. Moreover, the recognition of Surrealism first as one of the artistic tendencies conflicts with the primary intention of this form. One must not forget that Surrealists sought to merge art with the life *praxis*; therefore, they did not define the artist in accordance with the traditional paradigm of aesthetics (e.g. as one who has mastered artistic skills) – on the contrary, everyone could, and even should, become an artist. In the first *Surrealist Manifesto* (*Manifeste du Surréalisme*, 1924), André Breton, just as Tristan Tzara<sup>3</sup>, included instructions explaining the way in which surrealist poems could be generated with the use of the *écriture automatique* technique. This gesture gave away art to the public, not only to talented individuals (Breton used the same essay to deny the category of genius). According to the views espoused by Surrealists, everyone dreams, fantasizes, and imagines; therefore, everyone can elevate this subjective experience to the level of a work of life rather than art in the traditional sense. Every dream, understood as a product of psychic and physiological processes, is, by nature, surreal *par excellence*; therefore, while dreaming, everyone is a Surrealist. The problem is the fact that rarely do we remain Surrealists after waking up – the act of dreaming and its later adjustment to a given means of expression do not adhere to one another. Between these processes appears a gap that can be entered by the “work of reason”, against which the Surrealists constantly warned. Therefore, how should we approach *un rêve surréaliste*? André Breton, supported by Robert Desnos, Man Ray, and Philippe Soupault, glorified dreams – they all interpreted them first as “the sleep of reason,” that is a state in which the regime of rationality was invalidated. According to the Surrealists, paraphrasing the title of Francisco Goya’s etching, the sleep of reason produced surreality. The status of demon was reserved by avant-garde artists for the oppressive reason of the Enlightenment era. While defining Surrealism, by the words “psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express [...] the actual functioning of thought” the following remark appears: “Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason [...]”<sup>4</sup>; further, Breton spoke for limiting the role of reason to “taking note of, and appreciating, the luminous phenomenon”<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, Breton, in a way protecting the territory of surrealist explorations, denied all creative practice in which the impression-oriented intellect intentionally and deliberately, following a calculated strategy, compared two images to consciously generate an impression of strangeness. Except for their superficial similarity, dreamlike images prepared in this way had nothing to do with *un rêve surréaliste*.

Discursive cognition, oriented toward the accomplishment of practical objectives, was perceived by Surrealists, just as by the modernist philosopher Henri Bergson<sup>6</sup>,

<sup>3</sup> In 1920, Tristan Tzara created a “recipe” for a Dadaist poem.

<sup>4</sup> A. Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism* [in:] *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, tr. by R. Seaver, H. R. Lane, The Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press 1969, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 37.

<sup>6</sup> Surrealists never openly indicated Henri Bergson as the philosophical patron of the formation. In the 1910s and 1920s, he was one of the most popular and most widely read philosophers in France;

as unifying (in a negative sense). Their subsequent theoretical writings and artistic activities exposed its shortcomings – they claimed that reason, using logic and cognitive frames as its tools, flattened reality down and transformed it into a fossil. Breton wrote that rationalism wants to “make the unknown known, classifiable”<sup>7</sup>, thus forcing imagination to work “in strict accordance with the laws of an arbitrary utility,” and making man belong “body and soul to an imperative practical necessity”<sup>8</sup>. To Surrealists, reason was the thing that restricted the freedom of the individual, erasing and omitting everything that it could not process with the tools available. They declared that in order to restore the world to man in its entire complexity a revolution must take place, freeing reason from the limitations imposed on it by discursive cognition. They perceived the reason as the “Great Impersonator,” self-judging its right to exist (and establishing its superiority over other forms of cognition) on the basis of the axiom whose essence lies in the fact that it cannot be verified<sup>9</sup>. René Crevel, a member of the Bureau of Surrealist Research in the 1920s, in his excellently-entitled essay *L'Esprit contre la raison* (*The Spirit against Reason*) attacked Cartesianism:

‘I think, therefore I am,’ this keystone of Freemasonry, in the poor suburbs of intelligence multiplies wretched huts, in which thinking people easily forget about the anxiety of shining stars. Mighty Raminagrobis<sup>10</sup>, doubting everyone and everything, except for himself (A.J. – own translation)<sup>11</sup>,

Furthermore, André Breton asked where we should look for sleeping logicians and philosophers<sup>12</sup>.

