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Being Two: The Individual as Response in Surrealism's Partner Collaborations (1919-1935)

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BEING TWO: THE INDIVIDUAL AS RESPONSE
IN SURREALISM'S PARTNER COLLABORATIONS (1919-1935)

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that the Surrealists' collaborative practices reveal the formation of the self out of the collective, and that the coauthored books produced through collaboration imagine a relationship between self and other in the shared lyrical subject and the dialog of text and image. Surrealism's collaborative work, often seen as primarily politically motivated or as a pursuit of the unconscious, participates in its broader project of redefining the human being. In the early years of the movement, beginning with these writers' and artists' engagement with Dada in the late 1910s, artworks that leveraged the collectivity were understood as a kind of anonymous voice or universal consciousness. By the late 1920s, the concept of collaborative work as erasure of the self was evolving, allowing for a stronger expression of individuality, especially in the art book collaborations that allowed for the creative freedom of both poet and artist. Poet Paul Eluard (1895-1952), a member of Surrealism from its inception, participated in some of the seminal co-authored poetry collections of the movement, and produced art and poetry collaborations with key surrealist artists such as Man Ray and Salvador Dali. Through research into the practices behind Eluard's poetic collaborations, this study traces the reconceptualization of the lyrical subject as an individuality that arises from the pair. Close readings of two art and poetry collections from the year 1935 build on analysis of Eluard's theoretical writings on the term resemblance, which he understood as the offering of the body to the world. Framing the addressee as a plurality, images and

verses rethink the connection between self and other in terms of mutual contact that shapes both. By looking at Surrealism's reversal of the transcendental ego distinct from the world, this dissertation shows their response to the rise of mass society, explored through partner book collaborations.

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INTRODUCTION

In a lecture for the 1936 London International Surrealist Exhibition, poet Paul Éluard summarized Surrealism's purpose: "Le surréalisme, qui est un instrument de connaissance et par cela même un instrument aussi bien de conquête que de défense, travaille à mettre à jour la conscience profonde de l'homme."¹ Like other avant-garde movements, Surrealism is known for its political engagement as well as its artistic innovation, a union of purpose that precipitated the reintegration of art into the praxis of life.² Visible in Éluard's above-cited charge is the revolution that undergirds both Surrealism's political and its artistic practices: a renewed conception of the human being. The Surrealists' explicit intention to transform life and to change the world³ required a new understanding of the human. In its opening paragraphs, the 1924 surrealist manifesto begins not with a critique of the social or political order of the day, but with a depressing vision of the fate of modern man, abandoned by his own imagination: "ayant senti lui manquer peu à peu toutes raisons de vivre, incapable qu'il est devenu de se trouver à la hauteur d'une situation exceptionnelle telle que l'amour... ..il appartient désormais corps et âme à une impérieuse nécessité pratique, qui ne souffre pas qu'on la perde de

1. Paul Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Marcelle Dumas and Lucien Scheler ([Paris]: Gallimard, 1968), 1:519. Hereafter cited parenthetically as *ŒC*.

2. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

3. Breton, "La Position politique du Surréalisme" *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Marguerite Bonnet ([Paris]: Gallimard, 1988), 2:459.

vue.”⁴ The inquiry into the human undertaken by Surrealism occurs not through Romantic introspection, through the isolated individual,⁵ but through collective practices that explore the boundary between individual and group. In particular, the Surrealists’ persistence with multi-author collaborative book in changing forms throughout the 1920s and 30s testifies to an interest in the edges of the self. The present study charts the Surrealists’ evolving understanding of their motivation for collaborative work through the lens of the co-authored book, a medium to which the Surrealists consistently cleaved despite shifting political allegiances and changes in group membership. At the heart of collaboration lies the movement’s belief in the contingency of the self, which is reflected in both lyrical and artistic expression as well as in theoretical writings.

Collaborative work was central to the Surrealists’ political and artistic endeavors. Surrealism itself is the fruit of the coauthorship project of two writers, then-Dadaists André Breton and Philippe Soupault, who set out to “noircir du papier avec un louable mépris de ce qui s’ensuivrait littérairement”⁶—in Breton’s words—in 1919. Through their shared writing experiment, they conceived both Surrealism’s ur-text, *Les Champs magnétiques* (1919), and the creative practice of automatism that would dominate the movement in its early years. Initially, there was a great deal of overlap between automatism and collaboration. Automatic writing, as iconically depicted in Man Ray’s 1924 photograph “Séance de rêve éveillé,” often involved multiple participants in

4. André Breton, “Manifeste du surréalisme” in *Œuvres complètes*, 1:312.

5. Éluard writes in the same speech, “la solitude des poètes, aujourd’hui, s’efface” (EC 1:519).

6. André Breton, “Manifeste du surréalisme,” in *Œuvres complètes*, 1:326).

experimental writing sessions. The Surrealists' frequent meetings in the 1920s and beyond yielded collectively-authored texts and images,⁷ which were often published in surrealist journals. A separate but equally important collective production, the movement's numerous political documents⁸ were written, edited, and signed by the group. In the 1920s, Surrealism's collaborative work was patterned on automatic writing—"dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale"⁹—with early joint projects such as Max Ernst's and Paul Éluard's 1922 *Les Malheurs des immortels* transcribing this free flow of thought both verbally and visually. This style of partner-produced book came into its own in Surrealism, in several seminal poetic collaborations, most notably the 1930 *L'Immaculée Conception* by Breton and Éluard, and in combined art and poetry collections, where the freedom of both poet and artist led to remarkable dialogs between word and image. The Surrealists produced an incredible number of coauthored art and poetry volumes throughout the 1920s and 30s.

The two tributaries that merged to form surrealist automatic writing unsettle the integrity and autonomy of the self: firstly, spiritism,¹⁰ through possession, and, secondly,

7. On the subejective of Surrealism's group-authored texts, drawings, and collages, see especially Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image: Dissecting the Exquisite Corpse* (2005). See also *The Exquisite Corpse: Chance and Collaboration in Surrealism's Parlor Game*, ed. Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren, Davis Schneiderman, and Tom Denlinger (2009).

8. For a compilation of these documents, see *Tractes surréalistes et déclarations collectives*, ed. José Pierre (1980-82).

9. Breton, "Manifeste du surréalisme, *Œuvres complètes* 1:328.

10. For a discussion of Surrealism's and in particular Breton's evolving relationship to spiritism, see Tessel M. Bauduin, *Surrealism and the Occult* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2014).

Freudian psychoanalysis, through the unconscious. David Lomas writes in the introduction to his *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity* that “the hypothesis of an unconscious, of the subject's radical determination by an elsewhere (‘the self's radical ex-centricity to itself with which man is confronted’), seemed to render obsolete the ethical and philosophical imperative to know thyself.”¹¹ Collaboration represents in part a natural extension of this disturbance of the self. Uniting multiple voices behind a single *je* in the text, co-authored books condense the subject into a singular on the page at odds with the cover’s avowal of plural authorship. If a poem or artwork is conventionally seen as a form of self-expression, plural authorship probes the origins of thought within—or outside—the self just as automatism does. Laurent Jenny argues that Surrealism and other avant-garde movements nullify the division between the interior and exterior and extend the psychic landscape of the subject into the world.¹² The disturbance of these borders triggered by the avant-garde invites several analytical interventions: studying the dislocation of the self in surrealist literature and artwork,¹³ or focusing on the way objects become invested with meaning.¹⁴ However, what is overlooked in either focus is the contact between interior and exterior, where the boundary is not merely transgressed. This rubbing shoulders of self and world acts to

11. David Lomas, *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000): 1.

12. Laurent Jenny, *La fin de l'intériorité : théorie de l'expression et invention esthétique dans les avant-gardes françaises (1885-1935)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002).

13. In the vein of Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993) or David Lomas, *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

14. Johanna Malt, *Obscure Objects of Desire: Surrealism, Fetishism, and Politics* (2004).

constitute the borders of each through mutual impression. Collaboration draws our attention to interaction at the edges of the self that operates in a creative rather than a destructive mode.

Éluard and his fellow Surrealists exhibit a keen interest in interactions at the edge of the self, between self and world and between self and other. The motto originally published in Éluard's preface for the collaborative poetry volume *Ralentir travaux* (1930), "le poète est celui qui inspire bien plus que celui qui est inspiré" (ŒC 1:270), and republished in various works, positions the poet as a site of relationship and connection among mankind instead of in a vertically-oriented relationship with a divinity. The same preface imagines the poet as a mirror reflecting the world, an image that Éluard inherited from Baudelaire, and on which he comments directly in an essay titled "Le Miroir de Baudelaire." He uses the trop of the mirror to describe the poet's ability to activate the connections between the most dissimilar objects,¹⁵ in parallel to Breton's definition of the surrealist image.¹⁶ Encompassing not only objects, this interest in contact extends to both reality and imagination, and not only to the world of objects but of human beings as well: "il n'y a pas loin, par l'oiseau, du nuage à l'homme, il n'y a pas loin par les images, de l'homme à ce qu'il voit, de la nature des choses réelles à la nature des choses imaginées. La valeur en est égale. Matière, mouvement, besoin, désir sont inséparables" (945). Éluard's comments on collaborative practice emphasize the generation of

15. See "Le Miroir de Baudelaire" in ŒC 1:953-957.

16. Breton inherits from Reverdy the definition of the image as a rapprochement of two distant realities (André Breton, "Manifeste du surréalisme" *Œuvres complètes*, 1:337).

something new in the process: “pour collaborer, peintres et poètes se veulent libres. La dépendance abaisse, empêche de comprendre, d'aimer. Il n'y a pas de modèle pour qui cherche ce qu'il n'a jamais vu. A la fin, rien n'est aussi beau qu'une ressemblance involontaire” (982). The language of discovery—the unseen, the involuntary— raises the question of what, beyond the book, emerges from collective production.

In an article on vision in painting, phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty examines the treatment of the line in modern art.¹⁷ He makes the case that previous traditions treated the line as a property or attribute of the object, its outer limit, an assumption dispelled by modernism. Yet these painters’ purpose is not to dismantle the line, but rather to “faire revivre son pouvoir constituant.”¹⁸ As the “modulation d'une spatialité préalable,”¹⁹ the line becomes a generating force that enables things to take shape out of coexistence with the world. His opening paragraphs connect his analysis of vision and space in paintings to his broader œuvre, in which the lines between body and world are seen to have a constituting power as well: “un corps humain est là quand, entre voyant et visible, entre touchant et touche, entre un œil et l'autre, entre la main et la main se fait une sorte de recroisement, quand s'allume l'étincelle du sentant-sensible.”²⁰ One significant facet of Surrealism’s interest in the permeability of the boundary between self and world that has gone unnoticed is precisely this notion of the border as a generative

17. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'Œil et l'esprit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

18. Ibid., 74.

19. Ibid., 77.

20. Ibid., 21.

site. Collaborative work is emblematic of the boundary's creative stimulus. Collaboration operates in and through and around the border between co-authors: in the contact between them that, according to Breton, yields works that "portent la marque de ce qui ne peut être engendré par un seul cerveau,"²¹ through the back and forth of response across the divide between individuals, and around the border, in the unexpected and unintended coherences of thought or of verbal and visual that collaboration produces. Beyond exploring the self's discovery of itself within the world of objects, the movement's awareness of the reciprocal relationship between body and world²² led them to experiment with the plural lyrical voice of co-authored poetry and the text-image relations in illustrated books as sites to experiment with the implications of the subject as a product of lived experience, especially with regard to the relationship between self and other.

Éluard was especially aware of the intersubjectivity of collaborative work and the ethics of art and literature. He wrote extensively about the moral responsibility of the

21. Breton, "Le cadavre exquis, son exaltation" *Œuvres complètes*, 4:701.

22. Reciprocity is a function of the body's material existence, which makes it both subject and object: "lui qui regarde toutes choses, il peut aussi se regarder, et reconnaître dans ce qu'il voit alors l'«autre côté» de sa puissance voyante. Il se voit voyant, il se touche touchant, il est visible et sensible pour soi-même. C'est un soi, non par transparence, comme la pensée, qui ne pense quoi que ce soit qu'en l'assimilant, en le constituant, en le transformant en pensée—mais un soi par confusion, narcissisme, inhérence de celui qui voit à ce qu'il voit, de celui qui touche à ce qu'il touche, du sentant au senti" (Merleau-Ponty, *L'Œil et l'esprit*, 18.)

poet²³ in essays in the 1930s, arguing that poetry and other artistic endeavors had stakes in the real world: “la poésie ne se fera chair et sang qu'à partir du moment où elle sera réciproque. Cette réciprocité est entièrement fonction de l'égalité du bonheur entre les hommes” (ŒC 1:526). As well describing the real and material imperatives of poetry, he focuses on the term resemblance as a means of understanding the relationship between the individual and the world, a totality that he refers to as the *tout* or, in recognition of the inherence of things within this *tout*, as the *devenir*: “tout est comparable à tout, tout trouve son écho, sa raison, sa ressemblance, son opposition, son devenir partout. Et ce devenir est infini” (527). In describing the *tout*, however, he was not interested in a concretization of all individuals into a mediating singular. In an article first published in the sixth issue of *Minotaure* in 1935, entitled “Physique de la poésie,” he wrote, “la ressemblance niant l'universel, on ne fait pas le portrait de l'homme. C'est *un* homme qui parle pour l'homme, c'est *une* pierre qui parle pour les pierres, c'est *un* arbre qui parle pour toutes les forêts” (ŒC 1:937). In choosing the indefinite article over the definite, he makes the case for a particular individual as the figure that emerges in the poetic or artistic subject. Conversely, his poetics evolved a lyrical subject shaped by the other, often addressing itself to the *toi* “qui me mets au monde” (141). These two directions, at once the individual's ability to speak for the collective through particularity, and the self

23. Like many Surrealists, Éluard was also actively engaged in politics. He was a lifelong communist and participated in many of the party's efforts against injustice, such as the protests against colonialism (see Sophie Leclercq, *La Rançon du colonialisme : les surréalistes face aux mythes de la France coloniale (1919-1962)* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2010)).

as a passage and a position within the *tout*, reveal the reciprocity at the heart of Éluardian resemblance. The structure at work in this relationship creates a tension between singular and plural irreducible to either.

While he returned repeatedly in his poetry and theoretical writing to the other, and particularly to the female other, as both creator of the self and mediator of all others, Éluard found another significant expression of the tension between singular and plural in partnership. He produced more collaborative books than almost any other Surrealist, through partnerships²⁴ with poets André Breton, René Char, and Benjamin Péret, and with artists Max Ernst, Man Ray, Salvador Dalí, and Pablo Picasso, to name just a few. His preface for the Japanese translation of his 1930 collaboration with André Breton, *L'Immaculée Conception*, pinpoints the figure of the pair in collaborative work as particularly significant for the ways it positions the individual as the other and as all others: “être deux à détruire, à construire, à vivre, c’est déjà être tous, être l’autre à l’infini et non plus soi” (1:). In this quotation, Éluard frames being two in a series of contiguous possibilities, especially of being the other or of being everyone. That he implicates both sides of the coin in partner collaborations already makes the partner collaboration a difficult category, separate from the collective works—tracts and

24. Many of the collaborative books Éluard produced sprung from lifelong friendships. In particular, he maintained friendships and collaborated many times with the leader of Surrealism, André Breton, and with artists Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí, Pablo Picasso, and Valentine Hugo. For more on Éluard’s relationships with artists and the books they produced, see Jean-Charles Gateau, *Paul Éluard et la peinture surréaliste: (1910-1939)* (Geneve: Droz, 1982) and Annick Lionel-Marie, *Paul Éluard et ses amis peintres, 1895-1952* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1982).

pamphlets, journals, and exhibitions—that sustained the group life of the movement, as well as from the more well-known individual works of the Surrealists. By narrowing the plurality to the two, these book collaborations magnify the binaries at play—self and other, singularity and universality. More than the group, the pair hesitates at this crossroads, giving the collaborative work of art a distinctive focus on the self’s communion with the world but also, through contact with the other, its awareness of its own contours.

This study traces the development of a phenomenological inquiry into the self as it was undertaken in Surrealism’s collaborative books. Using theoretical writings on collaboration and documentation of collaborative practices, it shows the Surrealists’ evolving conceptualization of collaborative practice, from an emphasis on anonymity in the 1920s to a dialogical practice in the 1930s. Close analysis of the manuscripts of dialogical collaborations reveals how co-authors conceived of the self as a response to the other, and study of the shared lyrical voice in these volumes produces self-reflexive poetry that navigates the plural as the space out of which the individual emerges. Éluard’s individually-authored poetry during the same period mirror this trajectory, transitioning from a subjectless poetics to an emphasis on the formation of the *moi* in response to the *toi*. In both poetry and theoretical writings, the face-to-face with the other opens out onto all other individuals, through the process of resemblance that Éluard understands as connective tissue between individuals, so that the subject’s communion with the *toi* is also communion with the collective. In this mediation between the self, the other, and the

universal, resemblance operates through contact, in a structure present from the earliest surrealist collaborative text, but only belatedly recognized. The ultimate expression of this relationship, which bypasses similarity and difference as a means of relating to the other, is in the surrealist illustrated book, where poet and artist are given unparalleled freedom of expression, yet poem and image are brought into contact on the page. These art and poetry collections imagine a relationship between self and other based in negative space through the cross-media interactions on the page.

This dissertation begins by looking at two trajectories in the first two decades of the surrealist movement: the evolution of collaborative practices and their theorization, and developments in the lyrical voice in poetry. It then turns to case studies of two co-authored poetic collaborations, analyzing the shared lyrical subject constructed through dialogic writing practice, and two collaborative poetry and art collections, in which the contact between text and image shapes each on the page, grounding reflections on the boundary as the meeting-place of self and other.

Chapter one charts the history of collaborative practice in the surrealist movement, from the discovery of automatic writing to surrealist games to journals and exhibitions. It focuses especially on the development of the coauthored book in the 1920s and 30s, including poetic collaborations as well as books of art and poetry. In the chapter, I analyze the different strategies of collaboration used by poets and artists in light of essays, letters, and manuscripts, to show an evolution in the movement's understanding of what happens in collaboration and why it matters. Initially, the Surrealists conceived

of collaboration as the production of an anonymous or universal voice, an intention testified to both in André Breton's essays from the period and by procedures that sought to remove the author's identity as far as possible. However, in a shift especially visible in the art book model, the movement came to embrace a dialogic model of collaboration that emphasized the separation between co-authors' contributions. Instead of being directed toward the erasure of the self, coauthorship produced some of the most highly-sought-after art books of the century by through a model of creative response. The process of engaging with a coauthor's work and responding to it in one's own work constituted a phenomenological investigation from its earliest practice in Surrealism, and led to an understanding of the self as arising out of contact with the other

My second chapter turns to Éluard's individually-authored works and explores the recurrent theme of resemblance in his poetry and essays. Uprooting the word from its usage in the realm of visual similarity, Éluard develops a conception of resemblance as a juncture operating through particularity rather universality. Representative poems from the 1920s and 30s show that Éluard repeatedly applies the term "ressemblante" to the female *toi* at the heart of his poetics. At the same time, resemblance is also the key tactic of the poet in the essays he began to write in the 1930s. In poetry, he uses the genre of the lyrical address to redefine the self as dependent on the other, and more specifically on a female *toi*. By analyzing his reinterpretation of the lyrical subject through the pronouns "I," "you," and "we," the chapter situates the tension between the singularity and plurality of the self in Éluard's œuvre. Further analysis of his little-studied critical essays

shows the ethical import the poet attributes to his work as a means of liberating humankind through a revelation of the self's dependence on the other.

In chapter three, I look at two poetry collaborations published in 1930, during a tumultuous period for the surrealist movement, as a part of the reevaluation of Surrealism's agenda underway in those years. Despite being written within months of each other and sharing two of the same authors, *Ralentir travaux* and *L'Immaculée Conception* activate different modes of collaboration and, as a result, evince different conceptions of the individual. Éluard, Breton, and René Char amalgamated several styles of co-writing from the 1920s to produce *Ralentir travaux* while on vacation together. Consistent with previous practice of collaboration, the automatic writing in the poems of the collection seems to dissolve the subject shared by multiple authors. While the individually-authored prefaces celebrate a-subjectivity, the *moi* in the poems experiences the merging collectivity as a threat of erasure. When Breton and Éluard reunited to write *L'Immaculée Conception*, their prose poems instead focused on a multiplication of the lyrical subject. As the practice of automatism, or subject-less writing, wanes in Surrealism, Breton and Éluard define the importance of collaboration in a new light, as a practice that reveals the subject itself to be the product of a collaborative process. In doing so, they reverse the understood trajectory of collaboration: instead of operating as a collective that absorbs or erodes the self, the partnership of coauthors moves from a shared project to individual expression, reflecting the formation of the self through contact with the other.

My fourth chapter interprets art book collaborations as a further development in the surrealist conception of the self, contextualizing the implications for the relationship between self and other. In it, I read two of Éluard's art collaborations published in 1935—*Nuits partagées* with Salvador Dali and *Facile* with Man Ray—as manifestations of the poet's idea of resemblance as a point of connection between individuals. The dialogical model of collaboration engenders these works through response: the poet or artist uses the co-author's work as a springboard for his own creativity, but operates with considerable freedom. The resulting dissimilarity between text and image puts into play the relationship Éluard describes as resemblance, a bridge between two media in their own distinctive form shaped by encounter with the other. These collaborations meditate on the border as a site of self-formation, one that calls into question the stability and separation of the self in productive ways for poet and artist. In particular, the body, as a point of contact with the world, defines the borders of the self while also allowing the individual to be transversed by others. By seeing the self as a product of interaction with the other, these collaborations renew Surrealism's goal of reinventing the human being.

CHAPTER ONE

CONCEPTIONS OF AUTHORSHIP AND SELFHOOD IN
THE HISTORY OF SURREALIST COLLABORATIVE
PRACTICE

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the history of collaborative practice in the Surrealist movement with the purpose of defining why collaboration served as a catalyst for the movement and why it continued to fascinate the Surrealists in evolving forms. Events such as innovations in artistic methods, schisms in the group, and the arrival of new members, as well as developments in surrealist theory catalyzed changes in the practice of collaboration. Surrealism underwent a movement from an anonymous and collective practice of collaboration toward a dialogic practice with greater freedom for the individual. In Surrealism's early days, collaborative practice took shape around the anonymity of the author and the passivity of the creating self, emphasizing the way that language would speak itself through the author, who became a recording device rather than an agent. This mode of creation represents an important first step in Surrealism's attack on the transcendental ego as autonomous and separate from the world. In this stage, collaboration was a tool for disturbing the control of logic and seeking the

unconscious through techniques such as trance and hypnosis that rendered the speaker passive. These practices were a form of communal speech that abolished the Romantic notion of literature and art as self-expression. However, distinct from the group practices of collaboration, partner collaborations like Surrealism's ur-text, the 1919 *Les Champs magnétiques*, a collaboration between Breton and Soupault, began a parallel tradition of dialogic practice, in which the partners' responses to each other's work fueled the creation of the text. In the late 1920s and in the 1930s, numerous partner collaborations produced art and poetry volumes that allowed for substantial disparity between the themes of text and image. These partner books not only reflect the creative process of dialog and response in content but also in form. Poet and artist find themselves on the page as a product of an interaction that supersedes them, much like the work of art itself. In the movement between the plural of the co-creators and the singular product that demands to be approached as a book, the self is seen as being itself a response to a pre-existing collective.

Much of the Surrealists' own theoretical work revolves around the unconscious and political engagement, and so it is not surprising that scholarship on Surrealism, when it does not focus exclusively on aesthetic considerations, tends to emphasize either

psychoanalysis²⁵ or politics.²⁶ This leaves a fissure between the twin preoccupations of the Surrealists themselves: on the one hand, the question of the individual or the subject in studies that often focus on the unconscious and automatism, on the other hand, the question of the collective in studies that tend to focus on politics and artistic production.²⁷ Yet collective production and a consideration of the subject are intimately connected in surrealist theory and art, as perhaps best encapsulated in Éluard's "Notes à propos d'une collaboration:" "Être deux à détruire, à construire, à vivre, c'est déjà être tous, être l'autre à l'infini et non plus soi" (ŒC 1:1427). This dissertation contributes to a bridging of the

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25. Perhaps most notably in Hal Foster's seminal work, *Compulsive Beauty*, which reframes Surrealism in terms of the Freudian concept of the uncanny, revealing beneath the Surrealists' belief in the freedom and marvel of the unconscious the darker urges of compulsion and the death drive, as they manifest themselves in surrealist works. See also: Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993); Elizabeth Legge, *Max Ernst: The Psychoanalytic Sources* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989); Jean-Michel Rabaté, "Loving Freud madly: surrealism between hysterical and paranoid modernism," *Journal of Modern Literature* 25.3-4 (2002): 58-74; Briony Fer, "Surrealism, Myth, and Psychoanalysis," in *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*, ed. Briony Fer David Batchelor, Paul Wood (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1993); Naomi Schor, "Dali's Freud" (*Dada / Surrealism* 6 (1976): 10-17); Natalya Lusty, *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007); Elizabeth Wright, "The Uncanny and Surrealism," in *Modernism and the European Unconscious*, ed. Peter Collier and Judy Davies (Cambridge : Polity, 1990).
26. See for example Alyce Mahon's study on Surrealist exhibitions, *Surrealism and the politics of eros, 1938-1968* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2005). For a study on the Surrealists' intellectual and political engagement through the lens of crime, see Jonathan Eburne's *Surrealism and the Art of Crime*.
27. Johanna Malt's *Obscure Objects of Desire* seeks to bridge the gap between the psychoanalytic and political approaches: it focuses on the tension between subject and object in the treatment of the body in Surrealism, seen especially in the critique of commodity culture, and explores fetishization as a point of juncture between the individual and the collective. See also Steven Harris's *Surrealist Art and Thought in the 1930s: Art, Politics, and the Psyche* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), which contextualizes the creation of surrealist objects within artists' commitment both psychoanalysis and to the revolutionary ideals of Marxism and Communism.

divide between study of the individual and of the collective by looking at the formation of the subject as a function of collective engagement through a corpus of collaborative works.

