

# Surrealism as Radicalism

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On August 28, 1968, the third day of the thirty-fifth Democratic National Convention, approximately ten thousand civil rights and antiwar demonstrators clashed violently with police in Chicago's Grant Park. The protestors had arrived from across the country to oppose existing systems of institutionalized power and to push for the nomination of Senator Eugene McCarthy as the candidate who would finally withdraw US troops from the ongoing war in Vietnam. Anticipating a volatile situation, Mayor Richard J. Daley assembled nearly twenty-three thousand police officers and National Guardsmen to maintain "law and order"; their orders: "shoot to kill, if necessary."<sup>1</sup> At around 3:30 P.M., the police began beating protestors severely with billy clubs, ostensibly incited when a young man lowered an American flag on display in the park (fig. I.1). The crowd responded by pelting soldiers and officers with rocks and pieces of concrete.<sup>2</sup> Clouds of tear gas enveloped the brawl, with some demonstrators taking refuge in the nearby Hilton Hotel on Michigan Avenue. The police riot stunned millions of viewers who had tuned in for live television coverage; it appeared that the country was tearing itself apart at the seams.

To cover the convention and the violent unrest that ultimately surrounded it, the editor of *Esquire* magazine, Harold Hayes, assembled a remarkable team of writers: Jean Genet, William Burroughs, Terry Southern, and war correspondent John Sack. The four men appear on George Lois's memorable cover of the November 1968 issue of *Esquire*, staring confrontationally at the viewer, the body of an apparently unconscious protestor sprawled at their feet (see color plate 1). Lois had originally sent a photographer to the convention to shoot what he called the "unholy quartet" of "underground intellectual mavericks" in action, but after watching the traumatic footage of the "Chicago carnage," Lois came up with the idea of a staged tableau that would symbolize the savagery of the police riot: Genet ("the French high priest of decadence"), Burroughs ("the Beat Generation expatriate spokesman"), Southern ("the irreverent 'Candy' man"), and Sack ("the anti-war war-correspondent"), all surrounding the "Christ-like image of a jeans-clad student, lying in a bloody gutter."<sup>3</sup> The photograph unites the disparate group of



FIG. 1.1 Police and demonstrators in a melee near the Conrad Hilton Hotel on Chicago's Michigan Avenue, August 28, 1968, during the Democratic National Convention. Photo: UPI/Newscom.

writers around this stark depiction of police brutality, as if to cement, once and for all, the affiliation between the American counterculture and the European avant-gardes in an international coalition of dissent.

What does *Esquire's* coverage reveal about surrealism in the context of the Chicago riots and, more broadly, the politically engaged cultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s? The question has both a straightforward and an expansive answer, depending upon how one interprets surrealist action and its import, and such complexities of interpretation encompass the methodological issue we seek to address in this volume. None of the four writers identified himself as a surrealist, though according to Southern's account of the convention and protests, *Esquire* was aware of the implicit affinity between Genet, a mature member of the European avant-garde with ties to surrealism, and the prominent role that Burroughs and Southern self-consciously played in an American inheritance of that avant-garde precedent after World War II. Southern (whose contributions to American black humor Ryan Standfest discusses in this volume) even invokes surrealism in the opening lines of his report, writing that the violent racism evident everywhere on the streets of Chicago was like "something right out of a Buñuel movie."<sup>4</sup> Other witnesses to the Chicago events also used the word "surreal" to describe the bloodshed that ensued as police officers discarded their badges and waded into the crowds, batons in hand.<sup>5</sup>

It would be easy to overlook such passing invocations of surrealism in the 1960s, particularly given the paucity of scholarship on the surrealist movement's activity and influence during these years. Surrealism has gone practically unmentioned in the ever-growing bibliography of secondary texts devoted to the "long sixties." In the context of the United States, one might credit this in part to the large number of young people born during the postwar "baby boom" who lacked any historical context for surrealism before or during World War II. In 1964, seventeen-year-olds—that is, those born in 1947—made up the largest segment of the US population, while the founding members of the surrealist movement, most born during the last decade of the nineteenth century, were then approximately the same age as their grandparents. When free speech movement activist Jack Weinberg advised students in 1965, "Don't trust anyone over thirty," surrealism as an organized movement was already more than forty years old.<sup>6</sup>

From the vantage point of progressive activism, only a few ultraleft revolutionary currents from the 1950s and beyond vocally identified surrealism as a precursor, much less a partner.<sup>7</sup> And yet surrealists *were* active—vigorously engaged, in fact—in the period's protest politics and culture, and the impact of this ongoing radicalism was palpable on an international scale.<sup>8</sup> While historical accounts of the 1968 Chicago convention highlight demonstrations organized by "yippies" and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) members, for example—perhaps most notable in a surrealist spirit was the yippies' nomination of Pigasus the Pig as a presidential candidate—it is often overlooked that surrealists themselves had a concrete presence in the Chicago riots: about three thousand copies of the August edition of *Surrealist Insurrection*, a wall poster/broadsheet produced by the Chicago Surrealist Group, circulated among the throngs assembled in Grant Park.