The process of reasonless cognition was associated by Surrealists with a state of ecstasy, intoxication, fantasy, hysteria, insanity, or dreaming. In the 1920s hypnotic séances were organized, during which surrealist poems were created. Individual artists kept detailed records of their dreams, which were later published by “La Revolution Surréaliste” issued in the years 1924-1929. From among the enumerated cognitive modes, Surrealists valued the act of dreaming the highest (they called the others *les états secondes*), as within it reason was not partially, but – as they believed – completely incapacitated. Dreams attracted their attention for one more reason

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nevertheless, one may presume that the Surrealists knew only pieces of Bergson's philosophical project.

<sup>7</sup> A. Breton, *Manifest...*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Similar arguments, seeking to unmask the nature of reason and to undermine the concept of objective truth, were used by Friedrich Nietzsche.

<sup>10</sup> Raminagrobis is a hypocritical cat from La Fontaine's fairytale (who borrowed this name from François Rabelais). In the Renaissance, this term – used as an adjective – implied vanity. See Jean de La Fontaine, N. R. Shapiro, *Fifty Fables of La Fontaine*, Urbana-Chicago 1997, p. 119. In French, the expression *faire le/du grobis* means to “pretend to be important.”

<sup>11</sup> R. Crevel. *L'Esprit contre la raison*, p. 3, [http://www.bibebook.com/files/ebook/libre/V2/crevel\\_rene\\_-\\_l\\_esprit\\_contre\\_la\\_raison.pdf](http://www.bibebook.com/files/ebook/libre/V2/crevel_rene_-_l_esprit_contre_la_raison.pdf) (date of access: 12 Feb. 2016).

<sup>12</sup> A. Breton, *Manifest...*, p. 64.

– the worldview espoused by the Surrealists was characterized not only by clear anti-rationalism but also by an ambivalent approach toward ocularcentrism. While reconstructing the surrealist reflection on the status of sight, one may distinguish between two contrasting modes of perception. The former, saddled with the burden of habits and dependent on the “work of reason,” should be associated with – referring to the 1928 painting *Faux Miroir* by René Magritte – the figure of the eye as a “false mirror.” The Belgian painter’s work problematizes the illusory nature of perception – the canvas is covered by a monstrous eyeball, in the iris of which a clouded blue sky is reflected. Surrealists emphasized the fact that the image generated by the “false mirror” distorted reality; however, since they could not fully denounce the visual domain, they aimed to transform it – in place of the “false mirror,” they introduced the “innocent eye” (quoting Breton, “the eye exists in its primitive state”<sup>13</sup>, or Max Ernst’s poem about the “Eyeless eye (...) goes back to the savage stage (...) Rome – Rome – Paris – marsh of dreams”<sup>14</sup>), that is a mode of perception cleansed of all cultural accretions (products of the reason, transforming the “innocent eye” into a “false mirror”).

Once again, we return to the relationship between the internal and the external. This type of clear vision is activated, among others, during the act of dreaming, and it should be interpreted in relation to the surreal *modèle intérieur*. André Breton and Paul Éluard wrote that one should transform his or her eyes by closing them<sup>15</sup>, and Karl Teige encouraged the photographing of the world from the inside<sup>16</sup>. The collage<sup>17</sup> published in the last issue of “La Revolution Surréaliste” between pages presenting the results of a survey concerning the idea of *l’amour fou* is a peculiar kind of the manifesto of the “inner eye.” The central part of the work contains René Magritte’s painting (a naked woman posing as Venus from Botticelli’s painting, placed on a black background, between the words [*I cannot see*] and [*hidden in the forest*]). Magritte’s painting is enclosed within a series of photomaton portraits presenting different Surrealists (including Luis Aragon, André Breton, Luis Buñuel, and Yves Tanguy) with their eyes closed. The collage is based on a play of words and images: the person that cannot see is the viewer, and the thing that escapes him or her is the mystery hidden beneath the surface of the image (which can be seen by the Surrealists captured in the pictures).

<sup>13</sup> A. Breton, *Surrealism and Painting* [in:] *Theories of Modern Art. A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, ed. H. B. Chipp, Berkeley-London 1968, p. 409.