Studies on Surrealism most often approach the problem of the subject through the lens of psychoanalysis, building on a historical relationship between Surrealism and psychoanalysis as well as elements of compatibility between the surrealist and psychoanalytic conceptions of the subject. Scholars have shown Breton's indebtedness to Freud, whose work he came to know during World War I, and with whom he eventually exchanged correspondence, though the latter was riddled with misunderstanding on both sides.²⁸ Automatic writing, a practice intimately linked with the origins of the surrealist movement, was clearly influenced by Freud's talking cure, among other practices. In recent years, the work of scholars such as Hal Foster and Rosalind Krauss has influenced a number of studies that revolve around Lacanian psychoanalysis and especially the uncanny as productive concepts for the study of the surrealist subject. The psychoanalytic approach leads to an understanding of the subject's identity as anterior to relationships with others, and its definition of the other is grounded in the subject itself, a construction that does not function the context of surrealist collaboration.

28. For an assessment of Breton's influences in practicing automatism, see Jean Starobinski, "Freud, Breton, Myers," *L'Arc* no. 34, (October 1968): 87-96. See also Bonnet, *André Breton et la naissance de l'aventure surréaliste* (Paris: Corti, 1975) for an account of Breton's discovery of free association in working with traumatized WWI soldiers. For studies of the influence of psychoanalysis on other Surrealists, see *Le Surréaliste et son psy*, ed. Anne-Marie Amiot (Paris: L'Age d'homme, 1992).

Margaret Cohen's *Profane Illumination*²⁹ and David Lomas's *The Haunted Self* demonstrate the disconnect between the psychoanalytic subject and the relationship between subject and other in collaboration. In these works, the other is understood in terms of the self, and originates in the subject. This framework comes from Freudian theory, in which the uncanny is a dimension of the familiar, in fact a reversal in which the familiar becomes strange. In examples such as the doppelgänger or the repetition of the same, as in Freud's story of getting lost and repeatedly coming across the same street, the process of defamiliarization originates in a replication of the self or of the familiar that becomes alien.³⁰ In this sense, we can see that the self is always the origin point, a construction visible in several recent studies on Surrealism, influenced by Hal Foster's use of the uncanny in *Compulsive Beauty*, in which he observes a "defusion" of the subject. In *Profane Illumination*, Margaret Cohen describes the way the haunting of the opening paragraphs in Breton's *Nadja* triggers a displacement of the subject into what she calls a "differentiated self." She finds further evidence for this decentered subject in Breton's elusive style of writing.³¹ David Lomas's *The Haunted Self* also deploys the uncanny in conjunction with Lacanian theory to identify a becoming-other of the subject that is displaced through language.³² In each of the above cases, scholars focus on a

29. Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surreal Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

30. Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, 217-256.

31. Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination*, 57-76.

32. See especially Lomas, *The Haunted Self*, 187-235.

process of estrangement that is posterior to the formation of the self, while collaboration shows a singular that evolves out of a multiple.

This is not to say that psychoanalytic studies never touch on the problem of the other, or of relationships between subjects, but rather that they move sync from the individual to the collective, while a more effective study of collaboration would reverse that direction and begin with the collective. One example of a psychoanalytic reading of collaborative work is Lomas's careful analysis of Joan Miro's collaboration with Marcoussis on the self-portrait *Portrait of Miro*, in which Lomas argues that the subject exists in dependence on the O / other, by which he means both Miro's own unconscious and the co-creator of the portrait / self-portrait, Marcoussis. While Lomas insists on the importance of collaborative exercises as a dialogic undertaking, his binary linking of the other and the unconscious poses problems for study of collaboration.³³ If the other is only an extension of or a stand-in for the unconscious, we have removed the tension between portrait and self-portrait, as well as the motivation for artists to collaborate. While the works that take a psychoanalytic approach contribute much to our understanding of the roles of the erotic, of madness, and of the unconscious in surrealist endeavors, they do not entirely account for the Surrealists' fascination with collective production and its distinctive iteration of the relationship between self and other.

The connection between avant-garde movements and the group has been formulated and reformulated, beginning with Renato Poggioli's oft-cited statement that

33. Lomas, *The Haunted Self*, 213.

“the avant-garde is a group manifestation,” as well as the distinction he draws between schools of art in previous centuries and movements in the avant-garde.³⁴ Recently, more attention has been given to collaborative art endeavors, especially collectives and communities producing art in the 19th and 20th centuries, and in Surrealism more specifically.³⁵ In the context of the collective, scholars have also written extensively about the genre of the manifesto, especially as a political and public document.³⁶ Outside these more politically-motivated texts, collaborative work in Surrealism falls into two categories: automatic writing and games, or what has sometimes been termed “le livre surréaliste”—book collaborations. Studies on automatic writing address questions of language and narrative structure,³⁷ and underscore the way automatic texts reflect

34. Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), 17.

35. See for example Véronique Goudinoux, *Œuvrer à plusieurs — regroupements et collaborations entre artistes* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: PU du Septentrion, 2015.), a chapter of which is devoted to collective writing, political action, and games in the surrealist movement. See also Marie-Christine Autant-Mathieu, *Créer, ensemble: Points de vue sur les communautés artistiques, fin du xixe-xxe siècles* (Montpellier : Entretemps, 2013). For a study of collectives and creativity in the years prior to WWI in Europe, see Milton Cohen, *Movement, Manifesto, Melee: The Modernist Group 1910–1914* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2004).

36. See Martin Puchner, *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-gardes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes. Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999); Luca Somigli, *Legitimizing the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism 1885-1915* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2016).

37. See for example Laurent Jenny, “L’automatisme comme mythe rhétorique,” in *Une pelle au vent dans les sables du rêve*, 27-32; Laurent Jenny “Les aventures de l’automatisme,” *Littérature*, n° 72; Michael Riffaterre, “The Surrealist Libido: André Breton’s *Poisson soluble*, ‘No. 8’.” *Dada / Surrealism* 17 (1988): 59-66. Marguerite Bonnet and Étienne-Alain Hubert. “Sur deux types d’écriture surréaliste et leurs finalités dans ‘L’Immaculée Conception’ d’André Breton et Paul Éluard” *Revue d’Histoire littéraire de la France* 87, no 4 (Jul-Aug., 1987): 753-758.

autoreferentially on their own genesis.³⁸ Other studies perform psychoanalytic readings of the texts as revelations of the unconscious³⁹ or trace the process of creation through close reading and analysis of manuscripts.⁴⁰ In particular, the seminal automatic text *Les Champs magnétiques* (Breton and Soupault) and the collaboration between Éluard and Breton, *L'Immaculée Conception*, have been studied through these lenses.⁴¹ In the same vein as automatic writing, surrealist games, another collaborative genre, have been studied in terms of psychoanalysis and the revelation of the unconscious,⁴² though this collective endeavor was typically used more as a springboard for the mind rather than for the sake of the text produced.

Scholarly work on surrealist books of art and poetry most typically takes an aesthetic approach to the various collaborations between poets and artists, often

38. See Nathalie Limat-Letellier, “Les ‘Écritures automatiques’ d’Aragon,” in *Une pelle au vent*, 33-64, and Marie-Paule Berranger, “Poisson Soluble, ou les mains vierges dans la niche à fond bleu du travail,” in *Une pelle au vent*, 93-112. See also Michel Beaujour, “Poétique de l’automatisme chez André Breton,” *Poétique* no 25 (1976): 116-123.

39. See Julia Kristeva, “L’inquiétante étrangeté de l’automatisme: A propos de Poisson soluble,” in *Une pelle au vent*, 113-24.

40. See Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron, “Jeu de l’incipit et travail de la correction dans l’écriture automatique” in *Une pelle au vent*, 125-144; and Alain Chevrier, “Une source secrète de *L’Immaculée Conception*” in *Le Surréaliste et son psy*, 49-70.

41. See Gilbert Boissier, “Insignifiance et sursignifiance: lecture des Champs magnétiques,” in *Le Génie et la forme. Mélanges de langue et de littérature offerts à Jean Mourot* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1982) 577-87; Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron, “Toward a New Definition of Automatism: *L’Immaculée Conception*,” *Dada / Surrealism* 17 (1988): 74-90; Marguerite Bonnet and Étienne-Alain Hubert, “Sur deux types d’écriture surréaliste et leurs finalités dans ‘L’Immaculée Conception’ d’André Breton et Paul Éluard,” *Revue d’Histoire littéraire de la France* 87, no 4 (Jul. - Aug., 1987): 753-758.

42. See for example Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron, *Jeu surréaliste et humour noir* (Lachenal & Ritter, 1993); Elza Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image; The Exquisite Corpse: Chance and Collaboration in Surrealism’s Parlor Game*, ed. Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren, Davis Schneiderman, and Tom Denlinger.

highlighting the unique relationship between text and image. Most notably, two issues of the journal *Mélu*sine have addressed this topic. The fourth issue of the journal *Mélu*sine centered more broadly on the surrealist book, with certain articles highlighting collaborative works.⁴³ Twenty years later, the twenty-second issue delves more deeply into the “livre surréaliste” as “livre d’artiste” and the relationships between text and image.⁴⁴ Similarly to analyses of poetic and automatic collaborations, scholars work on the history of the collaboration and the relationships between co-creators, or look at the relationships between the contributions of each author. In the first monograph to focus on surrealist illustrated books, Renée Riese Hubert’s *Surrealism and the Book* mobilizes numerous examples of collections that pair art and poetry to demonstrate the Surrealists’ overcoming of traditional books of art or poetry, in which either the image illustrates the text or the text is subservient to the image.⁴⁵ Going beyond the scope of Surrealism but

43. *Le livre surréaliste*, ed Béhar (Lausanne : L'Age d'homme, 1983). In “Le photopoème Facile: un nouveau livre, dans les années 1930” (163-178), Nicole Boulestreau demonstrates a union of “corps” and “discours” in the book, made possible by thematic intersections between text and image, but also by the independence of each component. In “Découper, se couper, se recouper” (217-226), Jean-Charles Gateau uncovers the writing process of Éluard and Ernst in *Les Malheurs des immortels* and ultimately associates collage’s cutting techniques with castration anxiety. In “Miró et le livre surréaliste” (227-240), Renée Riese Hubert explores three different books illustrated by Miro and shows that he leaves behind illustration or imitation and invents a new form of writing through typography and lithography.

44. *À belles mains: livre surréaliste, livre d'artiste* ed. Andrea Oberhuber, (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 2012). See especially Constanze Fritzsche, “Le collage au cœur des créations de Paul Éluard-Max Ernst,” 97-109; Danièle Méaux, “Facile: l’alchimie des mots et des photographies;” and Jacques Leenhardt, “Labyrinthes de la collaboration—Genèse et importance de *Fata Morgana*” for articles about poetry and art collaborations.

45. Renée Riese Hubert, *Surrealism and the Book*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

focusing on the intermedial book, Thomas Jensen Hines' *Collaborative Form - Studies in the Relations of the Arts* sets out to define and explicate the collaborative book as a form or genre, with his first two chapters revolving around two collaborations of one-time surrealist poet René Char, *A la santé du serpent* with Miro (1954) and *Lettera Amorosa* with Braque (1963). Hines studies these and other *livres d'artiste* through close readings of the finished works, contextualized by discussion of the process of collaboration and the historical relationship between collaborators, arguing that we should extend the term "collaboration" to mean not only the collaboration between the artists, but also between media on the page, since that interaction is the one encountered directly by the reader.⁴⁶

Studies on surrealist books have clearly identified a unique relationship between text and image, and, in keeping with Hines' establishing of the continuity between the collaboration of artist and poet and the "collaboration" on the page, I would argue that this unusual relationship is reflective of that between artist and poet as well. Éluard himself commented on the lack of subservience in this artistic relationship: "Pour collaborer, peintres et poètes se veulent libres. La dépendance abaisse, empêche de comprendre, d'aimer." (ŒC 1:982) Precisely this equality and even independence of artist and poet causes Yves Peyré to term these books "livres de dialogue."⁴⁷ Yet scholarship on surrealist books has not engaged in questions about the nature of the lyrical subject or the status of self-representation in a cross-media, two-author work. While studies on

46. Thomas Jensen Hines, *Collaborative Form: Studies In the Relations of the Arts* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991), 4.

47. Yves Peyré, *Peinture et poésie: le dialogue par le livre, 1874-2000* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001).

automatic writing have more frequently addressed the question of the subject, whether as dissolved in a flow of mystic speech that comes from outside the self, or as revealed in the deeper kernel of self in the form the unconscious, this approach does not account for how two individuals can collaborate in automatic writing. Furthermore, scholars have not addressed both poetic and intermedia collaborations in one study, and if the Surrealists returned again and again to both kinds of practice, as indeed they did, the underlying reasons for these forms of collaboration must have much in common. Not only will such a study illuminate the Surrealists' motivations for collaborating, it will also contribute to a deeper understanding of the surrealist subject, which, while not defined as such in surrealist theory, manifests itself in their art and poetry, and especially in collaborative works. Lastly, collaborations, whether poetic or of image and text, give us insight into surrealist ethics, into the way surrealists answer the problem of interacting with others on equal footing, both because these texts spring not from an individual in isolation but from direct engagement with the other, and also because the collaboration of two poetic voices or of text and image on the page provides a fascinating model of relationship to the other through a different kind of resemblance.

Proto-Surrealism and Collective Practices: 1919-1924

Group collaboration was at the core of Surrealism from the time of its beginnings in Dada, and played a role in the movement throughout its existence. Across subjects from artistic to political, Surrealists practiced types of collaboration that allowed

them on the one hand to collectively forge the identity of the movement, and on the other hand to engage the public in a social and political revolution. The process of collaborations varied, from the tracts and documents which were often written by one member before being edited by a group, to editorial boards putting together journals, to exhibitions in which different artists were in charge of different components of the display. These large-scale collective projects represent the group as a whole, and often testify to a negotiation between group and individual identity. At other times, they position Surrealism within a network of other writers, artists, or groups, such as in collaborations with journals such as *Clarté* or with the Parti communiste français. Even among avant-garde groups, known for their emphasis on the collective, the Surrealists created an extraordinary number of collaborative works across many genres: writing and drawing, books and film, journals and exhibitions.

The early emphasis placed on anonymity and asubjectivity can partly be traced to the Dada activities in which many of the Surrealists participated before Surrealism's inception. Dada spectacles and journals complicated authorial voice in order to involve the audience into the creation of the artwork. In the first case, the complicating of authorial voice represents a breakdown in the rigidity of the individual that we will also see as a main principle in Surrealism. In the second, the Dada group sought to break down the barriers between art and life, and the practice of inviting the audience into collaboration can be found in both movements. Spectacles brought together a variety of voices, instruments, and other accoutrements to the stage with the intention of frustrating

interpretation.⁴⁸ For example, at Max Ernst's first Paris exhibition, "Louis Aragon impersonated a kangaroo, André Breton munched matches, Philippe Soupault played hide and seek with Tristan Tzara, while Benjamin Péret and Serge Charchoune shook hands for an hour and a half."⁴⁹ Instead of functioning as a uniform collectivity, the performers worked at cross purposes. In the Dada *poème simultané*, written for performance by multiple readers, the superimposition of voices makes it difficult to understand the poem, such that the added voices, the "collaboration," actually detract from the meaning. The chaos of these collaborations invited participation: audiences hurled not only insults but also projectiles, to the delight of the Dadaists.⁵⁰ Disrupting any notion of the author, Dada used collaboration to undermine art's highbrow and bourgeois associations.

Another collaborative practice that disrupted the unity and homogeneity of authorial expression was the journal. Dada birthed a substantial number of journals and reviews, published in Zurich, Berlin, Paris, and New York, which can be seen as meta-networks of exchange and collaboration in their own right. The network of exchange manifests itself in the last number of *Dada Intirol*, which "contains comic and ambiguous suggestions of objects as 'gifts:' 'Tzara sends to Soupault: four whales in soft sponge, two needles for poisoning trees, a perfected comb with twelve teeth... Arp sends to

48. G. Berghaus, "Dada Theatre or: The Genesis of Anti-Bourgeois Performance Art." German Life and Letters, vol 3, issue 4 (1985): 306.

49. Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image*, 1.

50. Henri Béhar, *Etude sur le théâtre dada et surréaliste* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 158.

Éluard: a turban of entrails and love with four rooms.’”⁵¹ The multi-author journal again questions the notion of the author, showing cracks between the collective and the individual. We might for example look at Éluard’s journal *Proverbe*, which ran six issues from 1920-1921, in which Éluard pursues his passion for the everyday, anonymous language manifest in proverbs. *Proverbe* plays with the concept of multi-author or authorless language in its frequent sidestepping of authorial claim, marking texts “anonyme” or using initials to obscure identity. The fifth issue of *Proverbe* was completely anonymous, intending, as Gateau says, to “abolir l’individualité de l’artiste, de parvenir à une écriture impersonnelle, proverbiale.”⁵² This focus on collective language as impersonal shaped Surrealism’s early models of collaboration

The Discovery of Automatism

It would be fair to say that Surrealism at its inception was synonymous with collective writing. The movement began with the discovery of what Breton termed “l’écriture automatique” or “l’automatisme”—since it was primarily but not exclusively verbal—namely the attempt to write or create without the intervention of the conscious mind. Breton uses an encyclopedia-style entry to define Surrealism in terms of automatism: “Surréalisme, n. m. Automatisme psychique pur, par lequel on se propose d’exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement

51. Dawn Ades, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978), 63.

52. Jean-Charles Gateau, *Paul Éluard et la peinture surréaliste*, 28.

réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale." Breton gives instructions for aspiring Surrealists on how to write automatically with a few key ingredients: putting oneself in a passive state, writing as quickly as possible without rereading or editing, and letting the mind focus on itself. Surrealism paradoxically turns to group activities to achieve discover the inner recesses of the mind. Practices such as hypnosis and trance writing depended on the whole group in the discovery of thought, involving an audience and a transcriber. The Surrealists believed that thought was "commune à tous" in poet Paul Éluard's terms, so that it could best be revealed through collaborative endeavors like trance-writing but also surrealist games, discussed below. Collaborative books were also produced through partnered automatic writing, most notably the 1919 automatic text *Les Champs magnétiques*, by Breton and Philippe Soupault. As a process intended to strip away the conscious mind, automatism required a fellow traveler. Louis Aragon writes of the production of *The Magnetic Fields* that: "c'est une exploration de la nuit, des abîmes où un homme seul n'aurait pu se risquer, où les épouvantes et les merveilles auraient tourné la tête d'un solitaire, l'aurait fait vaciller dans le gouffre... ...le regard double a seul permis à Philippe Soupault et à André Breton d'avancer sur la voie où nul ne les avait précédés, dans ces ténèbres où ils parlaient à voix haute."⁵³ The pairing of the

53. Louis Aragon, "L'Homme coupé en deux," in *L'Œuvre poétique* (Paris: Livre Club Diderot, 1974), 2:26.

double gaze and the single voice represents a tension between singular and plural unique to the partner collaboration, and already present in Surrealism's first book collaboration.

In the writing of *The Magnetic Fields*, Breton and Soupault initially set out to “noircir des pages,” as Breton puts it. The events that led to this experiment are recorded in the manifesto:

Un soir donc, avant de m'endormir, je perçus, nettement articulée au point qu'il était impossible d'y changer un mot, mais distraite cependant du bruit de toute voix, une assez bizarre phrase qui me parvenait sans porter trace des événements auxquels, de l'aveu de ma conscience, je me trouvais mêlé à cet instant-là, phrase qui me parut insistante, phrase oserai-je dire qui cognait à la vitre. J'en pris rapidement notion et me disposais à passer outre quand son caractère organique me retint. En vérité cette phrase m'étonnait; je ne l'ai malheureusement pas retenue jusqu'à ce jour, c'était quelque chose comme: “Il y a un homme coupé en deux par la fenêtre,” mais elle ne pouvait souffrir d'équivoque, accompagnée qu'elle était de la faible représentation visuelle d'un homme marchant et tronçonné à mi-hauteur par une fenêtre perpendiculaire à l'axe de son corps.⁵⁴

The germ of this strange image grew into *The Magnetic Fields*; it led Breton to practice with Soupault the trance-like writing that might produce similarly hallucinatory images. And while automatic writing was certainly done by individual authors, both the half-asleep state that Breton describes and the image itself suggest that the technique is linked to the presence of another. Sleep not only stills the conscious mind, it also opens the self to the other. Breton writes that he would like to sleep “pour me livrer aux dormeurs, comme je me livre à ceux qui me lisent, les yeux biens ouverts.”⁵⁵ The passivity of the self and the half-state, here between sleep and wakefulness, recur in other descriptions in

54. Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:334-5.

55. André Breton, “Manifeste du surréalisme” *Œuvres complètes*, 1:317.

the manifesto. This distinctive state of mind, that of the radio receiver tuned to the right frequency, is exactly the one that characterizes automatic writing.

In writing of the discovery of automatic writing, Breton describes how a phrase *came to him*, as if ready-made and not of his own construction, which then generates more poetry: “elle fit place à une succession à peine intermittante de phrases qui ne me surprirent guère moins et me laissèrent sous l’impression d’une gratuité telle que l’empire que j’avais pris jusque-là sur moi-même me parut illusoire.”⁵⁶ That the exercise of automatic writing, a free flow of thought without any filter, escapes not only the critical faculties of the subject but indeed subjectivity itself should be clear from Breton’s description of his and Soupault’s experiments, in which he observes an extraordinary similarity. Thought, then, seems unindivuated, pre-subjective. The Surrealists describe themselves merely as “appareils enregistreurs”⁵⁷ and Breton’s instructions for the “magic art of Surrealism” encourage practitioners to put themselves in a passive, receptive state. He tells readers to write or speak rapidly and unreflectingly, claiming “je me fie à la phrase suivante”⁵⁸ as if the sentences speak themselves in the trusting mouth of the surrealist orator. Automatic writing, then, constructs or mirrors a subject who is passive and who registers thought as something almost outside the self. Given this understanding, it is only natural that automatic writing would quickly become first and foremost a group practice. If we look at later collaborative projects, we should expect to see traces of this

56. Ibid., 325.

57. Ibid., 330.

58. Ibid., 335.

way of thinking about writing and creation, reflected in two authors who understand themselves as receptors to something outside themselves. Although Breton in no way proposes that this is merely a sensitivity to the other, the technique of automatic writing blurs the boundaries of both the author and the subject.

If we look at the history of automatic writing we will see that it arises out of what were two-person or group practices. Firstly, Breton acknowledges its origin in the psychoanalytic method of the “talking” cure that seeks to create an effortless flow of language. This practice pairs a patient with an analyst who prompts, poses questions, and sometimes simply transcribes what is being said. Secondly, Breton was influenced by the practices of mediums, especially Hélène Smith, at the time of the development of automatic writing.⁵⁹ Automatic writing was practiced by spiritualists who purported to transcribe the speech of spirits or ghosts, and often the seances of such mediums involved a group of people who together attempted to hear and to contact spirits. In fact, Breton describes surrealist automatic writing as “un dictée magique” or “ce murmure qui se suffit à lui-même,” and which he takes to arise out of a kind of “conscience universelle.”⁶⁰ Whether in the case of psychoanalysts or mediums, collaboration has a role to play. In the former’s practice, the psychoanalyst facilitates the patient’s knowledge of herself, or of her unconscious, prompting a flow of thought unimpeded by repressions and also acting as the recorder of those thoughts. The medium enters into a

59. André Breton, *Entretiens: 1913-1952*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 82.

60. Breton, *Entrée des médiums, Œuvres complètes* 1:274.

more ambiguous collaboration with the spirits who speak through him, opening himself up to a different world and allowing himself to become the transcriber for another entity.

