

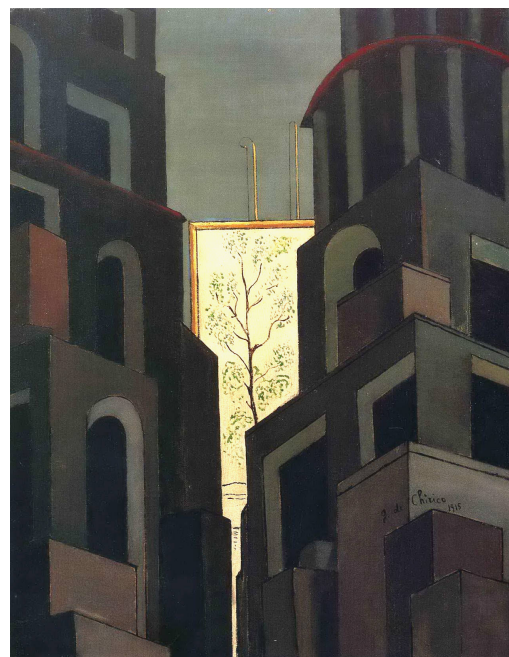
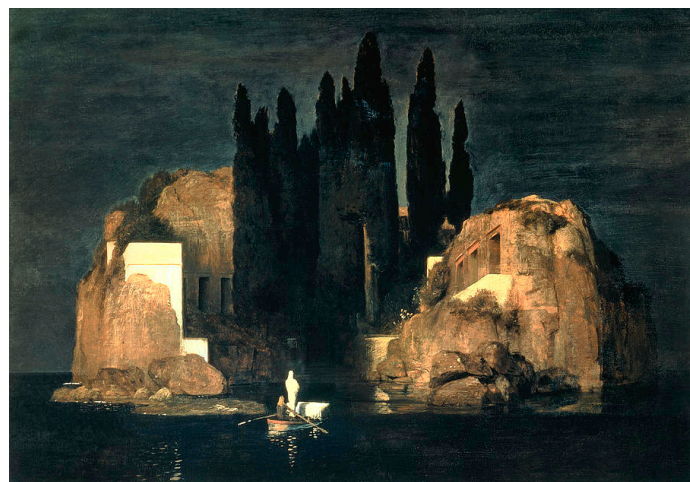
Georges Sebbag

The Animated Painting of the Surrealist Dreamer (III)

Drawing of a dream by Max Morise published in *Variétés*, June 1929. ("The city councillor is astonished because corpse number 8 has just suggested to him that in snowy weather the salt sprinkled on the roads ought to be replaced by soot")

10. *Erotic daydreaming as "animated painting" (October 1931)*

On October 17, 1931, in Port-Lligat, Salvador Dalí indulges in a long reverie that he immediately transcribes in minute detail (*Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* no. 4, December 1931). This Sadean daydream, culminating in masturbation, takes place at a moment in which the painter is pondering the "frontality" of *The Isle of the Dead* by Arnold Böcklin. The entire daydream, triggered by a recent dream in which Dalí was sodomising Gala in a stable, alludes to the initiation of Dulita, a girl of 11, with an eye to her sodomisation "among the excrement of the cow barn." The setting for this reverie, with a much older Dalí, is a chateau he knew in his childhood, albeit modified for the occasion. Thus, the lake is placed crosswise, the same way it is in Böcklin's painting. Also in the setting is a fountain from Figueras surrounded by ancient cypresses. The dreamer imposes on Dulita's mother and on an aging prostitute a strict protocol spread over five days. During the daydream, in order to openly contemplate from a room the initiation of Dulita based on pornographic photos at the fountain with cypresses, Dalí will even start a fire that burns down several trees and a wall. The astonishing thing is that this whole detailed account describes an "animated painting," with this freeze-frame revealing a particularly

Giorgio de Chirico, *The Purity of a Dream*, c. 1915Arnold Böcklin, *Isle of the Dead*, oil on canvas, 1880

dazzling vision: "the sun, in the moment preceding its setting, would penetrate, in a cadmium line, into the second-floor room, with its shutters half-closed and furniture under dust covers on a floor covered with corncobs left to dry, and would illuminate for half a minute, in all its bedazzlement, the extremity of the finger of the statue in greenish marble, its arm raised." Vermeer, Böcklin, Chirico, Dalí: phantoms appear, and desires are revealed at a precise moment.