<sup>14</sup> M. Ernst, *The Hundred Headless Woman* [in:] *Surrealist Painters and Poets. An Anthology*, ed. M. A. Caws, Cambridge, Massachusetts-London 2001, p. 223.

<sup>15</sup> A. Breton, P. Eluard, as cited in: *La Subversion des images. Surrealisme, photographie, film* (catalogue from the exhibition organized at the Pompidou Center), Paris 2009, p. 37.

<sup>16</sup> K. Teige, as cited in: *La Subversion...*, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> The discussed work has not been given an official title; in reference literature on Surrealism, the collage is customarily referred to under the title *Je ne vois pas la [femme] cachée dans la forêt*.

Martin Jay, analyzing anti-ocularcentric tendencies in French philosophy, noted that the concept of the “innocent eye” helped sanction the “visually privileged order of knowledge” and fitted within a broader philosophical tradition calling for “visionary illumination,” “elevat[ing] (...) to a position of honor” this type of cognition, and not “mimetic observation” or “speculative reason”<sup>18</sup>. As one may guess, Surrealists called for the transition of the “innocent eye” to the cognitive register on all levels of experience, which was to bring about – provided that the power of reason was suspended – the establishment of surreality, that is the creation of an amalgam of sleep and consciousness, the internal and external (Breton wrote: “I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a *surreality*, if one may so speak.”<sup>19</sup>). Here, it is necessary to clarify how the Surrealists approached the relationship between sleep and consciousness. Speaking of reality, I mean reality filtered through discursive cognition – to the Surrealists, false reality. Artists centered around André Breton believed that man and the world (or man and life) were separated by the curtain of the reason that could be removed by means of surreal activities. Surreality is the actual Reality, whose existence is carefully disguised by means of the “work of reason” – where the reason runs rampant, wonder being an attribute of surreality remains invisible and cannot become apparent. When Crevel’s Raminagrobis is trapped – and in the same way man is set free – it will become clear that between sleep and the waking state, the internal and external, the mind and the matter<sup>20</sup> there is, in fact, no difference, as the Surrealists believed. In this way, we reach a significant aspect of the surrealist worldview: the dream is not unreal – it is granted the status of real.

Surrealists knew Freud’s work *The Interpretation of Dreams* published in 1899 very well and approached sleep as a primary process. The researcher argued that waking life was organized by the principle of reality and that unconsciousness worked in accordance with the principle of pleasure. To Surrealists, Freud’s most expressive finding was the fact that during sleep thoughts repressed by reason from the conscious life were manifested and, additionally, that the dream “recalls not essential and important, but subordinate and disregarded things”<sup>21</sup> [disregarded by the crippled reason, as Surrealists would say]. However, their intentions were radically different from Freud’s approach (Freud never accepted Surrealism) – with the use of psychoanalysis, the researcher sought to locate and eliminate the causes of an illness, wishing to cleanse the psychic life of everything that could affect the integrity of consciousness; on the other hand, Surrealists believed that consciousness regulated

<sup>18</sup> See also M. Jay, *The Downcast Eye. The Denigration of Vision in the Twentieth-Century French Thought*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1994, p. 236-237.

<sup>19</sup> A. Breton, *Manifest...*, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Surrealists reject Freud’s belief that “psychic reality is a special form of existence which must not be confounded with material reality” (S. Freud, *Objaśnienie marzeń sennych [The Interpretation of Dreams]*, tr. by R. Reszke, Warsaw 1996, p. 518).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 153.

by the “work of reason” was an illness and demanded the liberation of repressed impulses. Another aspect that should be taken into consideration while contrasting the “faction of Freudists” and the “faction of Surrealists” is their approach toward the issue of interpretation. As we know, psychoanalysis consists in giving sense to individual fragments of dreams, reading the “dream-content (...) during the work of interpretation”<sup>22</sup>. In this process, the initially unclear is deciphered and incorporated by the horizon of comprehension. At the beginning of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud declared: “there is a psychological technique which makes it possible to interpret dreams, and (...) on the application of this technique every dream will reveal itself as a psychological structure, full of significance”<sup>23</sup>. Then, explaining the method that he had developed, he used his own dream (*the dream of Irma’s injection*) as a model example, and later even created a psychoanalytical lexicon of dreams, explaining typical visions. In Freud’s concept there appears a category referred to as the “navel of the dream” (the element that cannot be subject to interpretation); however, the identification of this phenomenon does not lead him to say that a given dream cannot be interpreted – the researcher noted only that certain fragments of this dream would remain inexplicable.