We can recognize both of these types of automatic writing in Breton's version and in the practices of the Surrealists. There are various ways partners can interact, before or after the writing process, that mimic the tools of psychoanalysts and mediums. In some cases, partners can act as a springboard, with one co-writer asking questions or prompting the other, provoking a cascade of thought which even Breton admits can sometimes be difficult to trigger. We see this in the various surrealist permutations of the dialog. We have seen the passivity of the subject in automatic writing above, and that passivity can be aided by a collaborator. In the second case, a universal consciousness is more readily visible in a meeting of the minds. The passivity of the medium who transcribes something outside herself can be seen in the practice of writers who would write together and compare results afterward, seeking to find what was common, and therefore what might be universal, in their writings. Breton was enthralled with the results of his automatic writing collaboration with Soupault particularly when he saw something in common between their writings, which we will see in the analysis of *Les Champs magnétiques* below. We should also note the none too clearly defined movement Surrealism is performing when it engages in automatic writing. The divergence between psychoanalysis and spiritualism lies in the opposing goals of their practices; where one seeks to unveil the inner self by exploring the unconscious, the other tries to go beyond the individual and open itself to something larger. Given Breton's pursuit of a

“rapprochement en quelque sorte fortuit” of distant realities,⁶¹ it should not be surprising that Surrealism refused to align itself with one of these trajectories over the other. The push and pull of those two directions makes itself apparent in collaborations, where the individual and the universal are in constant negotiation.

Surrealist Games

As has been previously mentioned, the Surrealists made a habit of meeting regularly to engage in group activity, and this practice must not be underestimated in its creation of a pervasive atmosphere of collaboration. The Surrealists put stock in mere physical proximity, in the act of working in the same space even when not directly engaging with each other’s work. Alongside the practice of automatic writing and hypnotic trance, they invented or reinvented various games as a means of heightening creative energies and allowing the unconscious to flow freely, and as such these games bear a close relationship to automatic writing in both structure and purpose. Often, the products of these games were in fact published as creative works, but the outcome of the games was less important than the group activity itself. These kinds of practices would become a base for all later forms of collaboration, though more evident in some projects than in others. As we look at these formative early years, we will see that rather than encouraging collaboration through editing, revising, and signing, as the tracts did, these surrealist activities intentionally obstruct knowledge of other participants’ ideas and

61. Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:337.

contributions. Firstly, we will consider the hypnosis and trances used to produce automatic writing, a practice that is at the root of the surrealist movement, though eventually disavowed. The Surrealists also reappropriated parlor games, using their set forms to release individual control and to evade moral and social strictures. Perhaps the most famous of these games, the *cadavre exquis*, bridged the verbal-visual divide, because the Surrealists adapted it to drawing as well. Lastly, I will turn to collage as another example of collective artwork in the visual realm. Automatic writing, collages, and surrealist games aim to create collaboration in the unconscious, allowing a kind of collective unconscious, or what is common to all thought, to surface.

As we have seen, automatic writing and Surrealism were initially synonymous. After publication of *Les Champs magnétiques*, which will be discussed below, the Surrealists engaged in automatic writing frequently, sometimes individually but most often in groups. Typically, one surrealist would be put into a trance, often Desnos, who could fall into a sleeping state with incredible ease, or Crevel or Péret, and a second, such as Breton, would transcribe the speech of the dreamer. The use of a second person to mechanically copy down what is spoken by the dreamer further heightens the automation of writing and reflects the intention to photograph thought in action, negating the writer as author. In this early period of experimenting with new methods of revealing thought, methods that break down the borders between interior and exterior, it remains unclear to what extent automatic writing reflects the individual or the group. Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron writes that “la pensée de Breton oscille entre l’affirmation que par ces

techniques est mis au jour le patrimoine très singulier—talentueux ou non—de chacun, et l’assertion selon laquelle la matière mentale obtenue durant les séances collectives est commune à plusieurs.”⁶² I would argue that this is because the Surrealists are already beginning to perceive the communal nature of automatic writing and the asubjective yet collective space of the trance as reflective of the starting point from which the subject takes shape, mirroring the way the work of art arises out of the interaction between the participants. Chénieux-Gendron argues that the surrealist subject is “*entre ces deux pôles antithétiques—l’immolation d’une conscience romantique dans l’acte (nietzschéen) ou le geste (dadaïste) et, d’autre part, le regard introspectif ou l’auto-analyse par tous les moyens,*”⁶³ but we might reasonably argue that automatic writing represented the furthest point in its swing toward an annihilation of the subject, or its dissolution into a collective, undelineated unconscious. Indeed, the Surrealists eventually abandoned trances and hypnosis as a means of writing automatically when those practices unleashed too great a risk of violence.⁶⁴ Yet the attempt to make use of the presence of multiple collaborators to capture something of the universal or hyper-real continued to be the drive of surrealist group activity.

62. Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron, *Le Surréalisme* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 73.

63. *Ibid.*, 157.

64. In *Entretiens*, Breton describes one seance that led to multiple participants attempting suicide (95-96), including René Crevel, who would in fact commit suicide in 1935. In another instance of trance-induced violence, a hypnotised Desnos chased Éluard with a knife and had to be contained (96).

While group collaboration in automatic writing focused on the observers transcribing the automatic speaking of one dreamer, games involved numerous active participants. Yet these authors did not collaborate directly, because each remained unaware of what the other had written. Most of the games operate through keeping each person's contribution to the game secret from the other players. This circumvented any attempt, accidental or intentional, to create continuity between parts, to make a homogeneous work of art. At times, the resulting texts found their surreality in the disparity between the two parts, such as the dialogue game, whose mismatched questions and answers—“(Breton): Qu'est-ce que la fraternité? (Péret): C'est une oignon”⁶⁵—created a kind of double monologue instead of what we might normally think of as a conversation. Despite making no attempt to reconcile the parts of the text to one another, we should note the turn from texts like the dada *poème simultané*, which actively negated meaning. The dialogue game does something quite different: it links the discordant ideas through syntax. In fact, some of the dialogues reveal strange continuities that the Surrealists believed arose from the unconscious in the context of group collaboration.⁶⁶ Another game makes the simultaneous usage and subversion of structure even clearer: the syllogism game. Three participants played this game, each filling in one part of the structure of a syllogism “Tous... Or... Donc...” without viewing the other parts. While the syllogism is used to bring together distant realities, the a-logical progression from

65. *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 11, March 1928.

66. See for example “(Breton): Qu'est-ce qu'une flèche? (Peret): C'est un I qui a perdu son point.” *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 11, March 1928.

sentence to sentence defies the linear nature of rational thinking. Thus the work of art, the collaboration, was in some sense automated through the use of a linguistic structure.

Perhaps the most well-remembered surrealist game is the *cadavre exquis*, described by Breton as a “jeu de papier plié qui consiste à faire composer une phrase ou dessin par plusieurs personnes, sans qu’aucune d’elles puisse tenir compte de la collaboration ou des collaborations précédentes.”⁶⁷ In the game, a sentence was progressively written by participants who would fold over a sheet of paper such that what was previously written was unknown to the next writer. Like the above games, the *cadavre exquis* relies on a strict syntax to create readable sentences, which nonetheless become all the more shocking for their divergent content. The most well-known example is the sentence that gave the game its name: “le cadavre exquis boira le vin nouveau.” In the above definition, Breton stresses the importance of each person writing without any knowledge of what the others have written. This lack of knowledge can only be achieved through collaboration, and Breton confirms that “ce qui nous a, en effet, exaltés dans ces productions, c’est la certitude que, vaille que vaille, elles portent la marque de ce qui ne peut être engendré par un seul cerveau.”⁶⁸ Nor could it be produced, presumably, by two partners when one was merely imitating, illustrating, or elaborating on what the other had produced. In looking at later collaborations, we will face the question of how the

67. Breton, “Le cadavre exquis, son exaltation,” in *Œuvres complètes*, 4:701

68. Ibid.

Surrealists maintained the double monologue when composing together and not in ignorance of what each other was doing.

The *cadavre exquis* was also practiced in drawing, by the progressive drawing by 3-4 participants of a single body. In her article “This is Not a Drawing,” Susan Laxton comments on the fold that creates lines over the drawing, still visible on the unfolded paper.⁶⁹ She argues that these lines, which she calls a “kissing hinge,” mark both division and continuity on the drawn *cadavres exquis*: “they join and separate, couple and divide.”⁷⁰ We should also note, even if Laxton does not, the significance of the tactile in the hinges as she observes them, which cause these marvelous body parts to touch, creating continuity by means of physical nearness, even while the tension between the parts “could at any moment repel violently like polarized magnets.”⁷¹ She identifies this as the extraordinary, inorganic unity of the drawn *cadavre exquis*, the way that differences can coexist, even oppositionally, on the page.⁷² Likewise, the collaboration that happens in the *cadavre exquis*, whether verbal or visual, brings together individuals into a collective that harnesses their unconscious, yet without reducing them to a singular. The interaction between artists produces an artwork that is neither purely singular nor multiple, and that indecision between singularity and multiplicity will

69. Susan Laxton, “This is Not a Drawing,” *The Exquisite Corpse: Chance and Collaboration in Surrealism’s Parlor Game*, ed. Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren, Davis Schneiderman, and Tom Denlinger (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 29-48.

70. *Ibid.*, 34.

71. *Ibid.*, 32.

72. *Ibid.*, 31.

resonate through the surrealist movement, whether in collaborative works or non-collaborative ones.

The visual *cadavre exquis* borders very closely on another technique used extensively by the Surrealists, which is collage. Collages were also sometimes created collectively, sometimes explicitly as a variation on the exquisite corpse. For example, Adamowicz discusses one collaged *cadavre exquis* made by Breton, Jacqueline Lamba, and Yves and Jeannette Tanguy, which is composed of various cut outs such as an inverted balloon, birds, shoes, and a scale.⁷³ Collages can be considered a multi-author work even when cut and pasted by one person, because of their appropriation of pre-existing materials. Like automatic writing, which seems to happen to the subject rather than being produced, collage has an objective nature. If the Surrealists champion and develop the art of collage, it is because they saw it as intimately linked to a distinctive understanding of psychic reality that they held. Furthermore, it represented a means of exploring that psyche, of “photographing” the inner workings of the mind as something that is neither fully distinct and individual nor completely dissolved into the universal. Also like the *cadavre exquis*, collage begins to collapse the boundaries between the verbal and the visual, preparing the way for the poetic-artistic collaborations discussed in chapter four of this project. Just as the drawn *cadavre exquis* leaves folded lines to demarcate individual contributions, art and poetry collaborations leave no doubt as to their respective creators. Collage also makes clear its disparate parts. Because of the way

73. Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image*, 78.

“the scars left by the grafting of spare limbs remain visible,”⁷⁴ collage draws attention to the borders of individual elements within the image, unlike the verbal collaborations that often obscure knowledge of how and by whom each part was written.

A final form to be mentioned as a part of the games category and which was sometimes co-authored is the pastiche. Although not used extensively by the Surrealists, several projects border on the pastiche, using a pre-existing form or document as a structure in the same way that surrealist games use linguistic structures to yoke multiple contributions together. These texts also border on the category of the ready-made; like collage, they recycle ready-made elements, and become more broadly collaborative by using that which others have created. One early example is Éluard’s and Péret’s *152 proverbes mis au goût du jour* (1925). The Surrealists had a distinct fondness for proverbs. Adamowicz traces the reappropriation of proverbs as found fragments that can be endlessly reshaped, as in the example of “il faut battre le fer quand il est chaud,” which becomes “battre sa mère quand elle est jeune” in *152 proverbes mis au goût du jour*, and later “il faut battre les morts quand ils sont froids” in Desnos’s and Ray’s collaboration on *Étoile de mer* (1928).⁷⁵ Although Éluard and Péret wrote the proverbs separately, in what we will term parallel collaboration, the collaboration resembles the *cadavre exquis* and other games in the way it couches surprising content in a familiar form. In the same way, the collaboration between Michel Leiris and André Masson,

74. Ibid., 15.

75. Ibid., 75.

Glossaire j'y serre mes gloses, subverts the form of the glossary to surrealist ends. The glossary was initially published in parts in the *La Révolution Surréaliste* and later as a book. The terms of the so-called “glossary” do not have traditional definitions, but are followed by poetic, sometimes elliptical and sometimes surprisingly apt “glosses” that often pick up on the consonant and assonant qualities of the word, as seen in the title. Masson’s lithographs further frustrate the role of definition, and this is an especially significant rupture in resemblance, given that images in a glossary or dictionary of all places are expected to be identical to the words they illustrate.

The Surrealists also created a kind of pastiche of a dictionary, the *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme*, which was in fact an exhibition catalog for the 1938 international exhibition of Surrealism in Paris. Like the exhibition, it was organized by Éluard and Breton, who took text from various Surrealists to create the dictionary “entries,” some of which were more properly definitions than others. Although less ludic in nature than the *Glossaire*, which focuses primarily on pun and sound play, it demonstrates the Surrealists’ fascination with the reappropriation of form through collaboration. They tend to create these kinds of pastiches or game texts in concert with another author, rather than individually, and like with games, the pre-existing structure facilitates collaboration. The text that comes closest to true pastiche is Breton’s and Éluard’s “Notes sur la poésie,” first published in *La Révolution Surréaliste* in 1929, which rewrites against the grain an essay by Valéry, “Littérature.” The authors went through line by line to invert each thesis, also transplanting citations from Lautréamont in their frankensteinian creation. In

his preface to the Pléiade edition of Éluard's work, Lucien Scheler claims that not only did the writers take inspiration from Lautréamont's poetry, but also from his process: "s'inspirant d'un procédé déjà pratiqué par Lautréamont, ils inventèrent des idées 'à partir de la pensée d'autrui, par retournement de La Rochefoucauld, de Vauvenargues,' comme l'a formulé Aragon à propos des *Poésies* d'Isidore Ducasse."⁷⁶ Here, as in the double monologue proposed by the surrealist manifesto, the thoughts of the the other act as a springboard for the ideas of the writers, and collaboration becomes a question not of reciprocating to each other, and very possibly a kind of antithetical relationship that nonetheless provokes a shift in our perception of the world.

Dialog in Les Champs magnétiques

*Les Champs magnétiques*⁷⁷ was written before the publication of the surrealist manifesto, but Breton argues that "incontestablement, il s'agit là du premier ouvrage *surréaliste* (et nullement dada) puisqu'il est le fruit des premières applications systématiques de l'écriture automatique."⁷⁸ It comprises 8 chapters, a structure determined by Breton and Soupault before they began the writing process. Breton also indicates that he chose to pursue a first experiment in automatic writing with Soupault because of Soupault's personality, which seemed less vulnerable to the rational and moral

76. Lucien Scheler, Introduction to Éluard, *Œuvres complètes*, XLII.

77. André Breton and Philippe Soupault. *Les Champs magnétiques*, (Au Sans Pareil, Paris, 1920).

78. Breton, *Entretiens*, 62.

control exerted by society.⁷⁹ Thanks to accounts from Breton, Soupault, and Aragon, we know that the texts of *Les Champs magnétiques* were written sometime between the end of April and the beginning of June, 1919.⁸⁰ Breton states that they wrote the text in six to eight days.⁸¹ Lastly, with the help of the manuscripts of the text, it is possible to identify which poet authored the various sections. When Breton annotated the manuscript for a friend, he focused especially on the various speeds at which each section was written, which shows how significant speed was in automatic writing in general but in collaboration as well. From the beginning, this collaboration was marked by an attempt to allow the free flow of thought and to see what might come of two individuals working together in such a vein. Automatism's speed seeks to outrun the self, to not give the author a chance to reflect on his own work. This is made clear by notes Breton made on the manuscript, which emphasize the "passage du sujet à l'objet" and the "éclipse du sujet."⁸² The predetermining of subject matter and speeds aids in automating creation, allowing the writers to sideline aesthetic preoccupations and focus on transcribing thought.

There are two categories of collaboration at play in *Les Champs magnétiques*. The first is parallel collaboration, in which the authors wrote together and with the same project in mind, however they wrote separately and without consulting each other.

79. "Entre tous mes amis d'alors, il me parissait être celui qui fût le moins contaminé par le souci d'un rigeur apparente." Breton *Œuvres complètes*, 1:1128.

80. Ibid., 1122.

81. Breton, *Entretiens*, 62

82. Breton *Œuvres complètes*, 1:1129.

Several sections of *Les Champs magnétiques* reflect this style of collaboration: “Ne bougeons plus,” “Saisons,” “En 80 jours,” both series of “Le Pagure dit,” and, it would seem from the manuscripts, the first two sections of “La Glace sans tain.” Breton himself describes this separate-yet-together collaboration in the first surrealist manifesto, when he describes how he and Soupault began to write *Les Champs magnétiques* by trying to write at the speed of thought and without controlling the outcome, and “à la fin du premier jour, nous pouvions nous lire une cinquantaine de pages obtenues par ce moyen, commencer à comparer nos résultats.”⁸³ Clearly, one method of collaboration entailed separate yet simultaneous writing, with the authors only seeing each other’s work after that writing period ends. As already stated, Breton specifies that the poems in the chapter “Ne bougeons plus” were written before *Les Champs magnétiques* but through the same practice of writing together without interacting with each other’s work. Based on Breton’s notes and the handwriting in the manuscripts, it can be demonstrated that he wrote “Saisons” alone, while Soupault wrote “En 80 jours” alone,⁸⁴ notwithstanding their regular practice of writing together in close proximity. Likewise, Breton wrote the first series of poems for “Le Pagure dit: (I)” and Soupault the second series, “Le Pagure dit: (II),” which, according to evidence from the manuscript, were each written in a single session.⁸⁵

83. Ibid., 326.

84. Ibid., 1134.

85. Bonnet in Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:135.

The second category is responsive collaboration, in which one author writes in response to a text written by the other. Bonnet's work with the manuscripts and Breton's annotations seem to prove definitively that "La Glace sans tain" was written in several different sessions, with Breton's sections written in response to Soupault's first section. Likewise, the manuscript evidence as well as a close study of the vocabulary of "Eclipses" point strongly to a responsive collaboration, with Breton responding to Soupault's text. With less concrete evidence, Bonnet proposes that "Gants blancs" too comprises Soupault's initial writing and Breton's response based on grammatical corrections made by Breton. The case of "Barrières" is much clearer, as well as being unique and perhaps a sub-category of the responsive collaboration because it is based around dialog. This is the only section of *Les Champs magnétiques* that espouses two-way collaboration, in the sense that both authors are responding to each other's work. The above-listed chapters of *Les Champs magnétiques* could best be qualified as one-direction collaborations, because only one author is responding to the work of the other. Responsive collaboration differs greatly from the mode of production of Surrealist games, which hide each collaborator's contribution from the others. We will see both these modes of collaboration in later chapters, with poets or poet and artist working together in some collections, or with poet responding to artist in others. It will be important to consider how the Surrealists sought to maintain the distance between collaborating authors even in responsive collaboration, and all the more so in two-way collaborations.

We should also see these two different forms of collaboration in light of the two sources from which automatic writing springs: psychoanalysis and spiritualism. The second model of collaboration, responsive collaboration, echoes the structure of psychoanalysis, in which a psychoanalyst interacts with a patient. The former provides prompting that allows the latter to speak in a way that brings the unconscious to the fore. Responsive collaboration likewise seeks to use the springboard of one individual's thoughts to propel the other's imagination, though the response does not necessarily relate to the initial prompt. In parallel collaboration, both individuals become receptors for the "dictée magique" of automatic writing. Like the seance, however, it emphasizes physical proximity as a means of attaining the correct state of mind. The passivity and lack of interaction of parallel collaboration reveals what is common or universal in the thoughts of two people even when they do not actively work together. However, the traces of automatic writing's history do not mean that these two models of collaboration were undertaken with different purposes. In fact, quite the contrary, since the authors undertook to produce texts that would vary in method and speed of creation, but which they intended to cohere in a book.

Parallel collaboration in Les Champs magnétiques

The two chapters called "Le Pagure dit:" will be taken as our example of parallel collaboration, in which the authors wrote the texts in close proximity to one another and in a single session. These chapters, the last two except for the whimsical final

section, a calling card for Soupault and Breton, titled “La fin de tout,” each contain ten titled poems. According to Breton’s notes on the manuscript, these series were written at different speeds, with Breton’s poems, the first of the “Pagure” series, written at a slower speed than Soupault’s, the second “Pagure” series. These two texts may in fact be the ones produced in the very first attempt at automatic writing, described by Breton in his

Premier manifeste du surréalisme:

C’est dans ces dispositions que Philippe Soupault, à qui j’avais fait part de ces premières conclusions, et moi nous entreprîmes de noircir du papier, avec un louable mépris de ce qui pourrait s’ensuivre littérairement. La facilité de réalisation fit le reste. À la fin du premier jour, nous pouvions nous lire une cinquantaine de pages obtenues par ce moyen, commencer à comparer nos résultats. Dans l’ensemble, ceux de Soupault et les miens présentaient une remarquable analogie.⁸⁶

What appeals to Breton about the outcome of the experience is the resonance between writers that emerges, despite their disregard for what is produced. He also mentions Soupault’s inclination to title the automatic texts, a feature that other chapters do not share with “Le Pagure dit.” Whether or not the chapters called “Le Pagure dit” are exactly the ones described above, they certainly reflect one of Breton’s main interests in experimenting with collaborative automatic writing, which was to reveal thought as truly as possible. Breton writes that he sees in the two flows of writing “un choix considérable d’images d’une qualité telle que nous n’eussions pas été capables d’en préparer une seule de longue main.” The mode of production, on the one hand in terms of the speed of writing, but on the other in terms of the writing in close proximity to one another even if

86. Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:330.

not actively together, marks the texts, in Breton's eyes. "Le Pature dit," written together yet separately by Breton and Soupault, further emphasizes the dynamic of resemblance in the repetition of the same title. Like a microcosm of the whole book, these two chapters are held together by the tenuous thread of a title despite little attempt having been made to unify the themes of the texts. Of course, readers would not have been aware of whether these chapters were written by one or both authors, or how they collaborated. But the repetition of titles constitutes only one type of doubling we see in *Les champs magnétiques*: doubling that is not duplicating, two authors creating a single work. If we examine these chapters more closely, we can recognize some of the facets of automatic writing that permitted a unique kind of relationality, first, between the two authors and second, between the two texts.

Responsive collaboration in Les Champs magnétiques

"Eclipses," the third chapter of *Les Champs magnétiques*, gives rise to a different form of collaboration, a responsive collaboration that only operates in one direction. Breton wrote his sections after having seen Soupault's, meaning that he chose to allow for a more direct relationship between their texts, having been in contact with the shape and content of Soupault's writing. This marks a significant departure from the process of automatic writing described in his manifesto and used for the creation of the chapters titled "Le Pature dit," in which the author begins from a blank page. Instead, "Eclipses" provides the writer a point of departure, which is the text written by his co-

author. Although it cannot be absolutely proven that these texts were not written simultaneously and without consultation by each of the other's work, Bonnet has several compelling arguments for this chapter to be included with "La glace sans tain" and "Gants blancs" as ones for which Breton wrote his contribution after seeing Soupault's. For one, she notes Breton's use of pencil at one point and blue ink at another as well as his titling of Soupault's text. Her strongest evidence, however, is the highly visible correlation between the vocabulary of Soupault's text and that of Breton's. Finding such commonalities as "péchés originels" (Soupault) echoed by "péchés mortels" (Breton) in addition to "fumée," "insecte," "étoiles," and many more, she argues for two separate moments of writing, one in which Soupault wrote the first part of "Eclipses," and another in which Breton corrected Soupault's text, even rearranging some of the sentences, and wrote his part of the chapter. We should also add that the significance of two in the title, "Eclipses," as a moment when moon and sun intersect, reifies the doubling as overlap. Breton's writing manifests the same attention to continuity in "Gants blancs," in which he also appears to have written the end to the chapter with Soupault's beginning in mind. He changed his first sentence to the simple past tense to reflect Soupault's narrative, and this editing seems to have happened in the flow of writing rather than after.

In looking at the process of responsive collaboration, we can see that the community of two writers takes a more direct shape. While the identical titles of the sections "Le Pagure dit" create a doubling that is not doubling given the two different sets of poems, "Eclipses" pulls the two writers into a different alignment. In this text,

Breton writes as if haunted by Soupault, allowing Soupault's text to overshadow his own. He himself notes on the manuscript: "Eclipse bien entendu du sujet." Just as they are laid out in the pages of the book, in the former as texts side-by-side, and in the latter, continuous, undifferentiated, and sharing the same pages, the collaborative styles entail two different kinds of relationships between the authors. Both of these modes of creation will come into play in the later chapters of this project. In parallel collaboration, the relationality between the two texts appears as the product of the environment of automatic writing and the shared commitment to transcribing thought, so that the coincidences of thought that come to the surface speak to the universal. On the other hand, responsive collaboration puts the second author in an intentional relationship with the other, and calls on him to deal directly with a text to which he does not necessarily subordinate himself. Here we begin to see the difference from typical modes of collaboration, in which one part is usually subordinated to the other, most notably in the case of the written word and images, where images either illustrate a pre-existing text or the words serve as mere explicator of the image. But the doubling of text in "Le Pature dit" or Breton's continuation of "Eclipses" do not simply duplicate. We must look for a different model to understand what is happening in these collaborations.