Founded in January of that year, after Penelope and Franklin Rosemont's return from an extended Paris sojourn spent in frequent contact and collaboration with André Breton and other members of the mid-1960s Paris Surrealist Group, *Surrealist Insurrection* had already established itself as a strident voice for the radical Left by the time the Chicago protests began. The first issue, published January 22, 1968, implored readers to give to the "Huey Newton Defense Fund," supporting the cofounder of the Black Panther Party who had been accused of murdering an Oakland police officer and wounding another (the Paris surrealists answered with an international money order in March; the same month, the cover of the Paris group's magazine, *L'Archibras*, featured a telephone with the dial's numbers spelling out B-L-A-C-K-P-O-W-E-R) (fig. 1.2). The second issue of *Surrealist Insurrection* solicited donations for the Survival of American Indians Association, a group advancing the "restoration of the splendid cultures of our



FIG. 1.2 Cover of *L'Archibras*, no. 3 (March 1968). Editor's collection.

# L'archibras 3

LE SURREALISME  
en mars 1968



Indian brothers, against the tyranny of the US government, army, and ruling class.”<sup>9</sup> Dedicated to “the total liberation of man,” the August issue seemed directed at the Democratic National Convention, demanding “a vast, multi-level, interconnected program of cultural guerrilla warfare.” Unquestionably, surrealism regarded itself as a partner and participant “in the service of the revolution in 1968!”<sup>10</sup>

To recognize surrealism’s support of the Chicago activists is already to go beyond the movement’s usual historical confines, which are too often misleadingly bookended by the two world wars or punctuated by André Breton’s death in 1966. Even so, it would be myopic to limit surrealism’s impact to members’ direct actions—even though many of these protest activities remain understudied. It is our view that the varied, implied, and sometimes latent affinities of key counterculture ideas and movements with the events and legacies of surrealist protest in action and in art are significant in their own right. This is so in spite of the fact that these affinities tend to be neglected as a result of disciplinary constraints, the continued epistemological influence of teleology on historical analysis, and persistent academic tendencies to shun the popular, among other pressures. In this volume we articulate surrealism’s example, influence, and longevity as a broad continuum of social and political radicalism that invites purposeful as well as inadvertent cultural feedback loops and revisitations. We do not intend this panoramic interpretation of surrealism’s permutations to diminish surrealists’ individual roles in the politics and culture of this period—quite the opposite, as several of the chapters included in this volume make clear. Rather, we hope to productively expand the scholarly purview and challenge the validity of historicist methods to surrealism’s persistently living culture. It is in this light that *Esquire*’s DNC writers serve as a fertile starting point for reconsidering what might be described as the generosity of surrealism’s praxis for continued cultural extension and adaptation for oppositional—rather than commercial, academic, or institutional—purposes.

At the same time, we cannot wholly disregard the popular invocation of the term “surreal” to describe these tumultuous events. While the widespread interpretation of surrealism as a mere byword for “bizarre,” “dreamlike,” or “nightmarish”—a derivation prompted chiefly by the surrealist movement’s most famous artists of the 1930s (e.g., Max Ernst, René Magritte, and Salvador Dalí)—does considerable disservice to the movement by limiting its multifaceted and pan-national character to the domain of art while also neglecting its vibrant intellectual and political rigor, it is nonetheless misleading to indiscriminately ignore this very real legacy of surrealism in the collective public consciousness. In the end, this popular reception of surrealism’s oneiric timbre, superficial as it may be in relation to the movement’s expressed aims, may have most completely infiltrated the decade’s visual culture, music, psychedelic subcultures, and other public and sometimes commercial realms. Although this volume is more interested in the

longevity and impact of surrealism's social and political radicalism, our methodology invites examinations of revolt in popular culture as well.

The concept of a surrealist continuum in the decades after World War II, both within and outside the movement, has been neglected in surrealism scholarship until very recently, with only a handful of publications addressing important intersections between surrealism and various nonsurrealist strains of social and political radicalism. Of these, Alyce Mahon's 2005 book, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938–1968*, is among the most thorough and innovative in reframing the movement's activities of the late 1960s as radically engaged, positing that the acme of surrealism's revolutionary spirit could be found in the student-led protests in Paris in May 1968. Mahon's contribution to this collection furthers her important work on this subject. The most detailed documentation of surrealism in the 1960s and 1970s, meanwhile, has emerged from surrealists themselves, and especially from members of the Chicago Surrealist Group, with authors such as Penelope Rosemont and Franklin Rosemont and affiliated authors Ron Sakolsky, Robin D. G. Kelley, and others demonstrating that surrealism was not simply *active* in the latter twentieth century but actually *characteristic* of the period's wider spirit of emancipation and protest.<sup>11</sup> To cite Franklin Rosemont and Robin D. G. Kelley with reference to the American atmosphere in the 1960s, a "Surrealist *spirit* was soon making its presence felt just about everywhere. Distrust of authority, defiance of injustice, and passionate yearning for *Freedom Now!* were in the wind along with a large-scale resurgence of poetry—not just reading it but living it—and a firm determination to change the world and have a good time."<sup>12</sup> Given the centrality of political engagement to surrealism's collective aims, it is perhaps unsurprising that surrealist concerns would continue to dovetail with other political currents of the 1960s and 1970s. As the thirteen chapters in this volume attest, a number of both subterranean and conspicuous aspects of international counterculture in the postwar period invoked surrealism's previous and ongoing radicalism in political views, cultural orientation, and aesthetics, as well as its continued engagement in actions for social change.