In view of the above findings, one should emphasize the fundamental aspect of psychoanalysis – it is an attempt at explaining dreams, reaching the “dream-thought” hidden beneath the “manifest content” (dream) by means of the operations of the reason, which Surrealism avoided. Even in the first *Surrealist Manifesto*, André Breton said that “From the moment when it [the dream] is subjected to a methodical examination, (...)when its graph will expand with unparalleled volume and regularity, we may hope that the mysteries which really are not will give way to the great Mystery”<sup>24</sup>. This statement eliminated the possibility of understanding dreams (and surreality), which – paraphrasing Breton’s famous words about beauty – will either remain a mystery (to the reason) or will not exist at all. Then, Breton contradicted himself and attempted to analyze dreams (his own and ones delivered to him by other Surrealists). John Matthews, commenting on *Les Vases Communicants*, found these contradictions in Breton’s arguments – Breton once said that his interpretations were not and would never be complete. Later he stated that he had managed to exhaust the dream-content<sup>25</sup>. The researcher noted that Breton had indicated the presence of elements resistant to interpretation within dreams, although believed them to be the evidence of the existence of surreality. Finally, the “Pope of Surrealism” ceased to practice psychoanalysis.

Although Breton’s approach toward the issue of interpretation was ambiguous and subject to perturbations, a clear stance was taken by Antonin Artaud, to whom dreams were the opposite of the discursive, revealing the “work of thoughts” in the

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, p. 130.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> A. Breton, *Manifest...*, p. 13-14.

<sup>25</sup> See also J. Matthews, *André Breton: Sketch of an Early Portrait*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, p. 102.

absence of reason. Also, according to a Belgian Surrealist Marcel Mariën, dreams function in a completely different register from consciousness, as on the level of unconsciousness images “are ideal surfaces”, which “have nothing ‘on the back’”; in dreams images are merely images, renouncing the specific<sup>26</sup>, and the activity of the subject consists in experiencing rather than interpreting them. Artaud and Mariën supported experiences – to them, cognition was possible through involvement.

In the field of artistic practice, Surrealists looked for such strategies of expression that would allow them to convey clear thoughts, undisturbed by rational operations. The first surrealist experiments (although today the movement is associated mainly with painting, especially by Salvador Dalí and René Magritte) were literary in nature. Breton developed the *écriture automatique* strategy, which was later eagerly employed by other Surrealists. Writing poems with the use of this method took place “in the waking life,” but *écriture automatique* was designed so that it could “simulate” mental activities characteristic of the act of dreaming. It was about thoughtlessly writing down associations arising from unconsciousness. The resulting string of words, without any stylistic treatment whatsoever, was the final product of the creative act; in this way, such images as: “A little to the left, in my firmament foretold, I see but it’s doubtless but a mist of blood and murder-the gleaming glass of liberty’s disturbances. Aragon,” or “On the bridge the dew with the head of a tabby cat lulls itself to sleep. Breton” were created<sup>27</sup>. I intentionally apply here the word “image,” because Surrealism – as noted by Scott Lash – was deliberately representative<sup>28</sup> (the researcher refers to Lyotard’s category). Recalling Benveniste’s correction of Lacan’s *dictum*, Jean-François Lyotard argued that the “dream-work” was rhetorical rather than linguistic in nature. The dream is “meaningful in a way that is irreducible to the modality of signification”<sup>29</sup>. In this concept, the meaning of discourse was related to consciousness, rational operations, and language, and the concept of figure (“spatial manifestation that linguistic space cannot incorporate without being shaken, an exteriority it cannot interiorize as *signification*”<sup>30</sup>) – to unconsciousness, another wish of the language-discourse<sup>31</sup>, image-figure, vision (“there remains a world that is a store of ‘sight’, or an interworld that is a store of ‘visions’, and that every form of discourse will exhaust itself before exhausting it”<sup>32</sup>). Clashing with the figure, the

<sup>26</sup> M. Mariën, *The Nostalgia for Ubiquity* [in:] *Surrealist Painters...*, p. 294.