It is also worth noting that while in these two chapters Soupault's and Breton's contributions remain whole and separate, with Breton's text following Soupault's, "La Glace sans tain" represents a more complex process of responsive collaboration. The four section chapter has text from Soupault followed by a responsive text by Breton, who then

embedded one of Soupault's paragraphs in his text. "La Glace sans tain" therefore creates a kind of belated dialog between the authors. It is reasonable to assume from this montage of Breton's that he saw within his own and Soupault's texts an implicit dialog happening due to their common goal of automatic writing or due to writing together in close proximity in the environment produced by these sessions. Even if the "dialog" between the texts happens *après coup*, I would argue that Breton saw this not as an artificial dialog created through editing, but as a revelation of the interaction of his and Soupault's thought even in the two initial texts that were written monologically. Nonetheless, Breton's editing of the texts, such as changing the subjects all to *nous* to match Soupault's, inarguably smooths the seams between the text. We have seen in the case of the *cadavre exquis*, both written and drawn, the complicated relationship to the fold and to division between parts. The question will recur in later collaborations: should the contours of each author's contribution be visible, or should the collaboration be seamless?

In the dialogic section "Barrières," we can say definitively that Breton intervened to disrupt continuity. He did so in order to advance a distinct concept of dialog, which also appears in the manifesto. "Barrières" is visually distinctive from the other chapters of *Les champs magnétiques*, and it also stands out for the reason that Breton explicitly names it in the first surrealist manifesto. Thus, we can assume that "Barrières" held a special importance for Breton. Furthermore, for "Barrières" the authors made use of a spoken form of collaboration, which the other sections lack, as far

as we know. We will look at this chapter as a two-way collaboration, in that both partners are responding to each other's words, unlike in the one-way collaborative chapters described above. One might also consider "Barrières" a two-directional collaboration because it entailed editing on the part of both of its authors. Bonnet notes that the presence of two handwritings in the editing made on the manuscript, where typically only Breton made modifications to other chapters of *Les Champs magnétiques*. Although Soupault generally seems to have opposed any changes made after the initial trance-like state of automatic writing, the manuscripts reveal that both authors edited "Barrières." Details from Soupault allow us to reconstruct the process of collaboration, which involved sitting face to face while one author read as quickly as possible what he had written, and the other had to respond immediately.⁸⁷ We have seen the fruits of these kinds of spoken automatism in the above discussion of trances and hypnosis, most notably in the case of Desnos. Although none of the collaborations in later chapters engage in this speech-based composition, I will argue that they very much pick up on Breton's vision of a particular kind of dialogue. Likewise, the desire for immediacy or even instantaneity, and a mode of creation that can capture thought in a flash, photograph-like, can be seen in much of surrealist poetry in the 1920s and even well into the 1930s.

On the page, "Barrières" is set to resemble visually the series of dialogs that took place to create it. Despite their couching in the visual and verbal structures of dialog,

87. Cited in Bonnet's notes in Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:135.

and their occasional surface-level resemblance to prosaic conversation (e.g., questions that are answered with a yes or no, themes that are taken up by the respondent, etc.), the dialogs are of course highly alinear and not typical of ordinary communication. In the first surrealist manifesto, just before a reference to “Barrières,” Breton describes the interaction between two surrealist interlocutors in the manifesto: “chacun d’eux poursuit simplement son soliloque, sans chercher à en tirer un plaisir dialectique particulier et à en imposer le moins du monde à son voisin ... les mots, les images ne s’offrent que comme tremplins à l’esprit de celui qui écoute.”⁸⁸ For Breton, the dialog serves as a model of creative collaboration, yet not the everyday dialog, but one in which no social niceties intervene to constrain each party’s thought trajectory. This description resonates with each of the modes of collaboration we have seen thusfar. In parallel collaboration, we see two “soliloques” that compose a dialog only because they are pursued in close proximity. In responsive conversation, Breton responded to Soupault’s text as a “tremplin à l’esprit,” capable of unleashing torrents of thought, but which might operate at a distance, launched far from the text that inspired them. Lastly, in the two-directional collaboration of “Barrières,” we see a disaffected dialog freed from the need to establish a thesis or to impose a topic of conversation on the interlocutor. Dialog, then, becomes much less unified, and becomes a tool to spur the mind to greater heights. This model, which allows for gaps between two soliloquies brought together in a dialog, may be the

88. Ibid., 1:336.

most helpful for considering collaboration in the intergeneric book projects by poets and artists that will be discussed next, as well as in the fourth chapter.

To what extent “Barrières” succeeded in avoiding the tendencies of the dialog remains a question. The elliptical nature of the dialogs in the chapter, their double soliloquy, in other words, can be understood as both natural and manufactured. In fact, some of the editing that took place on Barrières eliminated what Bonnet calls “points de suture,” the chains of logic or connection between the responses in the dialogs. She notes that Breton and Soupault removed from the final version and terms or phrases that created too much commonality between the parts of the dialog. Breton also went so far as to rearrange several replies in the third dialog to disrupt what must have been too direct a train of thought. Where in “La Glace sans tain” Breton intervened to create a more cohesive text, altering the subjects to match, in “Barrières” he chose to fragment the continuity between interlocutors. Although the *Les Champs magnétiques* was written some five years before the first surrealist manifesto, Breton seems to have held the same view of dialog then that he did when writing the manifesto. He sought to create a dialog in “Barrières” that spark a rapprochement of distant realities. Although it is arguable, one might contend that the artistic and poetic collaborations that marked the Surrealist movement would bring about a more complete version of the two-soliloquy dialog that Breton hoped for, even in the case of responsive collaborations that only entail one-directional collaboration.

Although Breton nowhere states at what point or why he decided to pursue automatic writing with a colleague after a brief period of experimentation on his own, it seems only natural that the technique would lead to collaborative work. *Les Champs magnétiques* embodies a variety of methods for creating collaborative texts, and is a true experimental text in this sense. The surrealist practice of collaboration begins in the context of automatic writing, and that heritage will remain visible in the collaborations considered later in this project, even when the actual practice of automatic writing is abandoned. The tension between automatic writing as pursuit of universal thought or as exploration of the subject can be seen in Breton's own writings. If the words spoken in the surrealist dialog are only important as a "tremplin de l'esprit," is thought merely a way of exploring the subject? If the purpose of automatic writing is to register pure thought, then is the subject completely eclipsed? These questions will be important to consider as we look at the relationship established between two collaborating authors. In projects where the authors worked together closely, it is clear that the environment of physical proximity and dedication to the project set the tone for separate work coming together on the page. Whatever resonance there was between the separate parts of the collaboration must surely result from these practices, since no attempt at cohesion was made. In poetic collaborations like "L'Immaculée Conception," discussed in chapter three, and artistic-poetic collaborations like "Les Malheurs des immortels," discussed in chapter four, the parallel collaboration that takes place must be understood in light of automatic writing's emphasis on the universal nature of thought. On the other hand, in

responsive and dialogic collaborations, the idea of a double soliloquy brings questions of resemblance into play, as the relationship between collaborators becomes more direct. Next we will turn to these forms of collaboration seen in collaborations between poets and artists. Although the models of collaboration are similar to those discussed in *Les Champs magnétiques*, collaboration that happens across genres brings a new set of problems, especially to do with resemblance. Breton's concluding image in *Les Champs magnétiques*, a calling card with his name and Soupault's, followed by a final non-identical double, "Bois et Charbons," is one last elliptical conversation that puts himself and his co-creator in a relationship of resemblance and difference.

Outgrowths of Automatism in the 1930s

In early art and poetry collaborations, the partnership between poet and artist was often shaped by automatic practices. These early collaborations embody Breton's notion of the "conscience universelle"⁸⁹ speaking through two individuals. At the same time, art and poetry volumes provided greater space for separate interests than verbal collaborations, as the images were not illustrations as such. Nevertheless, even in collaborations that were only loosely shared projects, the Surrealists saw a sometimes indefinable form of influence on both partners. For the 1926 *C'est les bottes de 7 lieues: Cette phrase "Je me vois,"*⁹⁰ coauthors André Masson and Robert Desnos created their

89. Breton, "Entrée des médiums," in *Œuvres complètes*, 1: 274.

90. Robert Desnos and André Masson, *C'est les bottes de sept lieues cette phrase "je me vois"* (Paris: Galerie Simon, 1926).

respective halves of the book in a trance state, and saw their creations a kind of discovery. Desnos regularly wrote poetry in a hypnotic state, while Masson was known for his automatic drawings, for which the artist draw freely without an intended subject, and then review the drawing and add minor touches to liberate the image that the lines suggested. Masson also worked with Michel Leiris on the 1925 *Simulacre*,⁹¹ the poems and artwork for which were both produced in Masson's studio. Poet and artist often composed at the same time and in each other's presence, a fact Leiris comments on in his essay collection *Zébrage*: "Simulacre... ...signé de nos deux noms jumelés, car je tenais à montrer que, conçus dans l'ambiance de cet atelier et imprégnés tant des œuvres que des propos du maître de maison, ils représentaient moins une série de textes qui ensuite auraient été illustrés, que le résultat d'une quasi-collaboration."⁹² Leiris's own account of the book's creation inverts the expected relationship, stating the influence of the artist on the poet rather than the other way around. It also emphasizes the central role of shared space in inspiring the poet and the artist, who nonetheless pursued their own separate ideas for *Simulacre*.

In the 1930s, Surrealism began to move away from the emphasis on anonymity and asubjectivity that had conditioned creativity in general and collaborative work in particular. 1929 was a year of turbulence in the surrealist movement; the group divided into two factions, one led by Breton and the other coalescing around Georges Bataille.

91. Michel Leiris and André Masson, *Simulacre* (Paris: Editions de la Galerie Simon, 1925).

92. Michel Leiris, *Zébrage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 222.

The schism provoked Breton to write a second surrealist manifesto outlining their commitment to political and social revolution. In particular, the arrival of Salvador Dali galvanized new developments in the theoretical apparatus of the movement through his interest in paranoia. In the late 1920s, the Surrealists already had madness on the mind: in 1928, the eleventh issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*⁹³ featured an excerpt from Breton's *Nadja*, about his relationship with a mentally unstable woman and an article on "Le Cinquantenaire de l'hystérie." Dali enthusiastically reinterpreted automatism in light of his own preoccupations with psychoanalysis, with the resulting theory of a "méthode paranoïaque-critique" delineated in the first issue of Surrealism's new journal, *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*. Importantly, he argues for a more active version of automatism: "je crois qu'est proche le moment où, par un processus de caractère paranoïaque et actif de la pensée, il sera possible (simultanément à l'automatisme et autres états passifs) de systématiser la confusion et de contribuer au discrédit total du monde de la réalité."⁹⁴ The turn toward the active, the critical half of the paranoiac-critical method, also entails greater subjective freedom for the individual. Laurent Jenny observes an openness to interpretation in the change of terminology: "les produits de l'automatisme sont compris comme des 'interprétations délirantes' (Dali) et non plus des 'faits mentaux' objectifs (Aragon)."⁹⁵

93. *La Révolution surréaliste* 11 (15 March 1928).

94. Salvador Dali, "L'Âne pourri," *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, no 1 (1930): 9-10.

95. Jenny, "Les Aventures de l'automatisme," 8.

The art and poetry collaborations in the 1930s are shaped by the shift away from thinking about the author as a mere recording device. The responsive practice begun in *Les Champs magnétiques* flourished in art books that embodied the freedom of the surrealist dialog, in which each side of the conversation is expected to be detached from and not imposing on the other, yet at the same time is contingent, as response, upon the words of the other speaker. Eluard in particular produced numerous collaborations with artists during the 30s and beyond that emphasized the freedom of poet and artist in response. His reverse “illustrations” of artwork highlight the reimagining of the notion of illustration, from simple paraphrase of pre-existing material to active interpretation, most notably in *Les Mains libres* (1937), featuring Man Ray’s drawings “illustrés par des poèmes de Paul Eluard,” and the 1947 *A l’intérieur de la vue*, *8 poèmes visibles*, for which Eluard wrote poems inspired by Max Ernst’s collages. Even when the traditional order was maintained, as in the 1935 publication of the poem *Les Nuits partagées*—analyzed in chapter four of the current study—with drawings by Dali or the 1947 reedition of *Poésie et vérité* with etchings by Oscar Dominguez, the divergence between text and image is manifest. In these collections, art and poetry perform the delirious interpretation espoused by Dali.

Conclusion

In the earliest examples of collaboration and its theorization that we have looked at, the separation between co-laborers that allows them to pursue a conversation

of disaffected soliloquies is achieved through one of two means. In the first, it is achieved through parallel collaboration, in which the authors intentionally maintain ignorance of what each other has written. This is also the case in surrealist games. In the second, it is achieved through automatism, with the authors responding to each other's work "automatically," rather than following a theme or developing a thesis as in ordinary conversations. Even if these techniques would fall by the wayside in the course of Surrealism's development, Breton's fantasy of the disinterested dialog remains at the core of collaborative practices. The question that must be answered in chapters three and four is how the distance created by automatic writing and parallel collaboration can be maintained even when the means of creation evolves. The surrealist ethos of dialog is a strange one, to be sure. It is completely disengaged from any concern for politeness, but each soliloquy leaves no room for egoism and avoids imposing itself on its neighbor. At the same time, we have clearly seen that the practice of writing together fundamentally impacts the work that is produced, and this surrealist belief is all the more clear in the separate-but-together creation of parallel collaboration. This project will make the case that surrealist collaborations reveal a particular understanding of the genesis of the subject, which is reflected in both the practices and the products of collaboration.

CHAPTER TWO

SELF AND WORLD: PAUL ÉLUARD'S REIMAGINING OF THE LYRICAL SUBJECT

Introduction

Paul Éluard is considered to be one of the foremost poets of Surrealism, and is most known for his 1926 collection *Capitale de la douleur*. Alongside André Breton and Louis Aragon, he was a leader of the movement, contributing to key projects in the 1920s and 30s, including the surrealist journals *La Révolution Surréaliste* (1924-1929), *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (1930-1933), and *Minotaure* (1933-1939), the poetic collaboration *L'Immaculée Conception* in 1930 with André Breton, discussed here in chapter 3, and the 1938 *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme*, also with André Breton, for the *Exposition internationale du Surréalisme* in 1938. However, as early as his 1926 *Les Dessous d'une vie*, Éluard diverged from the surrealist credo by making distinctions between poetry, dream texts, and automatic writing:

Il est extrêmement souhaitable que l'on n'établisse pas une confusion entre les différents textes de ce livre : rêves, textes surréalistes et poèmes. Des rêves, nul ne peut les prendre pour des poèmes. Ils sont, pour un esprit préoccupé de merveilleux, la réalité vivante. Mais des poèmes, par lesquels l'esprit tente de désensibiliser le monde, de susciter l'aventure et de subir des enchantements, il est indispensable de savoir qu'ils sont la conséquence d'une volonté assez bien définie, l'écho d'un espoir ou d'un désespoir formulé. Inutilité de la poésie: le

monde sensible est exclu des textes surréalistes et la plus sublime lumière froide éclaire les hauteurs où l'esprit jouit d'une liberté telle qu'il ne songe même pas à se vérifier. (ŒC 1:1388)

His emphasis on the role of the will in poetry marks a definitive break with Bretonian theory of the time, which described automatism, and thus surrealist poetics writ large, in terms of the passivity of the author, using phrases like the “éclipse du sujet” or the “conscience universelle” to describe the inner workings of surrealist creative production. However, Éluard was interested in automatism as a technique for breaking down the divide between interior and exterior worlds. In a 1937 essay called *Premières vues anciennes*, he revised the distinctions he had attempted to draw between poetry and automatism, claiming that “[l’écriture automatique] augmente, développe seulement le champ de l’examen de conscience poétique, en l’enrichissant. Si la conscience est parfaite, les éléments que l’écriture automatique extrait du monde intérieur et les éléments du monde extérieur s’équilibrent. Réduits alors à égalité, ils s’entremêlent, se confondent pour former l’unité poétique.” (550). For Éluard, automatism served to extend poetic consciousness and to put into balance internal and external worlds, and his poetry reflects the formation of the self as it takes place within this primal unity. This chapter will look at two of his major poetic collections in the 1920s and 30s—*Capitale de la douleur* (1926) and *La Vie immédiate* (1932)—to trace Éluard’s reconfiguration of the poetic *je*.

Éluard echoed Lautréamont in calling for poetry “faite par tous, non par un” in speeches and essays during his career, with the intention of uniting poetry and everyday

life, but also with the goal of removing the lyric from the realm of personal expression. If Breton sought the “passage du sujet à l'objet,”⁹⁶ Éluard took a more nuanced approach that still allowed for the “volonté” he describes above. Poetry provided Éluard with a unique space in which to explore the meeting of interior world and exterior world through the lyrical subject. Lyrical poetry is neither mimetic nor autobiographical, emanating from an “I” impossible to pin down, but generally agreed to be a form of self-expression. Käte Hamburger’s influential work on literary genres identifies the lyric as a reality-utterance emanating from a self, though not that of the empirical author.⁹⁷ At this border between the real and the imaginary, between the self as personal or universal, Éluard begins an intervention into the concept of the individual. As Surrealism more broadly sought to rewrite the boundary between self and world, in through the resurgence of the unconscious in everyday life, in the encounter and the found object, and in language as the product of a collective, Éluard shapes a lyrical subjectivity that emerges out of a pre-existing collective. The permeability of this subject can seem to abolish any central figure of self. In her study of *Capitale de la douleur*, Corinne Bayle-Hubner writes of his poetry as a “lyrisme moderne dans lequel le ‘je’ laisse la place à l’expression des choses du monde,”⁹⁸ echoing early studies such as *Pierre Emmanuel’s Le Je universel chez Paul*

96. Breton *Œuvres complètes*, 1:1129.

97. Käte Hamburger, *The Logic of Literature*, tr. Marilynn J. Rose (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973)

98. Corinne Bayle-Hubner, *Paul Éluard, le coeur absolu : étude de Capitale de la douleur (1926)*.(Mont-Saint-Aignan: Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2013), 85.

Éluard⁹⁹ that have often focused on the slippage in the subject as expressing a movement toward universality.

By focusing on two poems each from *Capitale de la douleur* and *La Vie immédiate*, this study will revisit the issue of the Éluardian subject. Éluard's early poetry, influenced by the theories of automatism discussed in chapter one, deploys a subjectivity in verses that position the human in a dynamic blending with the world. The perceptual mode of the section *Répétitions* in particular presents the individual through the language of the body instead of using pronouns. Emphasizing visibility and transparency, these poems celebrate the union of body and world instead of the transcendental ego. Toward the end of the volume, the self arises out of the face-to-face with the other, whose presence calls the self into being. *La Vie immédiate* draws implications from this conception of the self in its approach of the other, addressed directly through the female *toi* or indirectly in the *elle*. For the poem's *je*, this female other incarnates the whole world and all possible others while remaining distinctly herself, a dichotomy captured in the title of one of the last poems of the collection, "Une pour toutes," and the alternative repeated in the poem, "Une ou plusieurs." *La vie immédiate* establishes a poetics of contact through asyndeton and erotic touch that finds in the encounter of individuals and objects a shaping of the self rather than its erasure. As a part of Surrealism's transition from anonymity to dialogism in both the creative process and the expression of subjectivity in poetry and image, Éluard's poetics reveal the emergence of the self out of

99. Pierre Emmanuel, *Le Je universel chez Paul Eluard* (Paris: G.L.M., 1948).

the collective in the oscillation between singularity and plurality that he terms resemblance, with implications for a conception of self that avoids solipsism.

The Co-Presence of Self and World in 1920s Surrealism: Capitale de la douleur

Capitale de la douleur is one of Éluard's most well-known collections, and among the most celebrated of all the Surrealists' works. It bears many of the hallmarks of early surrealist thinking, and was clearly influenced by the techniques and theories delineated in the previous chapter, particularly from automatism, dreaming, and the surrealist image. *Capitale de la douleur* contains the collections *Répétitions* (1922) and *Mourir de ne pas mourir* (1924) as well as new poetry written for the collection, added poems in *Les petits justes* and all new poems in *Nouveaux poèmes*. While the composition of these works spans four years and bridges Éluard's involvement with Dada and the establishment of the surrealist movement, the poems share a foundational perspective on the self's unity with the world. Focusing on two key poems at the beginning and end of *Capitale de la douleur*—"Suite [2]" and "Celle de toujours, toute"—this study will trace an evolution from an apparent subjectlessness to the face-to-face of *je* and *tu* at the end of the collection. The suppression of the *je* to be a means of imperatives and infinitives and the transparency of the gaze allow the poet to reveal the self's expansion into the world. However, the poems written four years later in Éluard's career focus on the relationship to the other as a site in which the self materizes in bodily

form. These developments anticipate the turn to an interest in intersubjectivity in later collections such as *La Vie immédiate*.

The Subjectless Lyric

Répétitions opens *Capitale de la douleur* with a set of distinctly short poems, many of which consist of five to eight verses, and several of as few as three verses.¹⁰⁰ When *Répétitions* appeared in 1922, the poems were accompanied by collages by Max Ernst, and the collection was published almost simultaneously with another collaboration between the poet and the artist, *Les Malheurs des immortels*. In her article on the latter text, Sonia Assa has shown how both poems and images were created through elaboration of Ernst's titles and through the subversion of quotations.¹⁰¹ *Répétitions* manipulates language along similar lines, with an aphoristic poetics focused on brevity. The short poems also mimic the fragmentary nature of the art of collage. That brevity is intensified by the remarkable lack of pronouns in many poems as well as by the predominance of verbs and especially of infinitives and imperatives. Poems in the next two sections carry forward this distinctive style and syntax most visible in *Répétitions*. In conjunction with thematizations of speed, flight, birds, and water, the rhythms of Éluard's poetry impact the lyrical subject, which is often absent from the poem in its most recognizable form, the word *je*. However, I will argue that despite the apparent absence of the subject, the

100. "Porte Ouverte" (EC 1:105), "La Riviere" (107), and "Lesquels?" (115).

101. Sonia Assa, "Of Hairdressers and Kings: Ready-Made Revelations in Les Malheurs des immortels," *The French Review* 64, no. 4 (Mar., 1991): 643-658

Éluardian lyric is not interested in vacating the self from the poem, but rather in materializing the self in its primal union with the world, and ultimately the development of a perceptual sense of self.

It may seem coincidental that Éluard avoids the first, second, and third person pronouns in many of the short poems in *Répétitions*, but their absence is stark in longer poems such as the emblematic “Suite [2],” on which this study will focus to show the development of a subject in the world:

SUITE [2]

Dormir, la lune dans un œil et le soleil dans l'autre,
Un amour dans la bouche, un bel oiseau dans les cheveux,
Parée comme les champs, les bois, les routes et la mer,
Belle et parée comme le tour du monde.

Fuis à travers le paysage,
Parmi les branches de fumée et tous les fruits du vent,
Jambes de pierre aux bas de sable,
Prise à la taille, à tous les muscles de rivière,
Et le dernier souci sur un visage transformé. (106)

The poem's opening with a subjectless infinitive echoes many others in *Répétitions*, an apersonal and atemporal placeholder that seems to beckon the reader to fill it. As the poem continues, the feminine adjectives begin to shape an implicit *toi* to whom the poet addresses himself. The reveal structures many of the poems in the collection, in which the subject arises belatedly, and at times only implicitly. Éluard's use of the infinitive permits an initial subjectlessness that most frequently gives way to intersubjectivity rather than to the self-expressing *moi*. Instead, the *nous* and the *toi* often take center stage, as is the case with the female other who appears only through the adjectives of “Suite [2].” This

implicit presence of the other becomes apparent in the second stanza, which transforms the verbal tone from infinitive to imperative. The imperative is central to *Répétitions*, in which numerous poems address themselves to an unnamed other by use of imperatives.¹⁰²

The imperative introduces a present-yet-absent individual, identifiable only through the verb itself. The subject and the *tu* arise out of the language of the poem. If the imperative makes command or a request to the other, it invokes the presence of the other, but erases *je* and *tu*. “Les Moutons” is set in motion by the imperative, but proceeds to avoid any use of pronouns:

LES MOUTONS

Ferme les yeux visage noir
Ferme les jardins de la rue
L’intelligence et la hardiesse
L’ennui et la tranquillité
Ces tristes soirs à tout moment
Le verre et la porte vitrée
Confortable et sensible
Légère et l’arbre à fruits
L’arbre à fleurs l’arbre à fruits
Furent. (109)

The imperative not only seems to excise the *toi*; it also takes the place of the *moi* in many verses, such as in the repeated call “Espérons / Et / Espérons” (“A la minute,” 117).