We have already mentioned surrealism's significant role in the spirit and especially the imagery of postwar popular culture. Although this impact cannot be outside our awareness, this volume consciously approaches its subject from the vantage of *counterculture*—a term the American historian Theodore Roszak coined in 1968. For Roszak, the generational gap, "radical disaffiliation," and "cultural disjunction" instigated by the youthful counterculture posed one of the few remaining avenues of hope for breaking out of an existence of "immiseration" within the technocracy. Even so, Roszak's own definition of the counterculture and who represented it remained unclear, and even at its origins in the late 1960s, the term in no way sufficiently encompassed the scope and impetus of the student, antiwar, and civil rights movements, to mention just a few key revolutionary currents in the United States alone.<sup>13</sup> The resistance movements of the 1960s

and '70s were not just against the prevailing majority culture: they were passionately opposed to the violence of war, capitalist exploitation, racist and sexist oppression, class dominance, and many other deeply troubling social issues—all of which are still with us today in various guises. Certainly, in this contemporary moment, when the notion of culture itself has been thoroughly destabilized by digital technology, global commerce, and the resurgence of different strains of fascism—and when the dichotomies of high/low, popular/elite, avant-garde/mainstream have lost relevance in the face of the omnivorous nature of internet consumerism—it is clear that Roszak's simple binary of “the establishment” versus “the counterculture” cannot adequately describe the complexities of shifting cultural systems and modes of revolt against them. Accordingly, *Radical Dreams* alters and adapts Roszak's generational paradigm of rebellion, with all its limitations, not as an operational theoretical construct but rather as a historical trope that gathered most of its meaning from the original context of his famous book and accrued broader meaning in its vernacular use thereafter. The “counterculture” referred to in the subtitle of this volume, then, alludes not to a transhistorical sociological notion of sub- or fringe cultures but rather to specific manifestations of leftist reformist groups and currents of cultural nonconformity that erupted internationally following World War II, and during the 1960s and '70s in particular.

While “counterculture” remains bound by its historical signification in this volume, our use of the terms “radical” and “resistance,” denoting a powerful commitment to revolutionary change, remains deliberately open-ended in terms of time and place, limited though we are by the necessarily perfunctory scope of a single volume. By placing surrealism within a broader history of radicalism and resistance in the twentieth century and comparatively alongside other instances of dissent and experiment, future studies of surrealism may succeed in avoiding some of the baggage of qualification and presumptions of aesthetic insularity with which it sometimes has been burdened—in the hands, for example, of writers such as the American art critic Clement Greenberg, who in 1939 envisioned the afterlife of surrealism as synonymous with mass-market kitsch, or the German theoretician Peter Bürger, who in 1984 described surrealism's survival after World War II as a reactionary string of neo-avant-gardes.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, concerning the ongoing debate within surrealism studies over the distinctions between, and validity of, presumed “orthodox,” “dissident,” “pop,” “late,” and “post” surrealisms, the view of surrealism as an ongoing form of radicalism mitigates to some degree historicist tendencies, artificial boundaries created by biased theoretical camps, and judgments about the authentic versus the pseudo among connoisseurs. If we set aside the hierarchies of Greenberg's art criticism and the teleologies of Bürger's modernisms and postmodernisms, among other hegemonic methodologies, we may discover the potential for the emergence of provocative cultural models; networks of latent and manifest affinities; constellations

of cultural adaptation, extension, and appropriation; precocious games of generational inheritance, disinheritance, and self-identification; passionate solidarities.

Our use of the term “counterculture,” then, connects the oppositional resistance of avant-garde factions linked to “Old Left” causes with the disparate activities and aims of the New Left. We therefore agree with the French journalist Michel Lancelot, whose 1974 book about the “counterfeiters” of “*la contre-culture*” took Roszak to task for his failure to recognize the roots of the youth movement in the prewar avant-gardes, in particular surrealism. Surrealism, Lancelot wrote, is a “movement fundamental to modern counterculture.”<sup>15</sup> Lancelot’s argument was expanded by the German sociologist and literary scholar Elisabeth Lenk, a student of Theodor Adorno and a member of the Paris Surrealist Group between 1953 and 1957. Lenk describes the surrealists of the 1920s as pursuing “social engagement as surreal practice” with a “vehemence that anticipated, in a nutshell, all the protest movements of the 1960s: antipsychiatry, prisoners’ movement, antimilitarism, critique of fossilized universities.”<sup>16</sup>

Another influential figure for our examination of surrealism and counterculture is the renowned theorist of the counterculture associated with the Frankfurt School, Herbert Marcuse. Unlike Roszak, who had no connection to surrealism and whose frequently reductive opinions about counterculture were critiqued by various members of the New Left, Marcuse’s philosophy was deeply influenced by surrealism’s example and critically important to the international youth movement of the 1960s and ’70s. Marcuse corresponded with Franklin Rosemont and the Chicago surrealists for a number of years following a November 1971 conference for the journal *Telos* in Buffalo, New York. One of Rosemont’s envelopes to Marcuse from April 1973, embellished with hand-drawn psychedelic designs, seems to instill into a single piece of ephemera the immense importance of their rigorous exchange for a paradigm of contiguity between counterculture and its forerunners in radicalism before World War II (color plate 2). Writing about these epistles nearly twenty years later, Rosemont quoted from Marcuse’s final book, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (1977), highlighting a passage from the preface that discusses the prefigurative revolutionary purpose of art: “‘The work of art cannot be comprehended in terms of social theory, neither can it be comprehended in terms of philosophy. . . . What appears in art as remote from the praxis of change demands recognition as a necessary element in a future praxis of liberation. . . . Art cannot change the world, but it can contribute to changing the consciousness and drives of the men and women who could change the world.’” Rosemont responded, “Could any surrealist have better expressed the surrealist approach to the fundamental problems of human expression in our time?”<sup>17</sup>

This volume explores conversations between surrealism and diverse international modes of resistance to dominant culture in the postwar period in four interrelated sections:



“Surrealist Solidarity,” “Against the Liquidators,” “The Right to Insubordination,” and “Passional Attractions.” Rather than present a chronological narration of surrealism’s historical reception and continuation after World War II, the four sections sketch what we see as a meandering story of surrealism’s oppositional culture through which related cultures and subcultures of resistance emerge and build over time and across place. While these four sections serve as an organizing framework and a methodological statement for our volume, they should not be understood as comprehensive or in any sense non-porous. Rather, we have taken up the call for what Ron Sakolsky describes in his chapter as surrealism’s “radical inclusivity” in the hope that this study will catalyze further investigations. A developing subfield may be required to address the vast and overlooked cultural history of surrealist countercultures—a project that, by its very genealogical nature, challenges the academic tendency to narrowly delimit the discourse of surrealism studies to questions of style, orthodoxy, or historical development. While the majority of our contributors are art historians, this volume ultimately attempts to undermine the confines of disciplinarity, publishing essays by academics alongside those of contemporary surrealists. One of the primary ways to battle academic misconceptions or obfuscations of surrealist aims is simply to include surrealist voices in scholarly discourse, although this has rarely been done in the recent past except by surrealists themselves.

Using a methodology of hermeneutic continuity, the volume privileges material culture and transhistorical approaches, fosters relational rather than dialectical analytics, and maps spatio-temporal narratives of cultural migration, continuation, and longevity. Above all, our study approaches surrealism and its offshoots as a living and immensely relevant set of “cultures” that continue to morph and mutate in unpredictable and often unorthodox ways—for the most part fomenting urgent drives for social change. From our point of view, when surrealism and its related countercultures are studied as a set of resistance tactics and tools of direct action for social critique and transformation, rather than as just another instance of modernism’s influence and legacy, surrealism’s potential relevance for oppositional efforts in the present is also awakened.

We commence our examination with an introductory essay by the French-Brazilian scholar and surrealist Michael Löwy, whose extensive work on surrealism over the past four decades has been pivotal in shifting scholarly dialogues away from an art-historical model and toward a deeper understanding of surrealism as a dynamic social movement rooted in political struggle. Löwy’s essay on May ’68 considers surrealism’s scope and span over the course of the past century from the self-conscious perspective of the present, thereby encouraging readers to read the succeeding chapters with an engaged orientation toward historical events as informing the contemporary moment.

Part 1, “Surrealist Solidarity,” explores the idea that between the 1960s and the 1980s, different facets of international surrealism simultaneously fostered the internal

cohesion of surrealism's ideas and aims, and also external alliances with nonsurrealist comrades from revolutionary and oppositional movements, such as SDS, Black Power, and the American Indian Movement. Likewise, certain countercultural groups evinced a powerful "solidarity" with surrealism itself, particularly when it came to the contentious issue of the musealization of this avant-garde, which became a symbol of the mainstream appropriation of leftist culture. "Surrealist solidarity" was a phrase favored by the Chicago Surrealist Group in the 1960s and '70s and was related to the Chicago group's interest in workers' communities and unions, such as the Industrial Workers of the World, to which they belonged. Following its use in the workers' movement, the term "solidarity" evoked for the Chicago surrealists an ethos of unshakeable mutualism amid constant struggle. In conjunction with this resonance, we employ the phrase specifically as a way of challenging the art-historical rhetoric of stylistic coherence and influence in order to emphasize the nature of surrealism as a sociocultural movement of interrelated affinity groups, which continually fostered and inspired liaisons with numerous allies in the so-called Old and New Left, just as it sustained and continually reignited the vigilance of its own social critique from the 1920s onward.

The first chapter in this section, by Sandra Zalman, documents the protests that erupted in response to *Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage*, the 1968 landmark exhibition of surrealism curated by William Rubin at New York's Museum of Modern Art. Zalman frames *Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage* as a prominent rallying point for the question of surrealism's legacy among certain radical leftist factions in the United States at a time when large-scale surrealism retrospectives were seeking to academically historicize—and problematically ossify—the movement's history.

Next, Grégory Pierrot's chapter addresses the way in which the American poet Ted Joans combined his dedication to jazz, surrealism, and the Black Power movement in what might be called an aesthetics of direct action (fig. I.3). Highlighting Joans's *Black Manifesto in Jazz Poetry and Prose* (1969) and his participation in the Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers in July '69, Pierrot argues that, for Joans, surrealism was a means but never an end to liberation.

Part 1 concludes with a new essay by Penelope Rosemont, cofounder of the Chicago Surrealist Group in the mid-1960s. If surrealism can be said to have had a lively presence in American counterculture in the 1960s and '70s, it is largely thanks to the Chicago group and its surrealist allies in San Francisco and elsewhere, who embraced the left-wing radicalism that was lacking in the American public's general understanding of surrealism.<sup>18</sup> In line with their international counterparts, the Chicago surrealists declared their ideological support of "virtually every distinctive current of sixties and seventies radicalism—including youth revolt, war protest, women's liberation, Black Power, sexual freedom, Native American resistance, animal rights and radical environmentalism."<sup>19</sup>