<sup>27</sup> A. Breton, *Manifest...*, p. 38-39.

<sup>28</sup> Scott Lash, *Dykurs czy figura? Postmodernizm jako „system oznaczania”* [*Discourse or Figure? Postmodernism as a ‘Regime of Signification’*], tr. by P. Wawrzyszko [in:] *Odkrywanie modernizmu. Przekłady i komentarze*, ed. R. Nycz, Cracow 1998, p. 482.

<sup>29</sup> J. F. Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, tr. by A. Hudek, M. Lydon, Minneapolis-London 1996, p. 142.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> The title of one of Lyotard’s essays is *The Dream-work Does Not Think* [discursively, linguistically].

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, s. 7. On the basis of Lyotard’s findings, Scott Lash identifies two regimes of “signification”: the figural (the primacy of images over words) and the discursive one (the primacy of words over images). Lash emphasizes that these are not completely antinomic; therefore, one may speak of,

discourse, as Lyotard argued, “burst from the inside.” *Écriture automatique* worked in the same way; this strategy was founded on a certain paradox – in automatic poems words burst, and the sense (that could be grasped by the reason) was invalidated; the figure enters the discourse, the image enters the word, and automatic poems are perceived rather than read (as are images in dreams), experienced rather than interpreted (the image-figure goes beyond representation)<sup>33</sup>. “*Écriture automatique*,” as Breton said, “is a true photography of thought”<sup>34</sup>. At the end of the 1920s, Breton expanded the scope of his poetic experiments and presented the *poème-objet* – an object being the “externalization” of objects appearing in dreams. Constructing the *poème-objet*, he used everyday objects and combined them with clusters of phrases (which, in terms of structure, resembled those known from automatic poems), creating a surreal *assemblage*. The *poème-objet*, just as the *écriture automatique*, in spite of the use of textual elements, operated in the ‘figural’ register.

Nevertheless, Surrealism found its greatest advocates neither in the *écriture automatique* technique, nor in painting (which, despite his initial doubts, André Breton finally grew to accept), but in photography and cinema – to the Surrealists, the camera lens was an extension of the “innocent eye,” a machine that did not select the material in accordance with the principle of utility or cause-and-effect logic, but registered everything that came within its reach, including glimpses of surreality. In order to limit the role of reason in the creative process, “automatic photography” was practiced (for instance, Man Ray’s rayography technique consisted in placing randomly-selected objects on a photosensitive material, the clash of which resulted in “convulsive beauty”). At the other extreme of surreal photography, there were techniques that – although not fulfilling the restrictive requirements of Breton’s psychic automatism – also provided an attempt at taking photographs in the “internal mode.” These photographs (for instance, *Billet d’autobus roule* [1933] by Brassai, or *Buste d’hippocampe* [1931] by Jean Painlevé) utilized everyday objects presented – often by means of macro close-ups – in an unconventional way, making them break away from the function attributed to them. Importantly, Surrealists’ photography projects preceded their film experiments – the second half of the 1920s was the period of their fascination with cinema, another – after photography – medium “generating dreams.”

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for instance, the discursiveness of cinema (connecting it with narrativity). Lash also refers to Susan Sontag’s aesthetics of impression, which contradicts his interpretation. See S. Lash, op. cit., p. 471-506.

<sup>33</sup> Scott Lash said once that Breton presented *écriture automatique* only as a written form – “as a stream of cursive script rather than discourse”. See S. Lash, op. cit., p. 483. As I have demonstrated, Breton applied also the reverse metaphor – his reflection was largely a field of the clash of two visions: the world understood as text (discourse) and the word “manifesting itself” (figure). In *Nadja*, the narrator faces a challenge (“Perhaps life needs to be deciphered like a cryptogram”) to reach the conclusion, as Jean-Michel Rabaté said, that “the activity of deciphering is not neutral,” and that reading the world/life as a cryptogram only leads to “[disclosing] the »madness of light«.” See J.-M. Rabaté, *The Ghosts of Modernity*, Gainesville 1996, p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> A. Breton, as cited in: *La Subversion...*, p. 40.