Imperatives often come into play in verses that focus on language, such the invitation “parlons” (“La Rivière,” 107) or the command “parle” (“Sans musique” 83). To further the removal of these lyrics from the notion of poetry as self-expression, speech itself

102. See “Porte ouverte,” “Suite,” “La Rivière,” “Les Moutons,” “Sans musique,” “Lesquels?,” “A la minute,” and “Œil de sourd”

becomes a kind of being in *Capitale de la douleur*. In “La Parole,” speech itself takes up the subject position, with the *je* clearly spoken by the titular “Parole:” “J’ai la beauté facile et c’est heureux. / Je glisse sur les toits des vents. / Je glisse sur le toit des mers” (106). In the repetition of the verb “glisser,” the fluidity of speech resembles the unrestrained quality of writing the Surrealists hoped to achieve in automatic writing; undeniably, the poet seeks to write with “la beauté facile” that seems effortless in its rapidity. Yet that very quality demands that the poet who writes efface himself: “Je ne connais plus le conducteur” (106). Benoît Conort observes that in this poem “le poète est celui qui est traversé par la parole, qui la transmet (comme un fil conducteur) sans la diriger consciemment.”¹⁰³ It seems that poetry, like automatic writing, demands that the poet vacate himself from the poem. Unlike the infinitive, however, the imperatives in *Répétitions* invoke the subject through its absence, making room in the verses for the presence of persons, first, second, and third. From “Dormir” to “Fuis” in “Suite [2],” the *toi* moves out of apparent passivity into bodily activity. The verb tenses of *Répétitions* do not erase the subject, but position it relationally through imperatives that build a connection between the unstated lyrical subject and his other.

103. Benoît Conort, “Crise de l’amour, crise de la langue,” *Lectures de Paul Éluard* (Rennes: Presses Univ. de Rennes, 2013) 96.

The Dynamic Subject

The imperative “Fuis” in “Suite [2]” epitomizes the verbs of *Répétitions*, which place extraordinary emphasis on bodily mobility. The lexical field of *Capitale de la douleur* is rife with the terminology of running, flying, and synonymous verbs. In the opening verses of “Plus près de nous,” verbs run riot: “Courir et courir délivrance / Et tout trouver tout ramasser” (105) The infinitives allow the dynamism of Éluard’s poetics to carry forward unabated, as if the verses launch themselves into the motion described. Not only the human body gets caught up in movement; such is the mobility of these poems that even trees kick up their roots and run: “Légère et l’arbre à fruits / L’arbre à fleurs l’arbre à fruits / Fuiant.” (“Les Moutons,” 109). The direction of *fuir*, in particular, speaks to the significance of motion in the lyrical subject. To flee is to flee *away* rather than toward, an outward mobility captured in the two transitional verse of “Suite [2]:” “Belle et parée comme le tour du monde. / Fuis à travers le paysage.” These verses connect not only the physical displacement of the body, but a broader sense of connection between self and world. Mobility is a mode of understanding the outward extension of self into environment, which resembles and is resembled by the self in the *comme* of comparison. Speed becomes hyperbolic in the figure of the bird,¹⁰⁴ as running also undergoes a transformation, from “courir” to flight, attaining the air that carries not only birds but also sound. The attention on language, speech, and sound combines with the

104. For more on the figure of the bird in Éluard’s work, see Claude Maillard-Chary, *Paul Éluard et le thème de l’oiseau: la phénixologie du grain d’aile* (Paris: Harmattan, 2009).

emphasis on speed in the motif of wind and birds. The invisible lines of movement are captured in the bird, but also in the human body, in the association between bird and hair made by “Suite [2]:” “un bel oiseau dans les cheveux.”¹⁰⁵ In *The Poetry of Dada and Surrealism*, Mary Ann Caws has also commented on the presence of birds in surrealist poetry and their vertical nature, which is “pure freedom,” allowing them to escape categorization¹⁰⁶ and therefore to play a role in the surrealist project of expansion and extension¹⁰⁷.

The subject’s dynamism is also reflected in the repetition that is named in the title and characterizes the collection on multiple levels, from the repetition of sounds, to that of words, to that of titles. In “Suite [2],” the fourth verse echoes and expands on an adjective from the previous verse: “Parée comme les champs, les bois, les routes et la mer, / Belle et parée comme le tour du monde.” Like the opening lines of “Plus près de nous”—“Courir et courir délivrance / Et tout trouver tout ramasser”—the use of synonyms seems to repeat, but with a difference that creates its own forward motion. Serge Martin notes that even repetition, which might seem static, participates in the mobility of the poem: “[‘Courir’ et ‘Délivrance’] ne sont pas de simples répétitions puisque les positions syntagmatiques bougent la valeur de l’élément répété dans une sémantique sérielle... ..les positions sont entièrement rejouées dans un mouvement qui,

105. “Nul [2]” also draws this parallel: “Il pose un oiseau sur la table et ferme les volets. Il se coiffe, ses cheveux dans ses mains sont plus doux qu’un oiseau” (CEC 1:111).

106. Mary Ann Caws, *The Poetry of Dada and Surrealism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), 27-28.

107. *Ibid.*, 34.

des petites aux grandes unités, défait toute stase possible.”¹⁰⁸ “Suite [2]” sets in motion this dynamic repetition not only within the poem, but as a part of the collection’s skeleton, sharing the same name as the second poem in the collection, a “Suite” that features a parallel structure: “Pour l’éclat du jour des bonheurs en l’air / Pour vivre aisément des goûts des couleurs / Pour se régaler des amours pour rire...” (103). The recurrence of “Suite” is not an isolated incident in *Capitale de la douleur*: “Max Ernst” (103 and 187), “Nul” (107 and 111), “À côté” (112), and “À la flamme des fouets” (180-181) all head two different poems. Structurally, the speed and repetition of these poems create a lyrical overflow as if the collection generates itself: “la rivière que j’ai sous la langue” (107).

The title “Suite” echoes in the poem and redoubles the meaning of the imperative “fuis” that launches the second stanza of “Suite [2].” The outward flight of the self extending into the world figures the self as a wake through the world, both merging with and marking the world with its presence. “Suite [2]” expresses the sense of the body continuous with the world: “la lune dans un œil et le soleil dans l’autre,” “Jambes de pierre aux bas de sable,” and the final verse’s “visage transformé” (106). The seemingly subjectless world of *Répétitions* represents the initial formlessness of the subject, which flows into the world as the world flows into it, rapid and unmediated. The Éluardian verse bursts with the joy of a limitless experience of subjectivity, one that embraces the experience of the world as a part of the self. In particular, as seen in “Suite [2],” it roots

108. Serge Martin, “La voix du poème relation,” *Lectures de Paul Éluard*, 134.

the outward explosion of the self in bodily motion. Like other poems in *Capitale de la douleur* and especially in the *Répétitions* section, “Suite [2]” expresses this perceptually, through vision, tactility, and materiality, showing the co-presence of body and world, and the body as shaping our perception of the world: “Prise à la taille, à tous les muscles de la rivière” (106). In the direct contact between body and world, the border between the two is blurred; it becomes unclear what is being compared and what is made analogy: “Ciel lourd des mains, éclairs des veines” (“L’Ombre au soupirs,” 107) The “gymnastique à l’infini” (“La Mort dans la conversation,” 114) of the dynamic body of *Capitale de la douleur* in general and *Répétitions* in particular is less a matter of erasure of the self than of the lyrical subject’s co-presence with the world. Mary Ann Caws describes the way in which “the poet’s consciousness begins with the consciousness of any other being, his form begins with any other form,”¹⁰⁹ and it is important to emphasize that what may seem like an act of erasing boundaries is in fact a return to this beginning point.

Vision and Transparency in the Body

Throughout Éluard’s career, eyes and vision remain central to his poetry. References to eyes, eyelids, and the gaze proliferate, so numerous as to overwhelm attempts to analyze their significance. The eye is often cannibalized by the Surrealists, who seek to undermine its association with logic, reason, and understanding, as seen in Ernst’s cover artwork for *Répétitions*, which shows an eyeball penetrated by a wire

109. Mary Ann Caws, *The Poetry of Dada and Surrealism*, 143.

thread, or in the verses of *Capitale de la douleur*: “celui qui traîne un couteau dans les herbes hautes, dans les herbes de mes yeux” (“La Malédiction,” 146-147). The gaze itself can threaten violence or dissection, “les ciseaux des yeux” (*Les petits justes* VI, 173). The removal of the eye from the body or the implantation of other objects in the eyes also speaks to the way the gaze operates across distances. Through sight, the subject extends itself into the world, perceiving the horizons which might be attained. It is instantaneous, transporting us across great expanses. Like the speed and dynamism at play in this period of Éluard’s work, the gaze offers a possibility of instant displacement: “Tes yeux sont revenus d’un pays arbitraire” (“L’égalité des sexes,” 137). It immediately transports the gazer to another place. The eyes, in this sense, become the most mobile part of the body, transporting a person to another realm, even a non-physical one: “Ce sont ses yeux qui la ramènent dans mes songes” (“L’as de trèfle,” 179). “Suite [2]” captures the vast stretch of the gaze by uniting the eye with celestial bodies: “la lune dans un œil et le soleil dans l’autre” (106). Vision plays a significant role in Éluard’s embedding of the lyrical subject into the world.

The sun of the eye shines out onto the world instead of being merely a receptacle for light, as if vision started in the eyes instead of ending there. Other poems pick up the on this motif of the eyes as a source of light, echoing the medieval imagining of vision as an outward ray, and suggesting that vision is produced in the eyes: “Et c’est dans les yeux de l’enfant... ...que naît la lumière” (“Le plus jeune,” 188). As the point of intersection with the world the eyes not only shed light on their surroundings, but reflect

the light, both origin and reflector, sun and moon. The poet draws together the activity of the mind and the world through vision, not mediating between, but making both transparent to each other. The eyes, through their association with speed and light, become the seat of thought: “il mettrait dans tes yeux des pensées innocentes, des flammes, des ailes, et des verdure que le soleil n’inventa pas” (“La nuit,” 193). In “La nuit,” the “verdure” that spring up in the eye thrive from an internal light rather than from the sun’s. Vision opens up a space at the edge of the body in which thought can flourish: “O jardins de mes yeux!” (“Absences,” 177). However, the very mobility and openness of the gaze make it a site of both strength and weakness in the body.

The eyes make the body permeable, a theme which will be discussed at greater length below. Eyes, like lenses, work because they are invisible to us, and because they function as entryway, and in Éluard’s understanding, the origin of the body’s directedness to the outside. The eyes function as a threshold space: “l’asile de ses yeux a des portes sans nuages” (“À la flamme des fouets,” 180), but the doors open in both directions. “À la flamme des fouets” demonstrates that this openness spreads to the whole body, from the corridors of the throat to the “fentes de ton sourire” (Ibid.). This permeability further threatens the subject in the context of an encounter with the other. Éluard suggests that to look into the eyes of the other breaks down the space between them: “Entre nous est la transparence de coutume / entre les regards éclatants” (“Absences,” 176). Instead of the opacity of skin, the eyes offer no resistance in their transparency, in their luminous gaze. At the same time, the intersection of those gazes becomes so bright as to blind the eyes,

and yet there is no respite: “je ne cligne pas des yeux” (Ibid.) recalling “L’amoureuse,” in which “elle a toujours les yeux ouverts / et ne me laisse pas dormir” (140). The poet compares the intensity of this reciprocal light to a “mélange de miroirs” (“Absences,” 176). However, closing one’s eyes seems to be the opposite of closing the city gate. As often as not, it represents an opening of another set of eyes, those of dreaming, which also leave the subject open to the world and to the others: “mes yeux clos, je suis devant ta grâce comme un enfant dans l’eau” (137), the subject submerged in the flow of thought and dream which does not end with the closing of the eyes.

Intersubjectivity and the Lyrical Address

Building from *Répétitions* and *Mourir de ne pas mourir*, the second half of *Capitale de la douleur* develops a lyrical address through which both *je* and *tu* solidify into stronger presences in the poems of the section *Nouveaux Poèmes* in particular. The final poem in the whole collection, “Celle de toujours, toute,” shows the extent to which Éluard sees the self as evolving not only out of contact with the world but more specifically out of engagement with the other. The poem’s title and verses hint at the notion of the woman as mediating a relationship between the lyrical subject and the world in her position as the *toi*, which will become central in later collections in the 1930s.

CELLE DE TOUJOURS, TOUTE

Si je vous dis : “j’ai tout abandonné”
C’est qu’elle n’est pas celle de mon corps,
Je ne m’en suis jamais vanté,
Ce n’est pas vrai

Et la brume de fond où je me meus
Ne sait jamais si j'ai passé.

L'éventail de sa bouche, le reflet de ses yeux,
Je suis le seul à en parler,
Je suis le seul qui soit cerné
Par ce miroir si nul où l'air circule à travers moi
Et l'air a un visage, un visage aimé,
Un visage aimant, ton visage,
À toi qui n'as pas de nom et que les autres ignorent,
La mer te dit : sur moi, le ciel te dit : sur moi,
Les astres te devinent, les nuages t'imaginent
Et le sang répandu aux meilleurs moments,
Le sang de la générosité
Te porte avec délices.

Je chante la grande joie de te chanter,
La grande joie de t'avoir ou de ne pas t'avoir,
La candeur de t'attendre, l'innocence de te connaître,
Ô toi qui supprimes l'oubli, l'espoir et l'ignorance,
Qui supprimes l'absence et qui me mets au monde,
Je chante pour chanter, je t'aime pour chanter
Le mystère où l'amour me crée et se délivre.

Tu es pure, tu es encore plus pure que moi-même. (196-197)

“Celle de toujours, toute” shows the reversal that *Capitale de la douleur* effects, from a co-presence of self and other to the construction of the self in response to the other. The poem's early stanzas show the *moi* experiencing the same interruption of borders in the face-to-face with the *toi*. This is particularly present in poems in which the *je / tu* relationship is inflected toward the erotic encounter, which is to say that the poet speaks from a masculine *je* toward a female *tu*. It is important to bear in mind the special significance attributed to the female by the surrealists, that of creative force in the material world. We will see that the subject ultimately defines itself as a result of the encounter with this distinctly female other, and discovers its contours through contact

with her. The first stanza frames a poetic voice thinking back from a position of no longer being united with the *toi*, reflective of Éluard's difficulties with his wife, Gala Éluard, who had begun a relationship with the painter Max Ernst. The middle stanza reflects the poet's awareness of the woman in unity with the world, and his own dependence on her. In the final stanza and final verse, the poet's sense of self hinges on his relationship to the female *toi*.

The middle stanza of moves out of the "brume de fond où je me meus" into an awareness of the female other: "L'éventail de sa bouche, le reflet de ses yeux, / Je suis le seul à en parler, / Je suis le seul qui soit cerné." The lyrical voice responds to her presence, and specifically to her body, crystallizing as an entity in order to speak about her. At the same time, the woman's magnetic presence ("Un visage aimant") unites her with the surrounding world—ocean, sky, stars, and clouds. This continuity leads the poet to describe her as a mirror: her face is the face of the air itself; she abides in the sea and in the sky; and thus all the spaces and expanses of the earth exist by her existence. In the same context, Éluard's famous "La Courbe de tes yeux," which immediately proceeds "Celle de toujours, toute," hinges both the world and the self on the gaze of the other: "Le monde entier dépend de tes yeux purs / et tout mon sang coule dans leurs regards" (196) Through the identification of the world with the woman, we can begin to sense the potency of the female, and specifically of the female body, here evoked through her mouth and her eyes,¹¹⁰ and her association with a creative force understood not only

110. "L'éventail de sa bouche, le reflet de ses yeux" (ŒC 1:150).

materially but also as the source of artistic and poetic creation. In the context of the poem, this “visage aimant” pulls the lyrical subject into being, and therefore brings the poem into being as well. The poet identifies her as “[O toi] qui me mets au monde”,¹¹¹ and this is fundamentally the identity of the *tu* for Éluard. The other is the one who brings me into the world, as a process of self-building, to be sure, but one which can only be begun by the encounter that sparks a sense of self, a sense of positionality, of facing. Éluard calls this “Le mystère où l’amour me crée” (196), and at this moment in his career, it is often cast in the light of the erotic encounter, of a specifically male-female interaction, of romantic love, yet opens out onto a broader intersubjectivity.

“Celle de toujours, toute” moves from the potential dependence of the *toi* on the *moi*—“elle n’est pas celle de mon corps”—to a self that acknowledges the other as the material condition of the body’s existence: “Ô toi... / ...qui me mets au monde.” The reversibility of these positions is explored at greater length in previous poems, such as the following:

TA FOI

Suis-je autre chose que ta force?
Ta force dans tes bras,
Ta tête dans tes bras,
Ta force dans le ciel décomposé,
Ta tête lamentable,
Ta tête que je porte.
Tu ne joueras plus avec moi,
Héroïne perdue,

111. This verse bears a strong resemblance to one in the first poem of *Facile*, which will be discussed in the fourth chapter of this project: “Femme tu mets au monde un corps toujours pareil” (ÆC 1:459).

Ma force bouge dans tes bras. (150)

The poem begins with an evocation of the lyrical subject's dependence on the body of the *toi*. In the course of the poem, their bodies seem to become one—"ta tête que je porte."

The final verse replicates the second except for the change from "your" to "my," implicating both in this moment of encounter. What begins as an awareness only of the woman, of "Ta tête dans tes bras," and a near-negating of the self, progresses to a sense of intimacy with her that makes room for the *je*, and the "ta" repeatedly used to discuss the other's strength, arms, head, is transformed in the final line into the "ma" that marks the subject's sense of himself. The moment of two individuals encountering each other, and thus altering the boundaries on which their identities are based, appears in *Capitale de la douleur* as one of tension, of a tidal push and pull. In the third poem of *Les petits justes*, the same flux of force shifts back and forth between the *je* and the *tu*:

Avec tes yeux je change comme avec les lunes
Et je suis tour à tour et de plomb et de plume,
Une eau mystérieuse et noire qui t'enserre
Ou bien dans tes cheveux ta légère victoire. (151)

The same evolution as in "Ta foi" takes place over these four verses. In the first two verses, the poet articulates a dependence on the eyes of the one to whom he addresses himself. Indeed, the *tu* appears first through the address to her eyes. She shapes him with the force and inevitability of a planet, as a gravitational pull on his very being. More than this, the individual to whom he addresses himself alters his physical makeup, changing the stuff that constitutes him, from lead to down, from the heavy to the light. If he is a great, dark body of water and she the moon, the relationship between them alters his

shores, his contours, like the action of the moon on the sea. Yet this is no one-directional relationship: he surrounds her and grasps her, laying equal claim to her edges. The penultimate line suggests an intimacy taken up in the final line with the lyrical subject buried in the hair of the *tu*. The verse captures the tension and balance between *je* and *tu*, with the elliptically present *je suis* of the second verse finding its end in “ta légère victoire,” making an identity statement about itself and yet identifying as the victory of the *tu*. The *légère victoire* is one of balance and tension, in which two individuals reciprocate a defining of borders that is never definite, finding a shifting sense of self through contact with the other.

The trajectory of the pronouns in “Celle de toujours, toute” reveals the effect of the co-presence of self and world on the experience of the other. Already in its title, “celle” stands in for the woman as an adjectival and deictic placeholder. The same woman is referred to alternately in the third person or in the second: as “elle” in the first stanza and the second, with a sudden volte-face in the second when the poem begins to refer to her directly, “ton visage.” While the above analysis focuses on the face-to-face, the encounter with the other can be just as transformative in the third person. One of the most well-known poems from *Mourir de ne pas mourir*, “L’amoureuse,” strongly reflects the preoccupations of the poet with a tactile and bodily encounter with the other that shapes them both; “Elle a la forme de mes mains / Elle a la couleur de mes yeux,” seeming to conform or be built by the poet’s hands and eyes, yet “Elle est debout sur mes paupières” as if she controls what he sees; she refuses him sleep, and her dreams

overpower him (140). The indecision between second and third persons in “Celle de toujours, toute” comes from a lyrical subject whose extension into the world can equally be attributed to the other. The “visage aimant” of the woman, with its magnetic pull and extended offer of love, becomes central to the other’s flux between singularity and plurality in later collections.

Intersubjectivity in the 1930s: La Vie immédiate

Published in 1932, *La Vie immédiate* moves from a subjectivity enmeshed in the world to a reflection on the second and third persons as sites of connectivity between world and individual, and between self and other. *La Vie Immédiate* was written only a few years after Éluard and Breton collaborated on the last major automatic collection, *L’Immaculée Conception*, which will be discussed in the following chapter. The collection espouses the values that held over in Surrealism after the automatism of the 1920s waned, including an interest in the encounter of world and self through forces such as desire and dreams. In *La Vie immédiate*, nighttime becomes a central theme connecting both the erotic tactility that leads into a reflection on contact. Focusing on the night as a peripheral time between wakefulness and sleep, light and darkness, Éluard inflects vision toward a more intimate and partial modality. Nighttime was no less poetically productive for its associations with altered states, illogical thinking, and dreams, than it was more literally productive for its associations with sexuality and femininity, seen poetically in the consonance of *nuit* and *nu*. Through the experience of

the night, the poet effects a transformation of sight in which the self is vulnerable to outside forces.

Structuring this turn toward the intimate poetically, the poetics of *La Vie immédiate* are marked by a focus on contact, thematically and syntactically. In its syntax, *La Vie immédiate* constructs the world through asyndeton and lists, creating a dense closeness of nouns, a marked difference from the lightness of verbs and imperatives in *Capitale de la douleur*. *La Vie immédiate* also reflects on proximity between world and body in the senses and in the erotic encounter, with the body becoming the space of direct contact with the world. Unlike *Capitale de la douleur*, where the dynamism of the subject's co-presence with the world pushed out and away from the self, the site of contact in *La Vie immédiate*, immediacy manifests itself especially in the collapsing of distances, in listing and asyndeton, and in the tactile. In the poems of *La vie immédiate*, Éluard reveals the subject as inseparable from the experience of the world and continually formed out of contact with the world, an idea of contact which takes place in the tactile and erotic potential of the nighttime and which is grounded in the list- and fragment-heavy syntax of *La vie immédiate*.

The collection opens with a series of questions to an unnamed *toi* that set the tone for a collection focused on the other as a point of connection or difference: “Que deviens-tu pourquoi ces cheveux blancs et roses / Pourquoi ce front ces yeux déchirés déchirants” (EC 1:363). This notion of the other's becoming haunts the collection, in which the *toi* and the *elle* are unstable, both individuals to whom or of whom the poet

speaks, yet also standing in for pluralities. The second poem in the collection develops the concept of the other as a site of connectivity:

BELLE ET RESSEMBLANTE

Un visage à la fin du jour
Un berceau dans les feuilles mortes du jour
Un bouquet de pluie nue
Tout soleil caché
Toute source des sources au fond de l'eau
Tout miroir des miroirs brisé
Un visage dans les balances du silence
Un caillou parmi d'autres cailloux
Pour les frondes des dernières lueurs du jour
Un visage semblable à tous les visages oubliés. (363)

If the title of the poem implies a female other whom the poem describes, it also introduces the recurring word “ressemblante,” which Éluard reinterprets to define the individual’s connection to all others. In the first place, the poem divests resemblance of its visual associations. The poet writes about a face that is “un visage semblable à tous les visages oubliés.” If the object of the poem is “ressemblante,” if the face is “semblable,” it is likened forgotten faces, and therefore likened to faces whose characteristics are unidentifiable, lost. The very idea of resemblance or similarity to something forgotten is not only bizarre, but impossible, in a typical definition of resemblance. However, Éluard speaks of a resemblance which is not only not visual, but which connects things despite their appearances, and not as a result of exterior similarity. “Belle et ressemblante” transforms visual similarity into a new mode of connectivity. The “miroir des miroirs brisé” is lightless—a “soleil caché”—and soundless, yet calls forth “visages oubliés” through an invisible and silent resemblance. The poems that follow figure this point of

connection in half-states—of sleep, perception, and reciprocity, expanding on the themes already present in “Belle et ressemblante.” In the following pages, this study will draw parallels between “Belle et ressemblante” and other poems to show the development of resemblance as a half-state between the “un” and the “tous” of the last verse. Concluding with one of the last poems in the collection, we will see the emergence of the self as secondary to the *toi*, a lyrical subject anchored in the face-to-face.