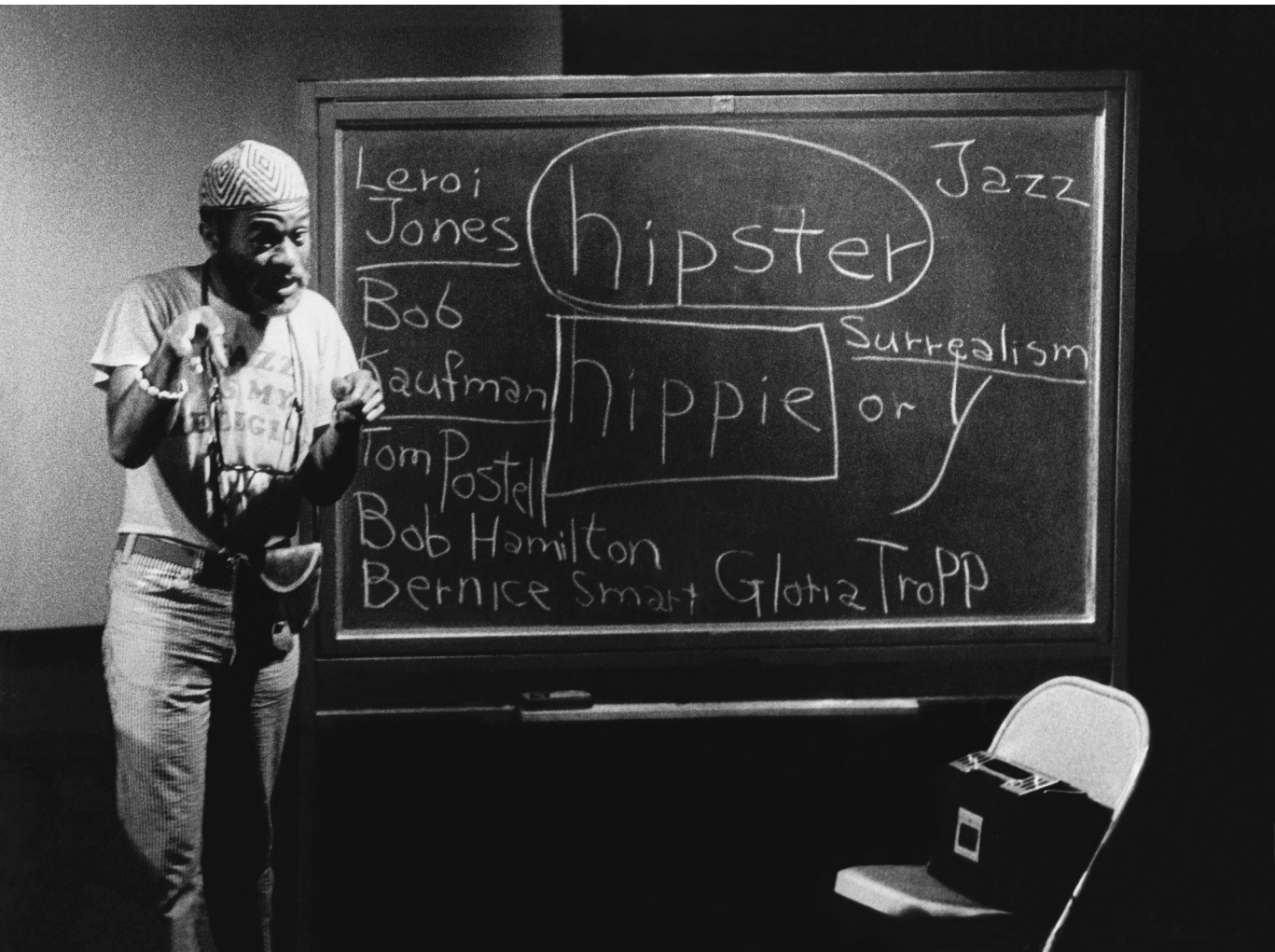


FIG. 1.3 Chris Felver, *Ted Joans at the Blackboard*, New York, 1980. Photo: Chris Felver via Getty Images.

Situated within the period's complex web of anti-authoritarian currents, Chicago surrealism was, and remains, an impassioned vehicle for what Breton cited early on as the movement's dual "watchwords": "Transform the world" (Marx) and "Change Life" (Rimbaud). Rosemont's chapter frames the activities of the Chicago surrealists during the 1970s in terms of an "angry, hopeful chaos," highlighting the founding of their journal, *Arsenal: Surrealist Subversion*, and their important 1976 World Surrealist Exhibition, documented in the catalog *Marvelous Freedom / Vigilance of Desire*.

Part 2, "Against the Liquidators," featuring chapters by Claire Howard, Gavin Parkinson, and Alyce Mahon, illuminates one of the core claims of this volume: that surrealist political engagement and active protest culture form the clearest corollary with the period's counterculture movements. We take the title "Against the Liquidators" (*face aux liquidateurs*) from the title of a surrealist tract of April 1964—one of two statements disseminated that month protesting Patrick Waldberg's retrospective exhibition of surrealism, *Le surréalisme: Sources, histoire, affinités*, at the Galerie Charpentier in Paris. According to "Against the Liquidators," Waldberg had attempted to bury surrealism alive and reduce its cultural dynamism to caricature.<sup>20</sup> Following the sentiments of this surrealist statement from the mid-1960s, part 2 of the volume argues that surrealism not only *influenced* countercultures of resistance in the 1960s and 1970s but also, through its own continuity of radicalism before and after World War II, itself *became* one of these many countercultures, albeit one with unusually strong foundations in the past.