Cinema intrigued Surrealists, just as photography did, because of its technical conditions and due to the nature of film perception. In 1923, in his essay “Le Rêve et le cinéma”, Robert Desnos noted that “from the desire to dream comes the thirst for and love of the cinema”<sup>35</sup> and thus, fifty years before Roland Barthes indicated the parallel nature of the cinematic experience and the act of dreaming (“we go into dark cinemas”, as Desnos wrote, “to find artificial dreams and perhaps the stimulus capable of peopling our empty nights”<sup>36</sup>). To the Surrealists, the cinema was a tool of double strength: not only did it allow people to externalize dreams (at the same time preserving their visual dimension), but it also helped put the audience in a state of artificially induced dream. In this context one could place Hans Richter’s 1947 avant-garde movie *Dreams That Money Can Buy*<sup>37</sup>, which excellently tackles the nature of the cinematic experience. To the Surrealists, the movie screen was an “external mind”, and after purchasing a ticket everyone could dream the dream screened for him or her.

With the ecstatic pitch of texts about cinema written by avant-garde artists, it appeared for a moment that the filmic medium would become a privileged means of expression to them. In practice, until the end of the 1920s few movies had appeared that could claim to be surreal. Man Ray’s projects (*Emak-Bakia* [1927] and *The Sea Star* [*L’Étoile de mer*, 1928]<sup>38</sup>), although he officially belonged to the surrealist movement, did not arouse enthusiasm among the other members of the group. Finally, *An Andalusian Dog* (*Un chien andalou*, 1929) by Luis Buñuel<sup>39</sup>, which was brought to life in cooperation with Salvador Dalí, became a breakthrough. The artists based the scenario on (or at least this is the official course of events) their own dreams (Desnos proposed: “I would like a filmmaker to fall in love with this idea. On the morning after a nightmare, he notes down exactly everything that he remembers and reconstructs it in detail”<sup>40</sup>). The remaining elements of the scenario were developed by applying a strategy resembling *écriture automatique*. The anti-narrational (therefore escaping discourse) *Andalusian Dog* is a work composed of “purely visual situations”<sup>41</sup>, a cinematic embodiment of *un rêve surréaliste*. However, it is not the most prominent surrealist movie – paradoxically, one has never been made.

The greatest – and most unfulfilled – apologist for cinema among the Surrealists was Antonin Artaud, who radically rejected linguistic representation, because, in his

<sup>35</sup> R. Desnos, *Dreams and Cinema* [in:] *French Film Theory and Criticism. Volume I: 1907-1939*, ed. R. Abel, Princeton-New Jersey 1988, p. 283.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>37</sup> In *Dreams That Money Can Buy* Joe discovers his unusual ability – he can “send” his thoughts into other people’s minds – and begins to trade in dreams. The particular sequences for Richter’s movie were designed by Alexander Calder, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Fernand Léger, Man Ray, and Hans Richter.

<sup>38</sup> In 1929, Man Ray also made *The Mysteries of the Chateau of Dice*.

<sup>39</sup> Buñuel’s other surrealist movie from that period is *The Golden Age* (1930).

<sup>40</sup> R. Desnos, op. cit., p. 283.

<sup>41</sup> A. Artaud, *La coquille et le clergyman* [in:] idem, *Oeuvres Complètes III*, Paris 1970, p. 23.

opinion, it deformed and reduced the thought. While he was writing the scenario for *The Seashell and the Clergyman* (*La Coquille et le clergyman*, 1928), he imagined that the movie based on the script would not be a mere reproduction of the dream<sup>42</sup>, but a search for the darker truth of the mind<sup>43</sup>, an image-thought, and that by means of cinema he could externalize, without any mediation, the clear thought present in the dream, going beyond the order of language-reason-representation<sup>44</sup>. However, that dream never came true – the director, Germaine Dulac, did not understand Artaud's intentions and turned *The Seashell and the Clergyman* into an effusion of impressive, oneiric images (she was publicly “lynched” by Surrealists during the movie's premiere). Artaud's example might be extreme, but it clearly shows that the Surrealists' dream of cinema never came true.