Perception in Dusk and Darkness

The oscillation between singular and plural is located at dusk, at the meeting of day and night. “Belle et ressemblante” shows the face of impossible resemblance is also a face that appears at dusk: “Un visage à la fin du jour.” This unrecognizable face is born at the death of the day—“un berceau dans les feuilles mortes du jour”—at the moment when night begins. Although nighttime appears repeatedly in the poems of in *La vie immédiate*, most frequently it reveals itself to be a kind of in-between state, as in the dusk of “Belle et ressemblante” or as the half-sleeping, half-waking state, especially in the case insomnia. In one poem, the poet concludes by reprimanding an unspecified *tu* for not being there to wake him (“Vers Minuit,” 367). The “nuit sans sommeil” (378), a paradoxical night of open eyes, appears in Éluard’s poem “La Fin du monde,” mimicking the unreal sensation of being awake deep in the night. These references to insomnia and dreams represent a mingling of time, the day invading the night in the form of insomnia, and the night not as an escape but as an attack—“Le sommeil assiège le jour” (“Quelque

bonté,” :393). In *La Vie immédiate*, the dream pushes against the boundary of the night, wearing down the line between day and night, and on the possibility of this rupture the poet establishes the potential for a real and unbounded contact with the woman. In “Saison des amours,” the shadowland of half-sleep permits the poet to draw near to the women: “Dans l’ombre à trois pans d’un sommeil agité / je viens à toi” (364). In an undoing of the light / dark binary that repeats itself throughout the collection, it is in this half-dark, twilight time that a “transparence vagabonde” illumines the body of the lover, erasing the boundaries between them. The “nuit hermaphrodite” (“Yves Tanguy,” 384) of *La Vie immédiate* breaks down the boundaries between day and night, but also those between the bodies of the lovers.

In the two immediately following poems, the strange resemblance of “Belle et ressemblante” is at play. The poet addresses himself directly to an unidentified *tu*. This other to whom he addresses himself seems elusive, frustrating the poet’s comparisons. Although he writes “à toi la double, la multiple / À toi semblable à l’ère des deltas.” (“La Saison des amours,” 364), the *tu* is not singular, but double, multiple, a being with none of the opacity or stability requisite for a comparison to be drawn. Resemblance is impossible, except perhaps when the poet lends his own body to the comparison: “Ta tête est plus petite que la mienne” (Ibid.). But this is a risky proposition, destabilizing the poet himself. In the following poem, an intersection of gazes yields a dynamic similarity that removes the distance between subjects: “La ressemblance des regards de permission avec les yeux que tu conquies / la confusion des corps des lassitudes des ardeurs” (“A perte de

vue dans le sens de mon corps,” 365). If “l’amour c’est l’homme inachevé” (Ibid.), it is because of the confusion of bodies taking place in the poem, an abolition of boundaries between the *je* and the *tu*. Incompleteness here signifies a process of self-building taking place through permeable boundaries - the self is not whole and sealed off, but rather immediately engaging with the *tu* to whom it speaks.

It is undeniable that the gaze and vision recur in Éluard’s work, yet what we find is that Éluard is in the process of undoing, of altering vision. Éluard invokes the night in a majority of the poems of *La vie immédiate* with the intention of frustrating vision. But even before this shadowing of the eyes, he inverts the normal structure of the gaze from one of power to one of powerlessness. The problem with seeing is that as soon as we open our eyes, we are forced to realize not only our own positionality and the inevitable limitation created by our bodily presence in the world, but also the troubling reality that we too can be seen in the same way that we are seeing. This is an irreconcilable disturbance in the world of *La Vie immédiate*. On the one hand, to be seen is to be virtualized, as expressed in “En Exil:” “elle fait valoir / Le doute qu’elle a de sa réalité dans les yeux d’un autre” (368). The “nudité continuelle” of being before other people represents the permanent condition of humanity, only to be temporarily escaped — “Les yeux fermés c’est elle toute entière” (Ibid.). On the one hand, the gaze of others seems to have a hold on me. Furthermore, even the objects I myself see can seize hold of that relationship: “Tes yeux sont livrés à ce qu’ils voient / vus par ce qu’ils regardent” (“Nusch,” 394). The poet seems to suggest that to look upon something is to offer up the

eyes to it, as the reflection takes its place in the pupil, almost as if what is seen invades the eyes, which become passive—“Tes yeux sont livrés... ..vus”— instead of exerting power. Perhaps this reflection in the eye even incapacitates the eye, blinding it: “Prunelle aveugle impérissable / Alliée à ce qu’elle devrait voir” (391). What interests the poet in the gaze is its ability to break down the boundaries between seer and seen, and unite them in a way that shifts the balance of power. This new mode of vision collapses the distance between the seer and the seen and suggests the inevitable movement from seeing to touching.

The space of the night opens up new tactile possibilities within vision. At night, those who sleep close their eyes, only to open themselves to a different kind of vision in dreams. Eyelids, so seductive to the poet, close off sight, sheathing the eyes with skin and making the visual space into a tactile one. In one poem, the pair of lines “Mains lasses retournant leurs gants / Paupières des couleurs parfaites” (“Peu de vertu,” 396) comments, unexpectedly, on the color of the eyelids rather than the eyes, as if the eyelids could replace the eyes in the same way that objects of clothing, such as gloves, metonymically stand in for the body. The proximity of hands and gloves reinstates the eyelids as part of the sense of touch. Night and dreaming are the time of closed eyes, yet the same time, a new kind of vision is developing. The poet is blind and mute in the daytime; he needs to close his eyes to see the shapes and colors of the woman (“Nuits partagées,” 373). The woman seems to vanish in the daytime, her fragile paleness swallowed by the sun: “je revois toujours ta pâleur dévêtue qui, le matin, fait corps avec

les étoiles qui disparaissent” (Ibid.). Although touch most greatly inflects the new vision of the Éluardian subject, the voice, intimately connected to poetry and to the address to the other found throughout the collection, also plays a role in the alteration of vision. In “Nuits partagées,” the poet writes “ta voix comble tes yeux comme l’écho comble le ciel du soir” — vision is crowded out as the voice fills the eyes. The topography of the night, with its limiting or even eliminating of vision, allows Éluard to evolve a more richly sensory mode of vision, which is inseparable from touch, the body, and sound.

If the poems of *La Vie Immédiate* linger in the tactile space of the night, this is of course also in keeping with the night as the time of the erotic. Nighttime is the time of the approach to the other, the time of merging shapes—“une ombre chacun, mais dans l’ombre nous l’oublions” (374)—perhaps because the night equalizes all shadows, but also because of bodies too near to allow for lines of separation. “Par une nuit nouvelle” comments on the woman’s need of clothing (“Il te faut un manteau rouge / des gants rouge un masque rouge / Et des bas noirs” (366), only so that they can be stripped away when the poet faces her nudity. The nakedness itself is her ornament, and in the final offset line, their bodies seem to come together. The last two lines—“Nudité pure ô parure parée / Seins ô mon cœur”—seem to gesture to a chiasmus in the echoing of the vocative ô that calls attention not only to the address but to a parallel being drawn. One might initially suppose that the two lines simply reiterate the erotic nudity of the lover, but there is a shedding of layers at work that continues past the coat and stockings of earlier verses. The poet longs to “te voir toute nue,” yet again sight gives way to the tactile of breast

against breast in the final line. Further, the nudity is not just nakedness to the eye, but rather a more profound nakedness. If the first of the last two verses, “Nudité pure ô parure parée,” plays on the assonance of *u* to suggest that nudity itself can be the finery the body wears, the next verse sheds the outer body for the inner: “Seins ô mon cœur”, delving into a realm where the eye cannot penetrate. Chiastically, the woman’s “seins” echo “parure”—an outer decoration, while “cœur” replaces “nudité” as the truest bareness of the body. In this poem, “Par une nuit nouvelle,” the new night is marvelously light, such that even the body becomes transparent and sheds its skin.

The Poetics of the List

If boundaries are broken down in the nighttime space of *La Vie immédiate*, the same decisive eradication of distances applies itself to the syntax of its poems. In their verses, the immediacy of the world and the body materializes syntactically through asyndeton. Éluard strings substantives together without even the connective tissue of verbs and prepositions, sometimes without articles, as if each word were only a shadow cast by the one before it, and needing no more justification. However, there are precursors of this mode of poetic production in poems like the well-known “La Courbe de tes yeux,” the second stanza of which erupts with a series of natural images couched at the end of the third and final stanza on the declaration that the whole world depends on the eyes of the loved one. One must also consider this technique’s resemblance to collage. The juxtaposing of nouns without the gradations of other parts of speech is a

grammatical performance equivalent to the conspicuous edges of collaged art. Instead of creating a gentle syntactical pathway for the reader, Éluard writes verses that jolt and surprise. Similarly to collage, the list in Éluard's poetry represents a continual and bare-faced adding-on, gluing one element half on top of another, not quite replacing yet leaving no room between. In "Disparition," the sound "ém / êm" gets passed, baton-like, from one adjective to another: "Ta tête émerveillée émue / Extrême frémissante" (372), words that press in on each other in both the visual and sonic spaces. More often, the clusters of words lack an identifiable sonic link from one to the next: "Tête désappointée / Tristesse beau visage" ("A peine défigurée," 365). It is interesting to note, however, that these article-less and verb-less "sentences" seem often to center on the body. The immediate is enfolded in the verses of *La Vie immédiate* through these unmediated collisions of nouns and adjectives.

Of course, the list-like syntax present in so many of the poems of *La Vie immédiate* also represents a particular kind of poem Éluard is evolving, one which, perhaps in opposition to prose writing, relies more heavily on substantives rather than on the verbs that typically mediate between them. "Belle et ressemblante," contains a string of asyndetic phrases in clusters of three, with the last being interrupted: "Un visage... / Un berceau... / Un bouquet... / Tout soleil... / Toute source... / Tout miroir... / Un visage... / Un caillou... / Pour les frondes... / Un visage..." The series of substantives becomes a kind of poetic form in its own right, creating sections within the single stanza poem. The cascade of images presented by the poem are Surrealist in bringing disparate

ideas together which frustrate both rationality and visualization—“Un bouquet de pluie nue” (363). Several other poems use anaphora as a kind of poetic structure, such as the poem “La Nécessité,” which is written almost entirely with anaphora, a rhetorical technique using repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of a series of clauses. In “La Nécessité,” a series of prepositional phrases introduces a fourteen-verse list beginning with “J’établis des rapports entre l’homme et la femme” (369). The man and woman multiply: the poem continues with twelve more pairings before returning to “Entre l’homme et la femme / Entre ma solitude et toi.” It is interesting to note that the only thing between these items is the tenuous and invisible “rapports” that the poet fails to delineate, but which somehow seem to bind everything together. In these pairings, parts of the body mingle with the natural world. As I have already mentioned, this syntactical move seems dependent on the body as that through which the world can be understood. Notably, “prunelle” draws together the outside world and the body as both a sloe berry and the pupil of the eye. The last of the poems written for *La Vie Immédiate*, “Une pour toutes,” takes back up the *un / tout* of “Belle et ressemblante” with the refrain “Une ou plusieurs” that repeats throughout the poem. Along with this refrain, several stanzas take up the poetic repetition Éluard has found in the use of anaphora:

Faites de pierre qui s’effrite
 Et de plume qui s’éparpille
 Faites de ronces faites de lin d’alcool d’écume
 De rires de sanglots de négligences de tourments ridicules
 Faites de chair et d’yeux véritables sans doute. (398)

Like the stone breaking apart, the length of the repeated phrase decreases to a single “de” preceding different materials, the flesh of the women about whom the poet writes. The stanza after the following one uses an identical anaphoristic structure with “Parées de” and indeed the poet doesn’t always make a distinction between the substance and the decoration, between interior and exterior. Anaphora heightens the intensifies the lists in *La Vie Immédiate*, at once emphasizing the strings of nouns and yet giving them a rhythm through repetition. Ultimately, the new lyricism Éluard seeks to establish is one of contact and directness, of a collagistic superimposition of substantives.

The syntax of the verses unveils the Éluardian body, which is constituted through contact with the world. I have said that the body and the listing syntax often converge, as was the case in “La Nécessité.” The collaging of body and world happens in various poems in *La Vie immédiate* and creates a “géographie légendaire de tes regards de tes caresses” (“La Facilité en personne,” 382), a sensory landscape that conflates the seeing and the seen, the touching and the touched, destabilizing the boundaries between subject and object. In the poem “En exil,” for example, various plantlike elements intertwine with the body of the woman:

Plante majeure dans le bain
Végétal travaillé brune ou blonde
A l’extrême fleur de la tête
Sa nudité continuelle
Ses seins de faveurs refusées
Un rire aux cheveux de cytise (368)

Even despite her nakedness, in the watery and womb-like space of the bathtub, the confusion of the senses, as when the laugh is compared to the at once tactile and visual “cheveux de cytise,” disorganizes the body in a way that opens it to alien objects. The head is a flower, the hair laburnum, the body a plant. The poet echoes the conflation of the contained and the container, the body and the bath, through the syntax of the first two verses of the second stanza, in which the four adjectives coalesce form the second verse. The asyntactical list of adjectives turns on a change in gender, with the first two modifying the bath and the second two modifying “plante majeure,” yet all cohabitating a single verse, anticipating the interaction of body and plant that takes place in the verses that follow. “En exil” inverts the expectations set up by the title; rather than an isolated individual, the poem describes a woman intertwined with the world, inseparable from the things around her. Though not as void of connectors such as prepositions and articles as some other poems, it makes evident the poet’s preoccupation with the entanglement of the senses, the body, and the world.

The extremes of Éluard’s syntax are more evident in poems such as “Houx Douze Roses” (378), in which the title sets the elliptical list-making of the proceeding verses in motion. Though the first stanza only hints at the presence of a human subject metonymically through the mention of makeup and the double entendre of “prunelle,” the second stanza begins with a series of nouns that birth the body into the poem: “Lune la feuille fleur le sein et les paupières lourdes.” The stringing together of nouns describing the external world with the intimacy of the breast and the vulnerability of closed eyes

recalls the title of the collection and Éluard's emphasis on a direct experience of the world. What is this direct experience, and how indeed can a person live an unmediated life? The poet suggests that one facet of immediacy is physical contact, mimicked on the page by the pressure of noun against noun, body against world. Indeed, the intensity of this unmediated contact seems to reach a kind of sensory overload: "Velours insondable vitrine éblouie / poudre impalpable." In the face of such an experience, what is feeble and passing must fade away even at the lightest brush of hair, banished by such direct contact: "Toutes les images obscures / perdues dans l'étendue de sa chevelure diurne."

Unity, Multiplicity, and Resemblance

In looking at the significance of physical nearness in the poems of *La Vie immédiate*, it is important to return once more to the problem of the visual, and the ways Éluard seeks to undermine it and transform it in his poetry. The distinction between metaphor and metonymy plays a role in the list-making of the above poems, as it must be emphasized that the extensions of the body do not replace the it, but are integrated into it. The immediate body has broken the barriers between itself and the world, so that the world can become an extension of the body, and so that the world is understood through the body. While a metaphor turns on a comparison drawn, most frequently, from the visual similarity, metonymy does not function through resemblance. Rather, it allows for relationship through the physical or ideal nearness of things. The poetry of *La Vie immédiate* privileges the tactile over the visual, and metonymy over metaphor. The same

instinct toward metonymy manifests itself in other Surrealists pursuits, such as collage, and in the recurrent fascination with objects of clothing, which represent a kind of everyday extension of the body. Clothing also plays a role in the metonymic structure of Éluard's poems, for example in the gradual undressing of the woman in "Par une nuit nouvelle," which concludes by lauding the woman's nudity, yet lingers on her clothing: "Il te faut un manteau rouge / des gants rouge un masque rouge / Et des bas noirs" (366). These accessories she wears also seem imbued with erotic and tactile potency for the poet because of their nearness to the woman. Insofar as the poems of *La Vie immédiate* transforms vision and privileges nearness, they unseat exterior resemblance as a dominant concern in art, and so we must ask how Éluard proposes to construct a metonymic poetics.

The poem "Nuits partagées," a long prose poem diverging noticeably from the verse poems predominant in the collection, provides perhaps the most insight into the question of resemblance. Consisting entirely of complete sentences, it lacks the syntactical strain of other poems, whose noun-heavy verses seem to try to embrace all, as in the open arms of "Tous les arbres toutes leurs branches toutes leurs feuilles" ("A perte de vue," 364). Nonetheless, "Nuits partagées" does employ anaphora to the same rhythmic effect, as in the first paragraph, which repeats "je revois toujours" (372-373) as almost an incantation of the space of the apartment. Perhaps the most remarkable moment of listing in the poem in fact negates that which it lists: "Maisons inhabitées, je vous ai peuplées de femmes exceptionnelles, ni grasses, ni maigres, ni blondes, ni brunes, ni

folles, ni sages, peu importe, de femmes plus séduisantes que possible” (376-377). We will see that this denial and undoing of the very women he installs in these houses reflects the deeper impossibility the woman he addresses in the poem, who seeks to “concilier les désaccords de la présence et les harmonies de l’absence” (375). For Éluard, the female represents a problematic resemblance and disunity. The last poem before the added collection “A toute épreuve,” “Une pour toutes,” addresses women as a kind of collective, an “une pour toutes” that nonetheless seems to break down “faites de pierre qui s’effrite” (398). In the same way, a breakdown happens in the *tu* of “Nuits partagées,” as she herself acknowledges: “[tu dis] que tu es comme une pierre que l’on casse pour avoir deux pierres plus belles que leur mère morte, que tu étais la femme d’hier et que tu es la femme d’aujourd’hui, qu’il n’y a pas à te consoler puisque tu t’es divisées pour être intacte...” (375). “Nuits partagées” will be examined at greater length in chapter four as half of an eponymous collaborative work.

Metonymy makes for, on the one hand, nearness, neighboring, and even approximation. Yet on the other hand it is the stone that crumbles, its parts only loosely held together. The poems in *La Vie immédiate* strain between unity and multiplicity, trying to bear up under the impossible burden of resemblance amongst a rubble of substantives which Éluard demands that they take on. The woman lets slip the mantle of “Une pour toutes”—her youth spent “Sans se soucier des autres” (398)—yet at the same time she seems to refuse the choice that the poet offers her again and again—“Une ou plusieurs”—neither becoming abstracted into a metaphor for women in general nor

becoming isolated, but rubbing shoulders with these other women, uniting with them without dissolving into their features: “Dans les rues, dans les campagnes, cent femmes sont dispersées par toi, tu déchires la ressemblance qui les lie, cent femmes sont réunies par toi et tu ne peux leur donner de nouveaux traits communs et elles ont cent visages, cent visages qui tiennent ta beauté en échec” (375-6). “Une ou plusieurs” is the question Éluard asks himself, the poet, seeking a subjectivity that is not isolated or confined, a lyricism that does not speak into the world out of completeness, but rather that can discover its own contours through contact with the world, that oscillates between singularity and multiplicity.

Conclusion: From the Lyrical Subject to the Other

The co-presence of self in world of Éluard’s early poetics stems from a perceptual exploration of the world instead of a rational or transcendental self, but inasmuch as perception shows the division of the self to be secondary to union with the world, it inevitably draws attention to subject’s embodied presence. The lyrical subject that evolves in *Capitale de la douleur* and ultimately finds expression in *La Vie immédiate* finds its clearest form as response to the other in the lyrical address, a reversal of the notion that the subject creates the other that it addresses. At the same time, the subject’s dependence on the other, both in the form of the *tu* and the *elle*, reveals a tension between singularity and plurality in the lyrical voice. The permeable borders of the body, which shape the self while also putting it in contact with the outside world,

become a central space in which this lyrical intersubjectivity is articulated. Above all, this intersubjectivity is developed through the notion of a differential resemblance that makes the self one among a multitude without losing particularity. Éluard's development of the notion of resemblance is seen as early as *Répétitions*, in which the final poem's paradoxical verse "Je voudrais ressembler—" evokes the poet's ability to reflect the world and the other. If Breton identified beauty with the convulsive,¹¹² Éluard identifies it with resemblance, with the woman's ability to remain particular while also opening onto all others. Éluard's poetics in *Capitale de la douleur* and *La Vie immédiate* open onto subjects that would remain dear to him in his political and poetic work, especially in the question of the human being, the individual, and the relationship between people. While his exploration of the self takes place through the lyrical subject, and through the *toi* and *elle* of his lyrical poetry, his critical essays reflect the same foundational view of the self as co-present with the world, developing as a trace within the primal unity between self and world. This understanding of the individual shaped not only his perception of the self, but also his view of the other as a crossroads of the individual and the collective.

112. The famous final line of *Nadja*: "la beauté sera convulsive" (Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:753)

CHAPTER THREE

FROM THE COLLECTIVE TO THE INDIVIDUAL IN COAUTHORED POETRY: *RALENTIR TRAVAUX* AND *L'IMMACULÉE CONCEPTION*

Introduction

At the beginning of the Surrealist movement lies the invention of automatism, a technique intended to rejuvenate the written word as well as to transform the writer. This dual purpose—both artistic and anthropological—defines the practice of automatism and the texts thereby produced. Likewise, surrealist collaboration, which was intimately tied to automatism from the first, is motivated not only by the impulse to discover new forms of writing, but perhaps more importantly by the desire to understand thought itself. The earliest iteration of automatic writing, *Les Champs magnétiques* (1920), not only produced a new form of lyrical voice; the text also sparked Breton's redefinition of thought in the first surrealist manifesto, aligning it with unconscious drives, with the logic of dreams, and with chance encounters in the exterior world. After its invention, automatism would flourish in a variety of forms, most of them collaborative: automatic writing, often through the transcription of a hypnotized person's speech; automatic games, with three or more partners writing or drawing *cadavre exquis*; and in some cases

automatic book collaborations, for example Ernst's and Éluard's *Les Malheurs des immortels* (1922). The year 1930 marks a turning point for the surrealist movement as a whole and for collaborative practices in particular. While group-oriented activities continued to be practiced by the Surrealists, automatic writing especially was put into question, reinvented, and ultimately, in some sense, outstripped by other methods. In 1930, two poetic collaborations followed the publication of Breton's second surrealist manifesto in quick succession: *Ralentir travaux*, by Breton, Éluard, and René Char, and *L'Immaculée Conception*, by Éluard and Breton. These poetry collections mark the launch of a new period in Surrealism in various ways: as corollaries to the second manifesto, as reinventions of automatic writing, and as book collaborations that begin a new phase of collaborative work in the movement. This chapter will analyze these two collaborative textual works—*Ralentir travaux* and *L'Immaculée Conception*—with an aim to understanding what poetic collaboration meant to the Surrealists and why it played an essential role in their revolutionary goals. More specifically, these texts effect a pivot from Breton's early conception of automatism in terms of anonymity and passivity toward a dialogic model of collaboration that dominates the 1930s. In looking at the lyrical experiments of *L'Immaculée Conception* and *Ralentir travaux*, published only months apart in 1930, we can see a new conception of collaboration developing, one that departs from the anonymity and a-subjectivity of the theories of automatic writing and collaboration in the 1920s. These collections mark the end of collaborative poetry, but

they prepare the ground for the poetic-artistic collaborations that flourish in the 1930s, and which will be the focus of the following chapter.

The breaking apart of the surrealist group in 1929 begins a year of tumult that catalyzed Surrealism's self-reinvention in Breton's second surrealist manifesto and brought in new members, such as Char and Salvador Dali, the latter of whom played a role in the production of *L'Immaculée Conception*. Laurent Jenny attributes the changes in the theory of automatism in the 1930s largely to Dali and his paranoiacritical method. Jenny constructs a chronology of theorizations of automatism that shows significant changes in the Surrealists' understanding of their own invention.¹¹³ While he focuses on theoretical texts to prove his claim, the changes in published automatic texts equally testify to a new understanding of the practice of automatism. *L'Immaculée Conception* and *Ralentir travaux* especially evidence such a shift: *L'Immaculée Conception* with a proliferation of new automatic genres and *Ralentir travaux* by reinvesting automatism in the poetic form. Yet these collections should be understood first and foremost as a rethinking of the nature of the collaborative act, a call to new models of collaboration taken up by artists and poets in the 1930s.

In an article on plural authorship focusing on *Les Champs magnétiques* and *Ralentir travaux*, Myriam Boucharenc makes a case for the ultimate failure of collaborative writing, which she believes always falls back into "the return of narcissism

113. Laurent Jenny, "Les Aventures de l'automatisme" *Littérature*, no. 72 (1988): 3-11.

in the undifferentiated form of the collective.”¹¹⁴ Boucharenc bases her argument heavily on theoretical writings from the 20s, considering automatism’s first goal as that of subject-less writing (103-105). In her understanding, the other, that is, the co-author, serves only as a means of access to the unknown or of avoiding the trap of personal lyricism (105-107). Her conclusion that “it is singularity rather than collective utopia, the force of division as opposed to that of propagation, which eventually won the day” (114) may hold true if we only take single-medium, written collaboration into account and if collaboration is only analyzed through Breton’s theoretical writings on automatism. However, Boucharenc does not reckon with the changes of the 1930s, both the theoretical developments observed by Jenny and the proliferation of art collaborations that clearly move away from the erasure of the author so prominent in early automatism.