Claire Howard's chapter opens this section by clearly identifying the dynamic synergy between surrealist genealogies of sexual and psychic liberation and the well-known counterculture enthusiasm in the post-World War II period for unbounded eroticism and psychedelic states. Howard places the 1965 international surrealist exhibition *L'Écart absolu* in the context of philosopher Charles Fourier's writings on gender equality and sexual liberation and their reception in 1960s France (fig. I.4). Dedicated to Fourier, *L'Écart absolu* drew its title from his proposal for an "absolute deviation" from established institutions and modes of thought, and, as Howard argues convincingly, broadcast surrealist support for his platform of women's equality, anti-utilitarian erotic pleasure, and nonmarital polyamory.

Surrealist protest energies gathered at the nexus of antiwar, anticolonialist, and anti-oppression discourses, as Gavin Parkinson reminds us in his chapter exploring the enthusiastic surrealist reception of American artist Robert Rauschenberg. Parkinson places Rauschenberg's French reception in the heated context of the Algerian War (1954–62), against which the surrealists were among the first to organize. This surrealist appreciation of Rauschenberg as against America, capitalism, and pop art can be seen as a prominent point of dialogue between the avant-gardes and the counterculture.

In another instance of visualizing sensibilities of political resistance, Alyce Mahon explores Chilean painter Roberto Matta's politicized reading of Freud's concepts of Eros and Thanatos in relation to specific historical instances of war, torture, oppression, revolt, and social hope. Mahon surveys Matta's disturbing invocations of torture and brutality during the Algerian War, and also the painting *Burn, Baby, Burn* (1965–66), which she presents as a response to the American race riots of 1964–65. Matta's active participation in the Paris protests of May '68, including the four protest posters he produced for the student movement, reveals another striking correlation between surrealist aesthetics and countercultural engagement in this era (fig. 1.5).

Part 3 of this volume, "The Right to Insubordination," presents chapters by Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen, Jonathan P. Eburne, and Ron Sakolsky in an effort to articulate the ongoing potential for surrealist activity as a mode of radical praxis for activating political and social change—for surrealists and nonsurrealists alike. "The Right to Insubordination" comes from the title "Declaration on the Right to Insubordination in the Algerian War," popularly known as the "Declaration of the 121," an open letter initiated by the Paris Surrealist Group and eventually signed in 1960 by 247 influential cultural figures in France, including the surrealists André Breton, Jean Schuster, and José Pierre. These signatories denounced the use of torture by the French government in the Algerian War and called for the recognition of the legitimacy of the Algerian struggle for independence from colonial rule and the right of conscientious objectors to opt out of French military service in the suppression of Algerian insurgency.<sup>21</sup> We invoke this "right to insubordination" of the "Declaration of the 121" to call attention to surrealism's ongoing protest actions from the 1920s to the 1960s and the movement's general opposition to authoritarianism, colonialism, and other forms of social control and oppression. The chapters in this section highlight the ways in which surrealism has served as a foundation for both surrealist and nonsurrealist resistance efforts.

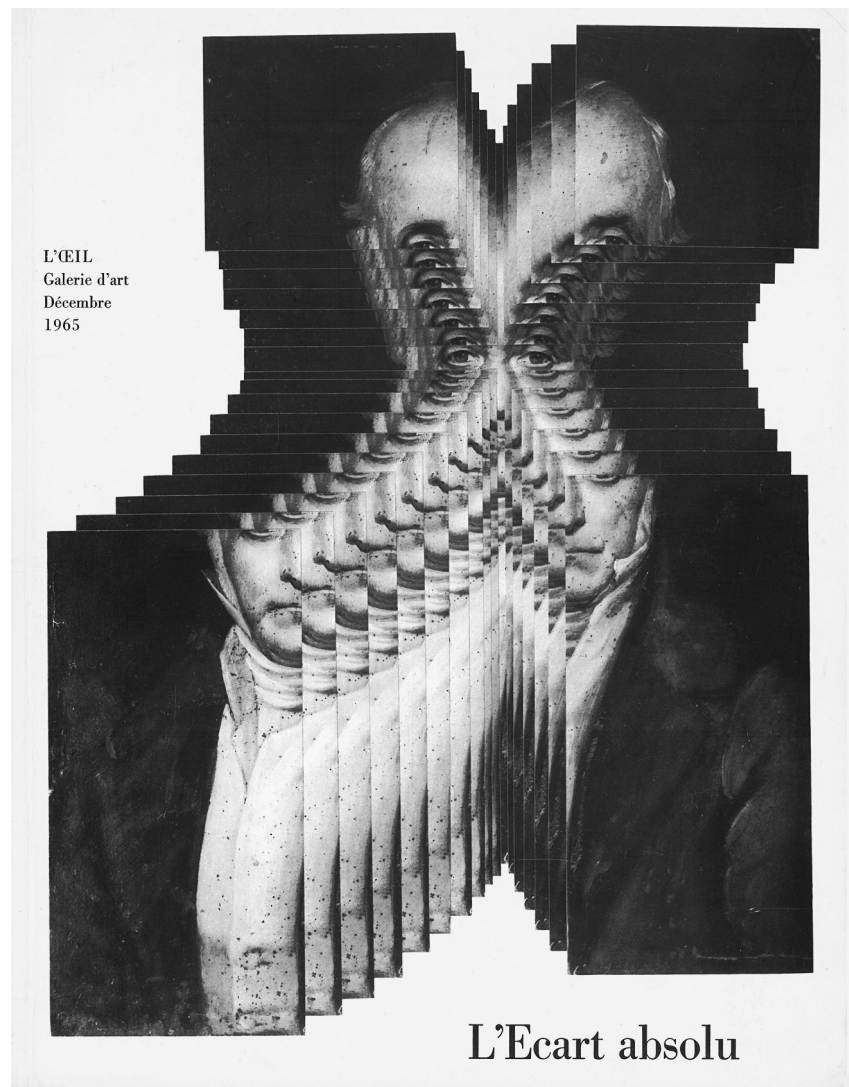
Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen begins this section by revealing the complex ties between surrealism and the Situationist International, connections that cannot be reduced to questions of legacy or the straightforward dualistic paradigm of homage and repudiation, originality and repetition. Rasmussen argues that Guy Debord continued to recognize surrealism's crucial contribution to the formation of a socially engaged art, even while he excoriated the movement for its shortcomings and alleged failures.