Of course, my attempt at determining the relationship between the dream and Surrealism does not fully exhaust the discussed problem, although it helps develop tools that could separate surrealist works from those that only use the surrealist convention. When the meaning of the term was deprived of its philosophical implications (pop culture assimilated this phenomenon, and treatments conducted by avant-garde artists became subject to countless repetitions), Surrealism transformed into “surrealism,” a template, a frozen convention – although still attracting the viewer's attention (hence also its popularity).

Referring to the artists' theoretical manifestos and characterizing the scope of the conducted experiments, I tried to prove that it is not possible – as I have mentioned at the beginning – to discuss surrealist works by applying only esthetic criteria. The surrealist artistic practice was derived from philosophical assumptions, and particular experiments were “designed” so that works emerging from them would remain consistent (in their form and message) with the philosophical credo of Breton's formation. Avant-garde artists, largely under the influence of Freud's theory, developed their own definition of the dream, and the problem of the act of dreaming was a crucial element of the surrealist reflection – considered both on the epistemological (the act of dreaming as the antinomy of rational cognition) and the ontological level (the dream is real; the world's functioning reflects the dream). The experimental nature of the aforementioned surrealist projects, the tendency to look for new means of expression (including the fascination with photography and cinema) allowing the artists to create dream-works, arose from their rejection of means of expression subject to the totalizing work of *cogito ergo sum* – Surrealists rejected existing art (and thus tradition) because they identified it with logocentrism.

One should note one more important aspect – to Surrealists, to create meant to discover (themselves and the world), experience, reach the essence of life. In their opinion, life – clear, uncontaminated by structures of the discursive reason – mani-

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<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>44</sup> Gilles Deleuze, using the category of the spiritual automaton, analyzes Artaud's theory of cinema. See G. Deleuze, *Cinema 2. The Time-Image*, tr. by H. Tomlison, R. Galeta, Minneapolis 1997, p. 165-173.

fested itself in dreams, and thus, the majority of surrealist works either used dreams as a source of inspiration or – on the formal level – were organized so that they would “resemble” them. Moreover, avant-garde artists wanted to neutralize the viewers’ perceptual habits with the use of their works, open them to the experience of “naked life,” transform the world into a kaleidoscope of images – that was the main mission of Surrealism. However, why did avant-garde artists intend to revolutionize life? The surrealist retreat from reason was caused by their deep disappointment with the Enlightenment project; it was a reaction toward the progressive process of modernization, which resulted in the experience of alienation – therefore, the artists reversed existing hierarchies, seeing art as a tool of liberation. If to them the reason was an enemy of life, the dream was life’s greatest ally.

Another question that should be asked here concerns the research method – what strategy could one apply to expressions of surrealist art? Is the interpretation of, for example, *An Andalusian Dog* in accordance with psychoanalysis not the same mistake that Breton made by trying to find meaning in his dreams, an attempt at reducing the figural to the discursive, life to a dead meaning? To quote Lyotard, “Power lies in the eye. To transform the unconscious into discourse is to bypass the dynamics, to become complicit with the Western *ratio* that kills art at the same time as the dream”<sup>45</sup>. Should we not escape from the trap of looking for meanings and instead think about the way that surrealist works resist reason and to what extent they are successful in doing so? My analysis is also a manifestation of the approach that the Surrealists hated; nevertheless, they would probably excuse this type of interpretation, because I did not attempt to break their works into fragments and ascribe to them meanings developed by the intellect, or – especially – decipher the greatest surrealist Mystery on this basis.

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<sup>45</sup> J. F. Lyotard, op. cit., p. 9.

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## SUMMARY

THE SLEEP OF REASON PRODUCES SURREALITY.  
SURREALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF DREAMS

Article presents the way in which Surrealists understood the dream process. Author claims that avant-garde artists glorified the dream as it functioned in opposition to the reason; then she moves on to characterize the main aspects of Surrealists' critique of Cartesianism, as well as their attitude towards the sight and the concept of the „savage eye”. Later on, the author compares Freud's ideas with Surrealists' views on dreaming – paying close attention to the issue of psychoanalytic interpretation. She describes „surrealist dream” in relation to such artistic practices as *écriture automatique* or *poème-objet* and to experiments in film and photography. Author refers to Lyotard's categories of 'discourse' and 'figure', arguing that Surrealists' works, even literary ones, belong to the figural space, thus they are resistant to language and interpretation.