11. *The debate with Freud about the dream (1932-1938)*

Breton writes *Les Vases communicants* [Communicating Vessels] after a close study of *Die Traumdeutung* [The Interpretation of Dreams]. He is not sparing his criticisms of Freud, whom he'd met ten years earlier in Vienna, but for the first time his dream narratives are followed by a certain number of associations. In the 1938 *Trajectoire du rêve* [Trajectory of the Dream], a dream anthology conceived by Breton, there is mention in particular of Paracelsus, Gerolamo Cardano, Lichtenberg, a dream by Éluard, an exemplary dream by Breton about an "animated picture" by Óscar Domínguez, a panoply of dreams and hypnagogic visions by Leiris, *La Pureté d'un rêve* [The Purity of a Dream] by Chirico, and three further drawings: *Le Dormeur* [The Sleeper] by André Masson, *Comme en rêve* [As in a Dream] by Remedios Varo, and *Rêve du 20 janvier 1937* [Dream of January 20, 1937] by Kurt Seligmann.

12. *The Gradiva Gallery (1937)*

In 1937, André and Jacqueline Breton open at 31 Rue de Seine in Paris, a gallery-cum-bookstore under the name of Gradiva, *celle qui s'avance* [she who advances]. This heroine of a novel by Wilhelm Jensen, admired in a bas-relief, and later appearing in a dream, will come back to life when she is identified by the archaeologist who has gone in search of her to Pompeii. In the eyes of Dalí, Gala is a Gradiva who resuscitates his childhood loves. In the eyes of Breton, Jacqueline is a chance arrival, a Gradiva who advances a thousand times in a single stride.

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Oneiric Mysticism and Religion

St Charles Borromeo is said to have tried to enter the man on the cross through the anus. Through a miracle, this had opened to receive him and Borromeo had vanished inside completely. This was why he had been canonized. It was not quite clear whether he had performed this act on the living Jesus or a statue. Nevertheless, I saw clearly how he clambered around on a cross and busied himself between Jesus' legs. By profession Borromeo was said to have been a colonel. I dreamt all this in utter seriousness, which lasted even after I had woken up, when I burst out laughing so much that I had to restrain myself so as not to wake Gretel. This is why the church is known as St. Borromäus im Gedärme [St Borromeo in the Guts] or, as the Bavarians say: St. Borromäus im Oarsch [St Borromeo in the Arse].

Theodor W. Adorno, dream of August 30, 1954, Locarno (in Theodor W. Adorno, *Dream Notes*, Cambridge, 2007)

In [the dream] I see the Virgin, shining softly, her hands outstretched to me. It's a very strong presence, an absolutely indisputable reality. She speaks to me—to me, the unbeliever—with infinite tenderness; she's bathed in the music of Schubert. (I tried to reproduce this image in *The Milky Way*, but it simply doesn't have the power and conviction of the original.) My eyes full of tears, I kneel down, and suddenly I feel myself inundated with a vibrant and invincible faith. When I wake up, my heart is pounding, and I hear my voice saying: "Yes! Yes! Holy Virgin, yes, I believe!" It takes me several minutes to calm down. The erotic overtones are obvious, yet they always remain within the chaste limits of a platonic devotion. Perhaps if the dream had continued, it would have vanished, or given way to desire? I don't know. I simply feel overwhelmed, my heart is full; it's an ethereal feeling I've often experienced, and not just in dreams.

Dream of Luis Buñuel from *My Last Sigh* (Chapter 9, *Dreams and Reveries*)



Still from the film *The Milky Way* (1969)

I find myself in a large market teeming with people. A young man, walking lazily, says:

"You see
You see
You see
The death you live.
Believe
Believe
Believe
In the life that awaits you."

Mitzura Salgian, dream of 1971

I saw Satan, he was very comical. I was throwing some forks at him that stuck in his body.

Dan Stanciu, dream of April 2-3, 1976

Like in an apparition rendered in Sulpician way, I see the Blessed Virgin. Suddenly she turns into an owl with a fixed look full of bad intentions.

Guy Girard, dream of August 7, 1978

I say [in English] about some horses that move floating at about 15 centimeters above a meadow: "Christian horses save the beauty."