Jonathan Eburne pursues this inquiry into legacy, appropriation, and surrealism's enduring relevance in his chapter on "Afrosurrealism," a term coined by American poet Amiri Baraka in 1988. Baraka's neologism gestures toward the international surrealist movement while remaining independent from it, demarcating, in Baraka's words, a "broken quality, almost to [the point of] abstraction," that "is a function of change and transition." Eburne describes how Afrosurrealism offers a term for the simultaneous

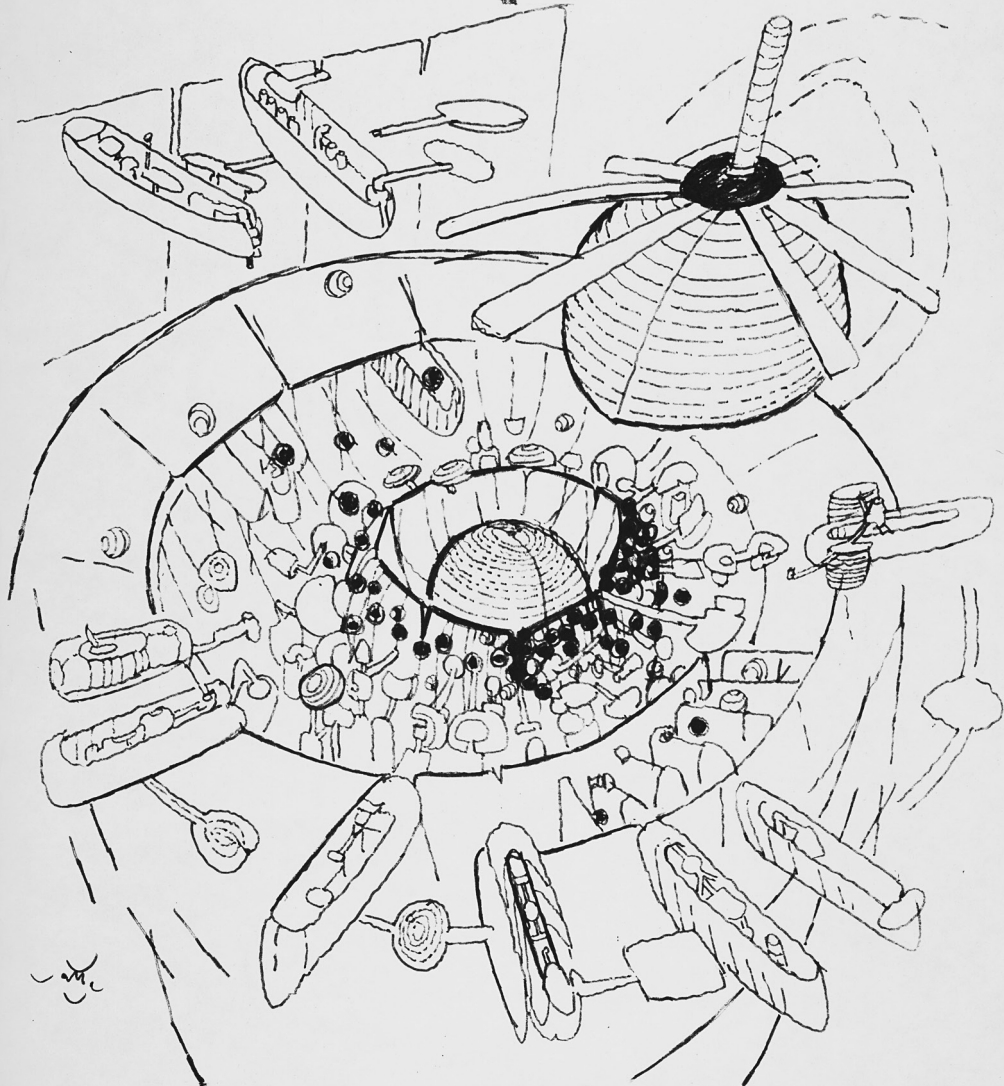
“art” and “science” of Black counterculture, anticipating Paul Gilroy’s portrayal of the Black Atlantic as a “counterculture of modernity.”

Ron Sakolsky concludes part 3 of this volume with what he calls an adventure story of “passionate encounters.” Sakolsky has worked closely with the Chicago surrealists over the past two decades to fortify the ties between surrealism studies and current efforts in radical activism in the United States and Canada. Much as the Chicago surrealists have continuously critiqued the historicization of surrealism in the American academic establishment, Sakolsky’s chapter, which chronicles American surrealism

FIG. 1.4 Pierre Faucheux, cover of the catalogue *L'Écart absolu* (1965). Editor's collection. Photo © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



disciples occupez  
la discipline.