L’Immaculée Conception and *Ralentir travaux* depart from the ideal of subjectless writing, similarly to the way Éluard’s individually-authored poetry moves away from the subjectless lyricism of the mid-20s, as I have shown in chapter two. Boucharenc contends that *Ralentir travaux* represents a turn to singularity as a method for collective writing (113), seeing in the singly-authored prefaces almost an acknowledgment of the collective poetry’s failure. Yet that very act—the authoring of individual prefaces—reveals the extent to which collaboration has discarded the model of subject-less writing. The individual prefaces represent a broadening of the field of collaboration more fully

114. Myriam Boucharenc, “Plural authorship in automatic writing,” in *Subject Matters*, ed. Paul Gifford and Johnnie Gratton (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000): 111.

realized in *L'Immaculée Conception*. Rather than seeing the other as a “solution” for the problems of the single author, Breton and Éluard show us that the other is anterior to the individual, who is revealed to be a product of collective engagement. Their collaboration evolves a distinctive conceptualization of the pair as a site of propagation and cocreation. *L'Immaculée Conception* is a poetic exploration of the importance of the pair as the origin point of humankind that collaborative practice replicates in the creation of a text.

Given that the writing took place only a few months apart, *Ralentir travaux* and *L'Immaculée Conception* present remarkable differences. In the first place, the writing processes diverged greatly, with the former being composed in poems and the latter in a variety of genres. *L'Immaculée Conception* is classified as an automatic text, while *Ralentir travaux* is neither fish nor fowl: it takes inspiration from automatic writing, but also from surrealist games like the *cadavre exquis*, following a set structure for the poems,¹¹⁵ unlike most automatic texts. Seen together, the collections show an evolution in the Surrealists' thinking about collaboration, with *Ralentir travaux* revealing many of the tensions in automatism that *L'Immaculée Conception* would resolve. Through the unusual method of a third author, *Ralentir travaux* activates the Hegelian dialectics that dominated the second manifesto. Breton believed that the third writer would serve as a kind of resolution to the two-author binary. However, *Ralentir travaux* shudders between

115. Mechthild Cranston notes that the division of verses and poems among the poets is so even as to make it highly doubtful that such an outcome could be accidental. The poets likely created some degree of structure to divide the lines in advance, though in the absence of the manuscript or other records, this is impossible to prove. *Orion Resurgent: René Char, Poet of Presence* (Madrid: José Porrúa Turanzas, 1979), 44.

two poles—individualism and collectivity—and the tension between those two forces the authors to reconceptualize collaboration as something other than self-dissolution. Perhaps *Ralentir travaux* was able to reveal this unresolved binary precisely because the presence of a third writer, so unusual in surrealist collaborative poetry, pushed collaboration to the brink. Unlike the surrealist games practiced in the 20s, such as the *cadavre exquis*, a poetry collection requires a substantially longer-term engagement with the other authors, and the creation of numerous works for a single project. Furthermore, in collaborative poetry the authors read and respond to each other's work,¹¹⁶ contrary to most surrealist games, which actually constrain the authors to write individually, with no knowledge of the collective production until it is completed. In a sense, games isolate the writer, whereas a collaborative author must respond to the contributions of the others without imitating them. This combination of singular-plural tensions is highly visible in the text, causing a number of scholars to consider *Ralentir travaux* a failure of collaborative poetry. Yet if we define individualism-collectivity as a binary, it may be all the less surprising that the pair is more successful at negotiating this binary. In *L'Immaculée Conception*, the authors recognize the role of the pair at the heart of the individual, revealing the individual emerging out of the collective. *L'Immaculée Conception* represents a fuller understanding of the implications of collaboration. Non-homogeneous

116. While we do not have an account of how *Ralentir travaux* was created, the poetry itself clearly shows that the authors read or heard each other's verses before writing their contributions. Many of the poems involve semi-repetitions that show the authors reinventing each other's sentences.

collaboration would then come to full fruition in the 1930s with a greater number of poet-artist collaborations, in which authorship is clearly delineated and each artist is practicing his own craft, yet the dialog between art and poetry creates a new kind of unity.

The Reproductive Pair in L'Immaculée Conception

L'Immaculée Conception was written predominantly in September of 1930, although Breton and Éluard produced its first section, "L'Homme," in August of the same year, and published it in the second issue of *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*,¹¹⁷ where it was accompanied with drawings by Dali. Dali's contributions to the published volume are only visible to the reader in the small drawing for the cover page.¹¹⁸ However, his paranoic-critical method, first described in an article entitled "L'Âne pourri" in the first issue of *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*¹¹⁹, helped to inspire *L'Immaculée Conception* in general and the section "Les Possession," which includes an "Essai de simulation du délire d'interprétation" resembling Dali's approach. Several studies have highlighted the inspiration Breton and Éluard took from Dali's theoretical works of the period, and positioned him as a third force in the creation of the text.¹²⁰ The texts of *L'Immaculée Conception* remain primarily a collaboration between

117. *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* 2 (New York: Arno Press, 1968), 10-14.

118. André Breton and Paul Éluard, *L'immaculée Conception* (Paris: Éditions surréalistes, 1930). Dali also created a drawing that served as a frontispiece for the first twenty copies of *L'Immaculée Conception*.

119. *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* 1, 9-12.

120. See especially Chénieux-Gendron, "Jeu de l'incipit et travail de la correction dans l'écriture automatique." See also Murat, "Jeux de l'automatisme," and Scopeletti, *L'Immaculée Conception*, 51-56.

Breton and Éluard, testifying to their intimate friendship and ability to co-write in a remarkably compatible style, even across the various genres contained within the book. Because of its earlier writing, Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron states that “L’Homme” should rightly be understood as the seed of and model for the other three sections. She also demonstrates that in all four sections, as well as in the subsections to be found in all except “Le Jugement Originel,” the titles were generally determined before the writing, and served as a launching point for each text.¹²¹ Breton and Soupault used a similar practice of directed automatic writing in *Les Champs magnétiques*, a method Breton defended as still falling under the category of automatic writing.¹²² *L’Immaculée Conception* also resembles *Les Champs magnétiques* in containing a variety of genres distributed among its four sections. “L’Homme” and “Les Médiations,” the first and third sections respectively, both consist of prose poems, which, despite revolving around different themes, are fairly similar in terms of structure. “Les Possessions” is unique in having a preface by the editors that purports to instruct the reader on how to approach the essays in the section, namely, a series of essays simulating different psychotic disorders. The last section, “Le Jugement Originel,” comprises a series of surrealist aphorisms, not dissimilar in style to the *152 proverbes mis au goût du jour* (1925) by Éluard and Benjamin Péret and other recastings of proverbs written by Surrealists.

121. Chénieux-Gendron, Jacqueline: “Jeu de l’incipit et travail de la correction dans l’écriture automatique” in *Une pelle au vent dans les sables du rêve* ed. Michel Murat and Marie-Paule Berranger (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1992), 125-142.

122. André Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:1128.

For the most part, interest in *L'Immaculée Conception* has been focused on the second section, *Les Possessions*, especially in work that connects Surrealism with early developments in psychoanalysis.¹²³ In some cases, studies categorize these essays as pastiches, imitations of the language of the mentally ill. In David Lomas's and Jeremy Stubbs's *Simulating the Marvelous*, the authors point to the preface of the section, in which Breton and Éluard claim that they have no intention of actually entering into a state of madness, and argue that the essays ought therefore to be understood as pastiche.¹²⁴ In fact, some scholars have found what amounts to proof that Éluard and Breton based their essays on the writings of the mentally ill that were used to categorize their disorders.¹²⁵ Lomas's and Stubbs's argument may also find footing given the presence of pastiche-like texts in the third section, "Médiations." Marguerite Bonnet and Étienne-Alain Hubert have traced the source-texts for two of the chapters in

123. See for example *The Haunted Self*, in which David Lomas reads "Les Possessions" as a performance of a pathological self, defining the multiple selves of authorship not only as Éluard and Breton, but also as Dali, who contributed artwork for the book as well as a prière d'insérer, and Max Ernst, who inspired the title and at least one of the essays in "Les Possessions." See also J.H. Matthew's *Surrealism, Insanity, Poetry*, in which the chapters devoted to *L'Immaculée Conception* focus mostly on "Les Possessions." Matthews argues that the simulation of madness allowed Breton and Éluard to explore the workings of cognition, and nurtured poetic creativity. See also Philippe Chardin, "'N'est pas fou qui veut?' La simulation des délires mentaux par André Breton et Paul Éluard dans 'Les Possessions.'"

124. Lomas, David, and Jeremy Stubbs. *Simulating the Marvellous: Psychology - Surrealism - Postmodernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 205-211.

125. In one article on the subject, Alain Chevrier demonstrates the role of two key psychoanalytic records for the making of *L'Immaculée Conception*, namely texts from Rogues de Fursac and Chaslin. Alain Chevrier: "Une source secrète de *L'Immaculée Conception*," *Mélusine* XIII, 1992, pp.49-69. In notes accompanying the text in the *Œuvres complètes* edition, Marguerite Bonnet and Étienne-Alain Hubert also comment on several psychoanalytic texts that defined Breton's and Éluard's approach to clinical psychosis.

“Médiations,” showing how Breton and Éluard adapted or collaged pre-existing articles to create their automatic texts.¹²⁶ In each of these cases, critics have focused on one or two essays or prose poems, or on the section “Les Possessions” as a whole. Few studies have attempted to address the entirety of *L’Immaculée Conception*, and for understandable reasons: the book’s heterogeneous nature resists theorization. Each of the four sections seems to be a world unto itself, and to have very little bearing on the other sections.

Several scholars have sought to put the sections in dialog with each other and to analyze *L’Immaculée Conception* as a whole.¹²⁷ In a chapter of her book *Littérature malgré elle*, Effie Rentzou directly addresses the diversity of genres in *L’Immaculée Conception*, arguing that the book inventories surrealist poetic strategies, theorizes them, and puts them into practice. Outlining the aestheticization of automatic writing underway during this period, she identifies a turn from mimesis toward simulation. She shows this more complex relationship between object and image not only in the deranged language of “Les Possessions,” but also in the proverbial language to be found in “Le Jugement

126. Bonnet, Marguerite, and Étienne-Alain Hubert. “Sur deux types d’écriture surréaliste et leurs finalités dans *L’Immaculée Conception* d’André Breton et Paul Éluard.” *Revue d’Histoire littéraire de la France* 87, no. 4 (1987): 753-58.

127. In the introduction to the facsimile edition of the manuscripts of *L’Immaculée Conception* held by the Picasso Museum, Paolo Scopelliti argues for organizing the sections into two poles: “L’Homme” and “Les Possessions;” “Les Médiations” and “Le Jugement Originel.” Showing the influence of Otto Rank on the authors, Scopelliti allies the first “pole” according to the repression of intrauterine and childhood experiences (“L’Homme”) that manifests later in life as madness (“Les Possessions”). In “Les Médiations” and “Le Jugement Originel,” Scopelliti identifies the influence of both Hegel and Kant, arguing that the sequence of four sections represents “les étapes d’un processus d’autopossession.”

Originel” and in the clichés and collages in “Les Médiations.”¹²⁸ Philippe Sabot also discusses all four sections of *L’Immaculée Conception* in *Pratiques d’écriture, pratiques de pensée*, though focusing on “Les Possession” and “Les Médiations” in his mostly Hegelian approach.¹²⁹ He calls the mediations a framework for surrealist revolutionary thinking that expands on the prose poem “La Vie” in “L’Homme” in order to put the madness of the possessions back in contact with the real. For Sabot, the series of aphorisms in “Le Jugement Originel” can best be characterized as an exaltation of surrealist values of freedom, tying together the philosophical and poetic objectives of the book. These studies illuminate the process of automatic writing in *L’Immaculée Conception*, unveil the psychoanalytic and Hegelian influences on the authors, and, in the case of the studies that address the text as a whole, build a deeper understanding of the proliferation of genres in the book. However, they do not map the activity of collaboration onto the poetic and political ambitions of the book.

While the text embarks on a project of redefining of surrealist poetics, it was no less a political and ethical undertaking. That undertaking is especially visible in the theme of the double threading through the four sections of *L’Immaculée Conception* in various guises, especially in terms of reproduction, underscored by the title, and of dialog, as method, genre, and theoretical framework. I have previously stated that the two-person

128. Effie Rentzou, *Littérature malgré elle: le surréalisme et la transformation du littéraire : la France, la Grèce, confrontations* (Paris: Association des amis de Pleine marge, 2010), 207-226.

129. Philippe Sabot, *Pratiques d’écriture, pratiques de pensée : figures du sujet chez Breton, Éluard, Bataille et Leiris* (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2001).

collaboration holds a special place in the surrealist œuvre, and Éluard's preface to *L'Immaculée Conception* bears witness to his personal preoccupation with what he calls "être deux." *L'Immaculée Conception* is a meditation on "being two" that turns over in its cognitive fingers various models for the figure of the pair: shadows, mirrors, molds, sexual positions, parent and child, the doppelganger, siamese twins, the binary, and the contradiction. In part, the superabundance of doubles reflects the text's obsession with its own genesis, an obsession to which title also testifies. Moreover, the various figurations of the double also reimagine collaborative practices. Such an investigation is visible in the encyclopedic proliferation of poetic practices and genres, but perhaps more importantly, in what Éluard will term a "philosophie poétique."

"Note à propos d'une collaboration"

In order to link the double to the ethical project of *L'Immaculée Conception*, we will first turn to one of the paratexts that has shaped interpretation of the book. While not included in the original French edition, a preface was written for the Japanese translation, titled "Note à propos d'une collaboration," and signed by both authors. Handwriting analysis of the manuscript shows that Éluard penned the note (OEC 1:1427). Most attention has fallen on the last paragraph of the preface, in which Éluard states that *L'Immaculée Conception* was written in fifteen days at the authors' leisure and calls the text a philosophy of poetry.¹³⁰ In fact, Éluard's preface itself serves as a crystallization of

130. See Sabot, *Pratiques d'écriture*, 52; Chnieux-Gendron, "Jeux de l'incipit," 126.

the tenets of this philosophy, most evidently in the insistent ethical strains of the first two sentences: “A constater leurs différences, les hommes se veulent semblables. De cette seule volonté, tous les rapports humains prennent leur valeur. Etre deux à détruire, à construire, à vivre, c’est déjà être tous, être l’autre à l’infini et non plus soi.” This note represents an early foray into the theoretical by Éluard, yet it presages his emphatic writings on the role of the poet in the ethical and political sphere.¹³¹

Not only does the preface declare the authors’ view of *L’Immaculée Conception* as an ethical undertaking, it argues for the collaborative partnership to be understood as a model for an ethical relationship. After all, the immediate “rapport humain” is that of Breton and Éluard, and more specifically their relationship as two men who “se veulent semblables” for the purposes of co-writing *L’Immaculée Conception*. In fact, Éluard’s and Breton’s contributions to *L’Immaculée Conception* merge in a remarkably harmonious unity, despite the fact that their styles in their own poetry are quite different.¹³² We will look more closely at the nature of this unity through the collaborative process that created the book, but it is a unity that is characterized first and foremost through the oscillation between singularity and multiplicity present in Éluard’s note: to be two together means being two people, being all people, being the other, and

131. See for example the opening lines of “L’Evidence poetique,” written several years later in 1936: “Le temps est venu où tous les poètes ont le droit et le devoir de soutenir qu’ils sont profondément enfoncés dans la vie de autres hommes, dans la vie commune.” (ŒC 1:513).

132. Éluard writes about their collaborative relationship in his dedication to Breton’s copy of *Ralentir travaux*: “Mon cher André, nous parlons la même langue. Mais je ne suis pas encore habitué à ta pensée. J’en vois toujours s’ouvrir de nouvelles portes, toutes les aubes sont nouvelles.” André Breton, René Char, and Paul Éluard, *Ralentir travaux*, ed. Jean-claude Matthieu (José Corti: Paris, 1989), 79.

being no one. In the poetry of *L'Immaculée Conception* and in the preface, the authors make sense of the “être deux” through the dialogic and the dialectical: the dialog as poetic method par excellence, and the dialectical, in the multitude of binaries that serve as the opposite pole of resemblance. Less visibly in Éluard’s preface, but prevalent in the text of *L'Immaculée Conception*, the double also appears in the guise of reproduction and resemblance. Casting the relationship to the other genealogically, Breton and Éluard raise on the one hand questions of the origins and the nature of the human being, and, through alinear lineages, find an unexpected alternative to re-production as copy.

In the two sentences quoted above, Éluard characterizes the relationships between all people firstly in terms of resemblance: “les hommes se veulent semblables.” In Éluard’s later theoretical work, resemblance will be a key term for understanding poetry and art, sharing a lexical field with the word “réciprocité” in Éluard’s unique understanding of the ethical.¹³³ Likewise, in “Note à propos d’une collaboration” resemblance is in the face of differences, and is not a question of all people being alike. How, then, can we define this surrealist resemblance? One facet of resemblance that is present in *L'Immaculée Conception* is simulation, an essential term in Breton’s preface to “Les Possessions” and one that has been mined by several studies showing its importance

133. The short essay “Avenir de la poésie” contains these two reflections on reciprocity and resemblance:

“La poésie ne se fera chair et sang qu’à partir du moment où elle sera réciproque. Cette réciprocité est entièrement fonction de l’égalité du bonheur entre les hommes.” (ŒC 1:526)

“Tout est comparable à tout, tout trouve son écho, sa raison, sa ressemblance, son opposition, son devenir partout. Et ce devenir est infini.” (ŒC 1:527)

for understanding that particular section, and the reinvention of genres in the book as a whole.¹³⁴ However, another kind of resemblance is explicitly referenced in *L'Immaculée Conception*: familial or genetic resemblance, the resemblance of a child to its parents. This kind of resemblance does not center on the relationship between art and reality, but rather on the relationship between human beings. In Éluard's theory and poetry, resemblance becomes a cipher for the ethical relationship between two individuals, rather than a term of visual comparison, as I have demonstrated in my second chapter in Éluard's poetry. In *L'Immaculée Conception*, Breton and Éluard deploy the non-identical copy—such as a statue that has moved and thus deformed itself in the mold—as a way of imagining the relationship between individuals.

Resemblance puts several entities into relationship, and therefore always implies multiplicity. Éluard's second sentence further develops this multiplicity by connecting the two-person project of collaboration to a multitude: “être deux... ...à construire... c'est déjà être tous, être l'autre à l'infini et non plus soi.” Even if the “être deux” primarily refers to Éluard and Breton as co-authors, Éluard extends that space of two to infinity, making it representative of all humanity. In *L'Immaculée Conception*, the proliferation of the “être tous” dominates, and resemblance is intimately linked with the reproductive theme present in the title. While Éluard does not explicitly reference reproduction in the preface, it is surely one of the “être deux” he has in mind: the

134. For simulation and psychoanalysis in *L'Immaculée Conception*, see Hal Foster, *The Haunted Self*, 58-74. For simulation and the reinvention of poetic language in *L'Immaculée Conception*, see Rentzou, *Littérature malgré elle*, 216-227.

pregnant woman who is at once a single and a double, who is herself and yet who is the other. On the one hand the single-double is a sigil for the authors' relationship, but on the other it describes the nature of their project. The poetic project of *L'Immaculée Conception* is pregnant with an ethical one, two purposes inhabiting the single body of the text. The authors figure this tension between multiplicity and singularity as a set of apparently contiguous possibilities, like the "être deux," "être tous," "être l'autre" that coexist in parallel.

Resemblance and reproduction are two guises under which the double appears in the preface, and a third pair ties it to *L'Immaculée Conception*: the contradiction. Opposites and binaries proliferate in all four sections of the book, stemming in part from the Hegelian influence that several scholars have identified.¹³⁵ The third sentence of the preface picks up on this technique: "chaque brin de soleil supporte un flocon de neige, chaque main tendre un regard connu." Where opposites in the form of light and water, heat and cold come together in the first clause, sight and touch, center and extremity coalesce in the second. These oppositions are yoked together in the text, a technique described in the first surrealist manifesto, in which Breton enjoined writers to bring together disparate terms, which would act like conducting rods and produce the sparks of new ideas.¹³⁶ The Hegelian dialectics taken up by the second manifesto also play a role in the reconciling or joining of oppositions in the poetry of *L'Immaculée Conception*.

135. For the influence of Hegel on Breton, see Sabot, *Pratiques d'écriture*, 40-49.

136. "C'est du rapprochement en quelque sorte fortuit des deux termes qu'a jailli une lumière particulière, lumière de l'image" (Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:337)

However, the dialectical is not only visible in the themes of *L'Immaculée Conception*; like the other pairs I have identified, it also reflects the construction of the book. In the first manifesto, Breton describes the dialog transformed and liberated by Surrealism:

Le surréalisme poétique, auquel je consacre cette étude, s'est appliqué jusqu'ici à rétablir dans sa vérité absolue le dialogue, en dégageant les deux interlocuteurs des obligations de la politesse. Chacun d'eux poursuit simplement son soliloque, sans chercher à en tirer un plaisir dialectique particulier et à en imposer le moins du monde à son voisin. Les propos tenus n'ont pas, comme d'ordinaire, pour but le développement d'une thèse, aussi négligeable qu'on voudra, ils sont aussi désaffectés que possible. Quant à la réponse qu'ils appellent, elle est, en principe, totalement indifférente à l'amour-propre de celui qui a parlé. Les mots, les images ne s'offrent que comme tremplins à l'esprit de celui qui écoute.¹³⁷

Breton's ideal dialog involves not a convergence of both speakers uniting in the same topic, but rather disaffected, disinterested remarks that may lead each interlocutor to diverging ideas. We will see that the collaboration in *L'Immaculée Conception* follows just such a model, with each author uninhibited by the other author's contributions. Both are free to pursue their own ideas, though each may "respond" to the other by reacting to the other's words as a springboard for ideas. The non-linear dialog is also cast in terms of reproduction in *L'Immaculée Conception*, where a non-linear genealogy mirrors the surrealist dialog: just as the answer does not resemble the question,¹³⁸ the child does not resemble the parent. The question of origins, both poetic and human, are intimately connected in *L'Immaculée Conception*.

137. Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:336.

138. In the *Manifeste du surréalisme*, Breton gives the following examples:

“‘Quel âge avez-vous? — Vous.’ (Écholalie.)

‘Comment vous appelez-vous? — Quarante-cinq maisons.’

(Symptôme de Ganser ou des réponses à côté.)” (Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:336).

The Dialogic and the Dialectical

The manuscripts that allow identification of Éluard's and Breton's separate contributions show the role of dialog in the construction of *L'Immaculée Conception*.¹³⁹ The authors' exchanges come together in the same way as the surrealist dialog described above in Breton's first manifesto. Rather than building on each other as links in a chain, each response propels the other in a new direction. Both Breton and Éluard choose aerial metaphors to describe the poet's relationship to his co-creators. Éluard's preface to *Ralentir travaux* uses the respiratory—"le poète est celui qui inspire beaucoup plus que celui qui est inspiré"—while Breton chooses the visual imagery of the trampoline. They do so not only in view of the breathy medium of speech, but precisely to capture the new and non-linear movement at play in the surrealist dialog. The instability of air contributes to the dynamism of the surrealist dialog, which goes in all directions, three-dimensionally, like flight. Of course, in reading Breton's description, one could easily ask what makes this disaffected conversation a dialog, and not merely two disassociated monologues. While the progression of the dialog is alinear, each author's contribution sparks the other to take a theme or syntax in a new direction, one that has an origin, however dissimilar, in the previous lines. Unlike in *Champs magnétiques*, where Breton's editorial cuts often elided the connecting lines between ideas¹⁴⁰, *L'Immaculée Conception*

139. See André Breton and Paul Éluard, *L'Immaculée Conception: Édition Fac-similé du manuscrit du Musée Picasso* ed. Paolo Scopelliti and Henri Béhar (Lausanne: L'Age D'homme, 2002).

140. See Bonnet, notes to *Champs magnétiques*, in Breton, *Œuvres complètes* 1:1142-3.

leaves the *tremplin* in place for the reader to see. Furthermore, the role of shared space is essential to dialog and a defining characteristic of collaboration. Not only do the two authors share space, the two parts of the dialog also merge on the page. While this may seem like a simple physical fact, we should not forget that juxtaposition played an important role in the surrealist aesthetic, most notably in collage.