Mitzura Salgian, dream of May 20, 1984

On a sidewalk I watch a dog and a bitch sniff each other and then mate. The same scene repeats itself with other dogs all along this street which borders a park. Looking up at the sky, I still see a couple of dogs in heat, one of which has the head of Christ.

Guy Girard, dream of September 17, 1991

When I was seven years old, I had a vivid nightmare. A group of people are being strangled by strange snakes, which are composed of a rope and two triangular pieces of wood for the heads. This takes place in a desert landscape with fire and explosions. I ask why this is happening. A woman being strangled in this way looks directly at me and screams: "I converted!"

Jason Abdelhadi, dream of 1994

I am in a colossal cathedral. The light coming from above is almost blinding me, and it's hot. There are a lot of people crowded inside.

In the middle of the cathedral there is a group of clergymen clad in golden robes. Among them there is the Pope; he is in the middle of converting a young martyr to Christianity. The martyr, covered with a silver-green cloak, lies motionless on a podium, looking weary from suffering. The Pope circumcises him, then makes him sit up and anoints the marks on his face that were made with one of the nails from Jesus' crucifixion. The martyr is then helped and supported to stand up, in order to be better seen by those present. The cloak opens slightly and reveals a trickle of blood from the circumcision.

Mitzura Salgian, dream of June 24, 1985

I am in a clearing of a splendid lush forest. Wrapped in a blue mantle, Virgin Mary sleeps nearby in the grass. A pack of animals, like some small wild dogs with short brown hair, are resting around her. I say about them [in English]: "Hools licking over her blessed soul."

Mitzura Salgian, dream of August 22, 1988

Not very long before René left us, my wife and I spent several days in René and Gilbert Goscinny's apartment in Cannes. And one morning I astonished René, telling him about how I had dreamt that I was hovering and flying over Jerusalem, bathed in golden sunlight under a brilliant blue sky, even though I had yet to visit this city. When I later visited for real, it was as if I recognized everything.

Albert Uderzo, dream from *Uderzo se raconte*, Paris, 2008

I was telling someone that in Judaism all bodies of water represent a divine blessing, even the smallest puddles. (While talking, I was even making the

gesture of the priestly blessing with both hands.) I was thinking that the reason for that was the fact that water reflects our image.



Sasha Vlad, dream of December 1, 2009

I knock on the door of a house. A woman opens, but I don't see her face. I go inside and see several people standing around a table. The woman who opened the door shows us a net, similar to a hairnet or a net for fruits or vegetables, that is resting on that table. She tells us that the net is a mystical object.

Sasha Vlad, dream of March 7, 2015

I see an issue of a lesser-known, probably local American religious paper (I think it was a daily), in reality just one sheet, from 1945. It has grey print instead of black and a conventional layout with different old style quite fanciful headline types. (Unfortunately, I forgot its name.) The main article was part of a series and announced a world premiere: the publication of a heretofore unknown biblical text: *The Harvest Book*.

Bruno Jacobs, Dream of August 27, 2015

There is a family of indigenous islanders in my living room performing a possession ritual and exchanging peanuts and beer for spiritual power. I am told a legend saying that in the spirit world the price of beer and peanuts is much higher, and can indeed be fatal for the one asking for them. One of the islanders, a little boy, comes out of the possessed state. He appears to have a small cut on his face. The family of islanders turn aggressive towards him and chase him down a catacomb. He runs, almost makes it away from them. He then turns into a bat to fly away. But the family outflanks him and catches him.

Jason Abdelhadi, dream of February 29, 2016

Mahmoudia Muslims: a sect of Islam from Northern Iraq, whose main tenet is that the Quran was not fully revealed yet, due to the fact of people being illiterate. When all Muslims know how to read, they will be able to read the Quran, and thus it will be revealed to them directly and fully. Their way of converting people to their faith is through music.

Sasha Vlad, dream of March 7, 2017

To prove a point, I'm showing someone a passage from a bible in the Dutch language.

Sasha Vlad, dream of March 16, 2017

A person is in a trance and is channeling an Irish spirit named *Swindig*.