Pour une discipline  
révolutionnaire.

and its relationship to anarchist currents from the 1960s to the present, destabilizes the distinction between past genealogies and present concerns. It does so by linking surrealism to causes of animal and environmental activism, feminism, and antiracism in the late twentieth century and the new millennium. For Sakolsky, surrealism's ongoing war on "miserabilism" takes effect through the surrealist practice of automatism as a form of anti-oppression, pursued in conjunction with the tactic of direct-action protest.

As noted above, Franklin Rosemont and Robin D. G. Kelley observed a surrealist "spirit" everywhere in the late 1960s, and it is this overarching visual, popular, and material cultural pervasiveness of radicalism that we emphasize in the volume's final section, "Passional Attractions." The title is adapted from Charles Fourier's theory of *attraction passionnée*, which observes that humans innately pursue relations and form bonds with the things, activities, and individuals that stimulate the most pleasure and harmony. Profoundly significant to the surrealists in the 1960s, Fourier's doctrine of passional attractions unites the chapters of part 4 under the working concept that significant nonsurrealist cultural formations in this era were organized around the impetus of surrealist affinity. Part 4 thus questions not just what interdisciplinary surrealism studies can learn from such affinity groups but also how, through their analysis, our field can become enriched, expanded, and more deeply engaged with political and ethical issues that continue to confront society today.

The dissemination of a surrealist outlook is taken up by David Hopkins in his chapter on surrealism, psychedelia, and the English counterculture magazine *Oz*, and by Ryan Standfest, who provides a detailed account of how Breton's conception of "black humor" was transformed into a radicalized strain of comedy in postwar America. Both Standfest and Hopkins consider the implications of the circulation and dispersal of surrealist aesthetics in the popular sphere, and how counterculture relates to the zeitgeist at large. Hopkins's distinction between mass culture and counterculture is critical in addressing surrealism's import between the 1960s and the 1980s—in terms both of the longevity of what Franklin Rosemont called the "surrealist critique" and of what Marcuse termed "aesthetic subversion."<sup>22</sup> It is with these watchwords of "critique" and "subversion" in mind that Marie Arleth Skov's chapter on British punk in the 1970s concludes the volume. Skov contemplates not the notion of anachronistic postsurrealisms but rather polysynchronic

adaptations and wandering migrations—and sometimes also pointed deviations away from—various surrealist antecedents, for fresh purposes of dissent. Expanding upon Greil Marcus's 1989 cultural study, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, which overlooked the possibility of synergy between surrealism and punk,

FIG. 1.5 Roberto Matta, *Disciples occupez la discipline: Pour une discipline révolutionnaire*. Photo © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



Skov's chapter examines a key moment of dialogue between these currents in the London-based music and performance group COUM Transmissions (1969–76).<sup>23</sup> According to Skov, the subversive appropriation, remixing, and collage practices of Genesis P-Orridge, Cosey Fanni Tutti, and others involved in COUM form a concise negation of the presumed dialectic between popular and counterculture. Skov examines the influence of surrealism and other European avant-gardes upon COUM's DIY punk aesthetic and determines that the question of homage or critique is thus not so much a case of either-or as of both-and, mirroring the dialectic relationship between subculture and mainstream.

*Radical Dreams* offers thirteen new essays on the subject of surrealism and countercultures of resistance, and yet we hope that this volume is just one contribution to a growing area of study that embraces the notion of surrealism as a social resistance movement. This is not merely a question of chronological purview or the inclusion of post- or late surrealisms, but rather of the fundamental manner in which we comprehend surrealism as a generous continuum of cultural and political radicalism with relevance for the urgencies of the present—not a historical dead end. In that sense, we are pleased that this volume remains drastically incomplete in terms of topics covered and avenues, traced and retraced, of past and future resistance.

## Notes

1. Johnson, "1968 Democratic Convention."
2. Farber, *Chicago '68*, 186.
3. George Lois to Elliott King and Abigail Susik, June 9, 2020.
4. Southern, "Grooving in Chi," 83.
5. See, for example, Kifner, "Recalling 1968"; Bateman, "1968 Democratic Convention"; Mitchell, "My Political Baptism by Fire."
6. See King, "Surrealism and Counterculture."
7. Susik, "Subcultural Receptions of Surrealism."
8. See Susik, "Points of Convergence."
9. Rosemont, Rosemont, and Garon, *Forecast Is Hot*, 25.
10. LaCoss, "Dreams of Arson."
11. See Rosemont and Radcliffe, *Dancin' in the Streets*; Sakolsky, *Surrealist Subversions*.
12. Rosemont and Kelley, *Black, Brown, and Beige*, 237–38.
13. "The counter culture I speak of embraces only a strict minority of the young and a handful of their adult mentors." Roszak, *Making of a Counter Culture*, xii.
14. See Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch"; Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.
15. Lancelot, *Jeune lion dort avec ses dents*, 86. Our translation.
16. Lenk, "Critical Theory and Surreal Practice," 49.
17. Rosemont, "Herbert Marcuse and the Surrealist Revolution," 38. See also Susik, "Chicago Surrealism, Herbert Marcuse"; Susik, *Surrealist Sabotage*.
18. See Rosemont, *Surrealism: Inside the Magnetic Fields*.
19. Rosemont, Rosemont, and Garon, *Forecast Is Hot*, xiv.
20. Pierre, *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives 2*, 227. Originally published in *Combat-Art*, no. 108 (April 13, 1964).
21. "Declaration on the Right to Insubordination in the Algerian War" (1960), in Richardson and Fijalkowski, *Surrealism Against the Current*, 194–97.
22. Rosemont, "Herbert Marcuse and the Surrealist Revolution," 38.
23. Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*, 187.

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