Sasha Vlad, dream of November 30, 2017

In a world of spirits, those that are related to us appear more clearly than those that are not. Spirits with a lower degree of kinship appear almost transparent, and those that are not related to us at all are virtually invisible. A couple is searching for the spirits that killed their two children. They can see the children very clearly, but their killers have disappeared.

Sasha Vlad, dream of December 1, 2017

I am sitting together with R. and S. under the sun on a low wall. We are discussing the question of the Apocalypse because there is something unclear with its relationship with prophecies. S. checks in the Bible and reads the answer for us: an apocalypse deals only with people, while prophecies deal only with events and phenomena.

Bruno Jacobs, dream of March 6, 2018

Someone is talking about Saint Leopold, the patron saint of those who have escaped from captivity.

Sasha Vlad, dream of April 3, 2018

I see three lit candles set directly on a table. They are of different heights and shapes but they touch each other, forming a group. This is a ritual for something, but I don't know what that "something" is.

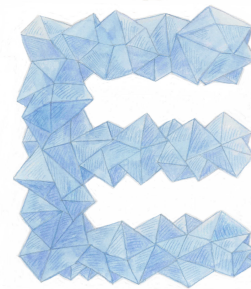
Sasha Vlad, dream of June 3, 2018

A friend shows me a strange kind of rectangular wooden frame with a net that for some strange, and to me unknown religious reason, one should press on one's ear. However, he tells me that my ear would get sweaty doing so, as the cheap version we have is lacking a small piece of wood attached to it, so that a narrow space would be left between the net and the ear, thus avoiding a skin contact provoking that sweating.



Bruno Jacobs, dream of October 4, 2018

On a mountaintop there is a sect that worships certain divine manifestations that appear and disappear unexpectedly. These manifestations materialize as objects that look like this:



These objects can be of a man's height or taller. They seem to be made of some kind of crystal or glass. Even though they look like the letter "E", they are **not** the letter "E."

In order to make them appear, the members of the sect pray. In the past, one of the members has asked that the prayers be made in a state of greater purity. Therefore, the believers have to pray undressed and in a group.

Sasha Vlad, dream of November 21, 2018

I am in a small room filled with plants, especially around the window. But this place really needs fresh air, so I open the window. There is some noise outside and leaning out, I see the pope a few meters right below making a speech to a large crowd gathered in the Vatican square. A security guard dressed in a suit looks up to me and I step back, closing the window: I may have been careless, thus running the risk of appearing suspicious, but it seems that everything is alright. The fact is that I belong to a highly secret network whose other members I don't even know. We are at the Vatican in order to take photos that would prove that it is a criminal organization.

Bruno Jacobs, dream of January 1, 2019

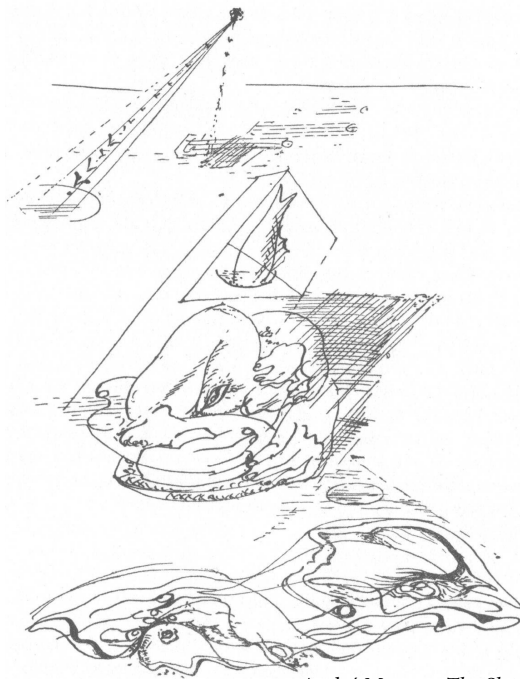
Philosophy of the Dream

For Freud the dream is the royal road when it comes to accessing unconscious ideas and desires. Starting out from the manifest dream, one can go back, thanks to the method of free association, as far as the latent dream. While the manifest dream appears absurd, it is important to interpret it, to find a meaning in it. The Surrealists are not of the same mind. For them, the dream is not a means but an end in itself. The dream is manifested and fulfilled in the manifest dream. In the Surrealist enunciation of the dream, Aragon (1924, 91) detects an unusual approach: “Therefore, for the first time since the world began, when André Breton writes down his dreams they retain the characteristics of dreaming in the narrative.” This leads the author of *Une vague de rêves* [A Wave of Dreams] to designate eleven Presidents of the

Republic of the Dream—from Saint-Pol-Roux to Freud, by way of Picasso and de Chirico—and to evoke each of the twenty-nine surrealist dreamers. In a lyrical flight of fancy he also suggests the unfurling of dreams and the bewildering power of images: “In bed, at the moment of falling asleep, in the street with eyes wide open, with the full apparatus of dread, we were shaking the hands of phantoms. ... Oh, phantoms of fickle gaze, children of shadows, wait for me, I’m coming and already you turn away. ... Oh, magnificent Dream ... seize the rest of my life, seize every live, rising tide with foam of flowers.” (Aragon, 1924, 5-8). For the surrealist there is nothing but what he dreams. And when he awakes, given the paucity of reality in reality itself, he sees to it that the marvel of surreality stands revealed.



The Gradiva Gallery, Paris 1937



André Masson, *The Sleeper*, 1937

Modern philosophy is based on the Cartesian *cogito* or on the transcendental ego of Kant. According to Descartes, I may doubt external reality but I cannot doubt that I think when I doubt it. As it is, reflexivity is not the prerogative of consciousness—the dreamer also undergoes the experience of it. On January 2, 1928, the dreaming Morise asks himself if he is dreaming, or if he is awake: “I imagined I was dreaming, perhaps.” On June 18, 1937, the dreaming Éluard dreams he is not dreaming and amasses



Remedios Varo, *As in a Dream*, 1938

the material indications to prove it. He dreams he is in bed at a late hour, that he cannot get to sleep, that he gets up in the dark, that he falls down in the corridor, that he crawls into Nusch’s bedroom, and that he goes to sleep. Next he dreams that he awakes with a start because Nusch has coughed, that he attempts to call her name, that he feels blind, dumb, paralysed, that he touches the parquet floor to check where he is. He is safe, he is indeed in his bed.

There is no break between day and night, but rather continuity instead. Hervey de Saint-Denis undertakes to direct his dreams. For Alfred Jarry, there are neither days nor nights; life is a continuum; there is only hallucination or perception; accustomed to directing his thoughts, Sengle, hero of the novel *Les Jours et les Nuits* [Days and Nights], makes no distinction between “his thinking and his acts or his dreaming and his waking life.” Breton (1924, 14) recalls that at the moment of retiring each day, Saint-Pol-Roux used to place this sign on the door of his country house: “THE POET IS WORKING.” He also confesses that he readily identifies with the insomniac Maldoror desperately awaiting daybreak: “My greatest desire is to make mine the admirable sentence of Lautréamont: ‘Since the unutterable day of my birth, I have sworn implacable hatred towards the somniferous bed-boards.’” (Breton, 1923, 4). In short, the surrealist dreams night and day and is awake day and night.

The surrealist philosophical project, elaborated by Aragon and Breton, is based on three principles. The *first*, subjectivist, solipsistic, immaterialist, extends the speculations of Berkeley and Fichte. To be is to perceive, to be is to be perceived. All is in me, the world is spirit. The *second*, intuitionist, imaginist, oneiric, echoes Novalis, Schelling or Bergson: mind is creative imagination, intellectual intuition, thinking via images. Consequently, it is important to describe the modern mythology that is taking shape and to use the “astounding image” without restraint. The *third*, nominalist or linguistic, under the auspices of Berkeley, Condillac and Jean Paulhan, that one cannot think without words, without a syntax and without the odd platitude. These three principles combine an integral idealism, a wave of dreams or images, and an absolute nominalism.

Definitive dreamers or sleeping logicians, the surrealists go in quest of a philosophy of the dream and the image. By day as well as by night they hoist the colours of the imagination. The dream, connective tissue of images and of film shots, is the stronghold and perhaps even the source of the imagination. Aragon, Breton and their friends quickly understood that there were as many surrealist images in their dream narratives as in their notebooks of automatic writing. The driving force of automatism transports and transforms images. Surrealist paintings are not fixed—they are simply in freeze-frame. Following the example of the metaphysical pictures of de Chirico, they pulsate with life, condense an enigma and fix a moment of eternity.

(to be continued)