In some exchanges, more than just a physical coexistence is visible—the traces of the two authors’ trajectories can be seen. An exchange in “Le sentiment de la nature” illustrates the semantic interplay that takes unexpected turns, yet maintains the points of juncture in its non-linear progression. It begins with Breton describing a glass that shatters in the hands of those who have been unfaithful:

[Breton] La grande question serait d'obtenir que lorsqu'un être a trompé un autre être, il soit incapable de prendre à la main un verre qui ne se brise pas aussitôt. Bien des inventeurs ont consacré leur sommeil et leurs veilles à la solution de ce problème, mais sans que jusqu'à présent aucun des verres imaginés ait présenté les qualités requises. Le fait est que si c'est l'élégance seule du verre qui permet de boire et si c'est le tremblement seul du buveur ou de la buveuse qui communique ses vibrations à la tempête toujours supposée à l'intérieur du verre vide, l'émotion de l'un ou de l'autre ne peut suffire dans la plupart des cas à provoquer l'éclatement d'une parcelle de matière transparente qui fait bombe à l'extrémité des doigts. [Éluard] Ces grêlons qui ont mûri dans l'inconstance et dans l'oubli ne permettent pas à ceux qui boivent de prendre l'attitude détachée des amateurs de jalousie.

Sous les arbres, à pleines mains, l'odeur de linge brûlé des vieux rosiers garnit les caves de l'automne. Le cœur de la dame du lac a été perforé par un lézard. Il est dans l'aurore jusqu'au cœur. Il y a sous roche un tel mouvement d'étoiles que l'ombre tombe en flocons, un tel mouvement d'étoiles grandes et terribles que la vie est en lambeaux. Et l'écho répond: Ici, il y a un cadavre. [Breton] Peu à peu, le cadavre se farde. La poudre de riz laisse place à la céruse, le sublimé paraît au balcon... (ŒC 1:340)

The “[Breton:] éclatement d’une parcelle de matière transparente qui fait bombe à l’extrémité des doigts” becomes “[Éluard] ces grêlons” in the next sentence, a re-vision of the material from glass to ice. The metaphor capitalizes on the paired qualities of transparency and fragmentation to redirect the dialog. That meteorological reimagining propels Éluard into a reflection on sky and space as he continues: “il y a sous roche un tel mouvement d’étoiles que l’ombre tombe en flocons, un tel mouvement d’étoiles grandes et terribles que la vie est en lambeaux. Et l’écho se répond: ici il y a un cadavre.” When Breton responds in the paragraph that immediately follows this line, he plucks the last word, “cadavre,” and launches into an absurd depiction in which “le cadavre se farde,” making a hairpin turn from the cosmic to the cosmetic. These two exchanges operate according to different principles: in the first transition, Éluard changes the conversation through a play on resemblance (of glass and ice), while in the second, the same image is presented differently through a change in tone. Without mimicking each other or seeking to create seamless continuity, the authors take thematic or lexical content in a new direction.

The dialog allows for tension between resemblance and difference, even when pushed to the limits, well beyond the bounds of social convention. While not all of the transitions between Breton’s and Éluard’s writing are marked by such evident redirections, with one author responding directly to a previous word or image, all of the sections, with the exception of the singly-authored proverbs in “Le Jugement originel,” are written dialogically, with multiple exchanges between the two authors. The joints that

the manuscript enables us to see show both the unity and division through which Breton and Éluard to create a surrealist dialog in the text. Already in the practice of the dialog we can see Éluard's theoretical notion of resemblance at play: an attempt to form a relationship that finds resemblance outside of similarity. The relationship of non-similar resemblance characterizes the collaborative relationship as well as the dialogic double. Furthermore, these dialogic engagements reflect a broader strategy in *L'Immaculée Conception*: the singular comes out of the plural and the shared births the individual. While one speaker or writer initiates the dialog, the whole arises out of the crossed paths of the two monologues—as in the shared notion of the clear shards (glass or hale) or of the corpse. Both in its dissimilar resemblance and in its modeling of a collective origin, the dialog puts the authors in a relationship that recalls the proto-ethics of Éluard's preface.

While a reader of *L'Immaculée Conception* might not be able to see the “tremplins” that mark exchanges between Éluard and Breton, the thematization of dialog in binary oppositions is conspicuous. The surrealist dialog fuses two disparate halves, a poetics that extends to non-collaborative works, as in the famous verse from Éluard's 1929 *L'Amour la poésie*: “la terre est bleue comme un orange” (232). In *L'Immaculée Conception*, a proliferation of opposites presented as unities recreates the surrealist dialog in compact form. Phrases such as “parmi les herbes régulières des cieux” (309) turn the world upside down, defying the reader's expectations of continuity and cohesiveness. The obsession with dialectical oppositions stems from Breton's renewed interest in

Hegel, as testified to by the second manifesto: “Tout porte à croire qu’il existe un certain point de l’esprit d’où la vie et la mort, le réel et l’imaginaire, le passé et le futur, le communicable et l’incommunicable, le haut et le bas cessent d’être perçus contradictoirement. Or c’est en vain qu’on chercherait à l’activité surréaliste un autre mobile que l’espoir de détermination de ce point.”¹⁴¹ Philippe Sabot writes that the dialectical is at the heart of what he calls the anthropoetics of *L’Immaculée Conception*: “nous verrons que *L’Immaculée Conception* contribue, à sa manière, à promouvoir cet ‘esprit dialectique’ qui doit réconcilier l’homme avec lui-même et avec la réalité du monde qui l’entoure en transformant radicalement leurs rapports.” Sabot focuses his analysis of the dialectical primarily on the simulations of *Les Possessions*, breaking down the divide between alienation and possession, but he makes a broader case for the antinomy as a product of social oppression.¹⁴² While the Surrealists use dialectical oppositions for political purposes, *L’Immaculée Conception* is more broadly concerned with reenvisioning relationships beyond simple difference or similarity. The dialectical phrases of *L’Immaculée Conception* join opposing terms, many of which defy mental accommodation: “le lustre éteint qui m’éclaire” (EC 1:309). In the context of the dialogical and the dialectical double, relationality does not exclude difference, nor does it pit two parties in opposition. Rather, it allows for a responsive co-existence that, as we will see in analysis of reproductive themes, positions the other as an origin point, just as

141. Breton, *Œuvres complètes* 1:319.

142. Sabot, *Pratiques d’écriture*, 47-48.

the replies that make up a surrealist dialog originate in the co-author's thought, without imitation.

Shared Space

One facet of collaboration that I have shown to be important in chapter one, and which is significant in both *L'Immaculée Conception* and *Ralentir travaux*, is physical nearness. We have seen that whole sections of *Les Champs magnétiques* were written by Breton and Soupault separately, with the only collaborative aspects being the shared intent to co-create a text and the simple fact of working in the same space. While Éluard's and Breton's writing may have influenced each other more directly, since each reads and responds to the other's writing, they capture the significance of presence in a variety of images in *L'Immaculée Conception*. The impact of a shared working space on the author's or artist's work was never directly theorized by the Surrealists, though its importance to the movement is undeniable. Certain publications testify to the significance of communal space all the more clearly because the authors considered their work collaborative even in the absence of direct collaboration, i.e. mutual editing or responding to each other's work in their own. One example of such a "collaboration" through simply being together is Michel Leiris's and André Masson's *Simulacre* (1925). Leiris describes the poems in the collection as "conçus dans l'ambiance de [l']atelier [de Masson] et imprégnés tant des œuvres que des propos du maître de maison."¹⁴³ Remarkably, he uses

143. Michel Leiris, *Zébrage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 222.

the very language to which Breton and Éluard will have recourse in the attempt to portray the process of collaboration: that of reproduction (*conçus, imprégnés*). In *L'Immaculée Conception*, an understanding of that which is so difficult to characterize, what Leiris terms “ambiance,” develops through a notion of the shared body. The title of *L'Immaculée Conception* evokes the pregnant body, which is neither one person nor two. The ambiance of shared space as an influence on the text seems almost an abstraction, but Breton and Éluard concretize it through the image of the shared body, which instantiates a tension between multiplicity and singularity. Shared space and the shared body recur as metaphors for collaboration throughout *L'Immaculée Conception*, revealing an alternative to thematic continuity as we normally understand dialog: physical contiguity as a lived reality that imprints the finished artwork.

The shared body is synonymous with the re-productive. References to reproduction crop up in passing in many chapters of *L'Immaculée Conception*,¹⁴⁴ but “La Conception,” in the section “L’Homme,” particularly reflects on the reproductive as metaphor for artistic creation. Although “La Conception” and the two chapters that follow are clearly describing intrauterine life—the title of the second chapter in “L’Homme”—they operate on the level of self-referentiality as well. The indeterminate single-plural of reproduction overwhelmingly characterizes the body in these chapters. In

144. The vocabulary of reproduction—eggs, the embryo, and other early life forms—and sexuality may not be the focus of most chapters, but it demonstrates one axis of Breton’s and Éluard’s thinking that runs through the whole collection. In “Essai de la démence précoce:” “l’embryon garde son apparence de clef anglaise” and “j’ai mis ma verge dans toutes les cheminées le jour de Noël” (OEC 1:328).

“La Conception,” phrases such as “ces vingt doigts” represent two simultaneous possibilities: the four hands of the two authors, or of the mother-father pair, or perhaps the ten fingers and ten toes of a single body. In either case, however, the twenty digits, like the face, hands, and other body parts mentioned, are fundamentally shared—belonging to both mother and child and to neither. In “La Vie intrautérine,” the split nature of the self is explicitly rooted in bodily existence: “un cœur qui n’est pas le mien et qui est mon cœur” (ŒC 1:309). Like the physical heart of the mother, the core of the lyrical prose in the text is divided: the authors share the single subject of the *je*, making the “le mien” and the “mon” belong at once to both of the authors and to neither. A single sentence of “La Conception” encapsulates the Gordian knot of shared subjectivity: “nous n’étions chacun que nous” (307). Taking a plural subject pronoun only to break it apart into “chacun” and then reunite it again in “nous,” the authors describe a togetherness that overrides their individuality, making it possible for them to write together. The *nous* engulfing the two individuals is underscored in the same paragraph: “on s’est bien regardé en face au point de se perdre de vue.” Losing sight of oneself—an act mandated to the poet by Éluard in his preface to *Ralentir travaux*¹⁴⁵—makes collaboration possible by breaking down the borders between individuals.¹⁴⁶ These images of the shared body

145. “Il faut effacer le reflet de la personnalité pour que l’inspiration bondisse à tout jamais du miroir” (ŒC 1:270).

146. In “La Force de l’habitude,” the interdependence of *je* and *tu* is distinctly cast in terms of presence: “tu ne peux pas n’être pas là, tu es la preuve que j’y suis” (ŒC 1:334).

capture the essential role of shared space in the relationship of mother and child as hyperbolic version of the coauthors' relationship.

In “Le Jugement originel,” the authors’ rewriting of Proverbs but also their call to action through repeated imperatives, several of the proverbs invite readers to participate in collaborative dialog.¹⁴⁷ The proverb “Pense à moi qui te parle, mets-toi à ma place pour répondre” (ÆC 355) may seem an odd injunction given Breton’s insistence on the freedom of both speakers in the surrealist dialog, freedom not to imitate each other. We should read the proverb not as a demand that the addressee take up my train of thought or speak as I would speak, neither of which would resemble Breton’s and Éluard’s dialog in *L’Immaculée Conception*, but rather as a radical invitation to shared space. The authors invite the answerer to step into their space, a cohabitation that makes dialog possible. In fact, the proverb picks up on a strain of Breton’s preface to the “Possessions,” where he proposes to “faire parler par ma propre bouche” a series of different individuals, as the “essais de simulations” attempt to do. This is yet another valence of the shared body, that each author allows the other—and, through the expansion of *être deux* to *être tous*, every other—to speak from his own mouth. Ultimately, what allows the surrealist dialog to hold together, despite an abandonment of logical and thematic constraints, is a radical sharing of space, even the space of the body

147. Perhaps most explicitly in the proverb “parle selon la folie qui t’a séduit,” which plainly encourages readers to attempt what the authors performed in the *essais de simulation* in “Les Possessions,” and in the proverb “ne prépares pas les mots que tu cries,” a call to automatic writing.

itself. This plurality in the self is not an ex post facto construction of collaboration, but rather derives from human nature as it is shaped in the earliest stages of life.

Resemblance and Reproduction

The title *L'Immaculée Conception* announces a particular focus for the collection: the origin point of the human being. Scholars have noted that the title makes an anti-catholic statement, distorting a religious doctrine to give it new meaning: Breton and Éluard are characterizing automatic writing as immaculate, as free from “original sin,” i.e. the influence of tradition or reason.¹⁴⁸ However, the second part of the title has not been given equal weight: the moment of conception as somehow significant or important to the Surrealists. In fact, the “conception” in the title is insisted upon twice, first in the title of the whole collection and secondly as the title of the first section in the first chapter: “La Conception.” As we have seen in images of the shared body, conception is one of the doubles through which Breton and Éluard understand their own collaborative process. Collaboration itself can be seen as a kind of reproduction through alternative means.¹⁴⁹ Perhaps more importantly, conception also signals a return to origins, and specifically to the dependent, unformed life of the fetus. If the authors wish

148. See for example how Philippe Sabot translates this Catholic doctrine into poetic terms in *Pratiques d'Écriture, Pratiques de Pensée*: “‘vierge’ de tout présumé et de toute contrainte formelle ou stylistique, exempté en quelque sorte des modèles de reconnaissance que le discours 'littéraire' entend imposer à l'écriture poétique” (53).

149. Immaculate conception is often mistaken to mean the virgin birth of Jesus, a fitting metaphor for the asexual reproduction of collaborative practice. See the references to the hermaphrodite's body in “Essai de la manie aiguë:” “C'est moi qui ai dû amputer la femme du sexe de l'homme sous prétexte de chirurgie esthétique.” (ŒC 1:318).

to go back to the beginning, it is precisely to understand the nature of the human being, the nature on which their ethics hangs, as well as the nature of their own collaboration. The emphasis on the origin in the title *L'Immaculée Conception* might even be called hyperbolic, because it captures not a single, but a double regression. The doctrine of immaculate conception does not concern Jesus Christ's conception, but the Virgin Mary's own conception and preservation from original sin. In question in the immaculate conception is the beginning of the beginning.

In the beginning there are two relationships: first between the mother and father, and second between the parent and the child. The horizontal axis of the mother-father relationship is present in sexual images and discourse throughout *L'Immaculée Conception*, a fairly typical surrealist trope, but the vertical axis of lineage through the parent-child relationship, a more distinctive preoccupation, also threads through all four sections. In part, writing about the mother-child dyad allows the authors to reflect on processes of reproduction, and, relatedly, of artistic production. The two are most evidently connected through several reflections on the artistic technique of the mold. The authors pastiche a somewhat technical text about molding in "Médiations," while a section of "L'Homme" gives a fantasy vision of molds that could produce non-identical copies: "Les gestes interdits des statues dans le monde ont donné ces figures imparfaites et revenantes: les Vénus dont les mains absentes caressent les cheveux des poètes" (308). *L'Immaculée Conception* changes the shape of reproduction. The potent polyform mold is one more example of resemblance through other means, alongside the dissimilar re-

production of childbirth. In “La Naissance,” Breton and Éluard make a humorous play on the need to identify a baby with the mother or father: neighbors come to see the newborn and exclaim over how much the baby resembles not the parents but abstractions: “Le voisin soutient qu’il est fait à l’image du feu de bois, la voisine qu’on ne peut mieux le comparer qu’à l’air des avions...” (310). The construction of resemblances unravels, and as in the surrealist dialog, the reader is left to question how to establish a relationship otherwise. The unexpected parent-child relationship posits procreation as something other than the reproduction of the self. In some sense, we can align this preoccupation with the goals of automatic writing, to define artistic production as something other than self-expression.

Nonetheless, the connections that *L’Immaculée Conception* draws between artistic creation and procreation are not merely to symbolize the surrealist project in other terms. While the alinear genealogies of “L’Homme” parallel the processes of automatic writing and collaboration, it would be more appropriate to say that they reveal the beliefs that underly those practices. The most explicit references to genealogy appear in “L’Homme,” where the authors have chosen to launch the project of *L’Immaculée Conception* with a reflection on the nature of the human being that focuses in three out of five sections on fetal life, on origins. They find the answer to the nature of the human being not in parentage, which is categorically nonsensical in these poems: “le poisson naît d’une épine, la guenon d’une noix” (308). Rather, the process of reproduction becomes important: the dependent and interconnected life of fetus and mother, and the

endless potentiality of difference as productive force. The non-sequitur parent-child relationships in “L’Homme,” along with the notion of the womb as changing mold, disrupt the association between genealogy and continuity. In automatic writing, which ruptures the traditional relationship between author and book, the authors not only engage in illogical dialog, but also experiment with a kind of reproductive relationship that mimics what they see as true reproduction: not copy, but spontaneous and unpredictable generation. Breton and Éluard suggest that the origin point of the human being is found in difference, rather than in continuity and resemblance. In “L’Homme,” they cast a vision for this understanding of the human being that resonates throughout *L’Immaculée Conception* and makes the collaborative act possible—in this sense, “L’Homme” is not only the seed of the whole text, but the theoretical foundation that founds it.

For Breton and Éluard, the relationship between two collaborating authors enacts the potential of a range of other relationships, and points toward the collective fashioning of the subject. Alongside productive difference, the second characteristic of the parent-child relationship that appears in *L’Immaculée Conception* is the contingency of fetal life. This quality materializes in all four sections, and makes possible the section that immediately follows “L’Homme,” “Les Possessions,” which contains the “essais de simulation.” The contingent life of the fetus unites the poles of singularity and multiplicity. We see the pair pulled toward the infinite, at once toward the other, and toward the “être tous” of Éluard’s preface. In the “Essai de simulation de la démence précoce,” the *je* experiences an outward explosion: “je suis le grand-père, le père, le

beau-père, le frère, l'oncle, le gendre, la bru, le cousin, le parrain..." (330) Through asyndeton, the self becomes polymorphous, dispersing along genetic lines in every direction. The sentence takes the many-branched tree of genealogical relationships and makes it into the self's identity, along an axis of individual relationships that are always pairs—*parrain / filleul, oncle / neveu, bru / belle-mère*. While *L'Immaculée Conception* thinks collectivity in terms of family, it does so not in order to limit the relationship to the other to one kind of relationship, but rather to reinscribe the human being in the collective from which it originated. This genetic proliferation extends to non-familial relationships in "Les Possessions." In the preface that opens the section, Breton writes about the poet's ability to make other voices speak from his mouth, to let himself be in some sense possessed. The single-plural structure of paired authorship activates the openness of the body. The progression from singular self toward pair toward shifting plurality occurs through the same dynamism of productive difference, but it is catalyzed by the non-singularity of the human at its earliest stage of being.

In naming the moment of conception as key to human nature, Breton and Éluard cast the human being as fundamentally relational. This definition of the human is not a result of their collaboration; rather, it is a belated recognition of the motivation behind Surrealists' abiding desire for collective action and collective creation. Seen properly, the work of art itself reflects the nature of the author that created it—an author shaped by a process of interaction, by a collectivity that pre-existed it. *L'Immaculée Conception* appears as a unity, as if written by a single hand, despite the unexpected

changes in direction and in genre. Without the title page, its reader could perhaps believe it to be the product of one mind. Nonetheless, Breton argues that the images of collaborative writing could not be produced by a single person. In the same way, the multiplicity and potentiality of the human being revealed by *L'Immaculée Conception* may hide beneath the surface of the individual, yet be brought to the fore by collaborative practices. By understanding the human being to be formed out of relationship, Breton and Éluard prime the ground for a distinctive relationship to the other, one that casts the coauthor as a cocreator of the self. In this ethics, relationship to the other does not depend on the other's resembling the self. Instead, the “être l'autre à l'infini et non plus soi” of Éluard's preface suggests that two-person collaboration creates a face-to-face in which the self can be left behind. However, for the authors of *L'Immaculée Conception*, such a departure from the self toward the other might best be seen as an exploration of origins—a pursuit undertaken through collaborative work that puts the human being back into the creative relationship with the other that formed the self in the beginning. Using collaboration to instantiate a collective experience of the world, *L'Immaculée Conception* re-envision the origins and evolution of the human being, as well as the implications of collective origins for relationships between individuals.

Ralentir travaux *and the Erasure of the Self*

A handful of months before the writing of *L'Immaculée Conception*, Breton and Éluard participated in another collaborative poetic project with René Char, a

newcomer to Surrealism. The thirty poems of *Ralentir travaux* were written in five days, from March 25th-30th according to the dates at the end of the published collection. *Ralentir travaux* holds a strange position in the Surrealist canon—one of many projects on which Breton and Éluard collaborated, yet the only three-poet book collaboration to be realized. The collection operates on the threshold between the better-known poetry collaborations like *Les Champs magnétiques* and the group games like the *cadavre exquis* that were more practice than publication. Little has been written about the difficult, elliptical poems, although the three individually-authored prefaces have received more attention due to the authors' more philosophical reflections on poetry, language, and collaboration. Breton would later make a case for the three-author structure in a letter to Rolland de Renéville, describing Char as the third element “de jonction, de résolution, et intervenant auprès des deux autres comme facteur d'unité.”¹⁵⁰ Unlike *L'Immaculée Conception*, dominated by the prose poem and essay genres, *Ralentir travaux* returns to free verse and a more condensed style, reminiscent at times of Éluard's *Répétitions*. The collection's status as automatic writing is also more complicated than that of *L'Immaculée Conception*, despite bearing certain hallmarks of automatism, such as the speed of writing and resemblance to certain surrealist games. Anne-Marie Amiot has

150. Breton, *Œuvres complètes* 2:330. In fact, Éluard might be more appropriately termed the “facteur d'unité” connecting Breton and Char, as Char's first point of contact with the Surrealists, as Breton's most frequent co-writer, and as the co-laborer par excellence who would continue to work with many members of the surrealist diaspora who quit official membership, such as Char himself. Seven years later, Éluard and Char would cowrite poetry again during a stay in the south, two poems published together with a gouache by Char.

called *Ralentir travaux* a remake of *Champs magnétiques*, noting the roles of the commonplace and the plural *je* in the text,¹⁵¹ and Myriam Boucharenc has also found various parallels between the two texts in their thematization of collaboration, especially in the tension between the individual and collective forms of expression.¹⁵² Yet other scholars assert the lack of an *énoncé collectif*—they argue that the authors’ three voices rarely merge, and instead remain preoccupied by individual concerns, a separation signaled by the three prefaces.¹⁵³ Mechthild Cranston notes that “the verses of *Ralentir Travaux* are *grégaire*s rather than *anonymes*, for each poem, each line clearly bears the unwritten signature of its author,” an individuality that for Cranston, as for Boucharenc, ultimately represents a failure of collective writing.¹⁵⁴

Regardless of the authors’ success in finding a shared voice, certain thematic explorations create continuity in the poems of *Ralentir travaux*—many verses reveal a distinct concern with erasure and suppression of identity that is absent from other collaborative texts. At the center of the collection is a threat of erasure in stark contrast to the individualism some scholars identify in the poems and in the prefaces. The authors

151. Anne-Marie Amiot, “Éluard écrivain de groupe, à travers l’écriture en collaboration,” in *Éluard à cent ans*, ed. Collette Guedj (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998), 40-47.

152. Myriam Boucharenc, “Plural Authorship in Automatic Writing,” in *Subject Matters: Subject and Self in French Literature from Descartes to the Present*, ed. Paul Gifford and Johnnie Gratton (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 102-105.

153. In her article “*Ralentir travaux* : the Second Surrealist Manifesto,” Virginia La Charité argues that the individual contributions to the collection are notably distinct from each other, and that only through the action of the reader does the collection come together. In *Conjunctions: Verbal-Visual Relations*, ed. Laurie Edson and Renée Riese Hubert (San Diego: San Diego State Univ. Press, 1996), 293-308.

154. Cranston, *Orion Resurgent*, 35-63.

seem to have experienced a degree of dissolution or disappearing in the act of collaboration. While such an erasure could be traced to the effacing of the author demanded in some forms of collaboration and automatism, *Ralentir travaux* resists that tendency in the singly-authored and -signed prefaces. Paul Bonet's 1931 binding beautifully captures the individuality of the authors with three intersecting yet distinct lines, inscribed with the authors' names, terminating in a bird head on each of the three Rs of the title. In order to understand the nature of this erasure, I will begin by analyzing the theory of collaboration set forth in each of the authors' prefaces, and comparing the individual articulations found there with the poetic reflections on erasure in the collection. The three-author structure of *Ralentir travaux* throws the paired collaboration into sharp relief, not only for the purposes of this study, but seemingly for the authors themselves. By revealing the tensions within the theory of automatism—its demand for anonymity and its call to collectivity—*Ralentir travaux* prepares the ground for future collaborations, most obviously *L'Immaculée Conception*.

By looking at *Ralentir travaux*, we can see an internal struggle between two conceptions of collaboration: one based on the erasure and anonymity that characterized automatic writing of the 20s, and one that often seems to be retroactive, going against the grain of anonymity to reformulate the individual. The former is articulated in the prefaces, which champion the erasure of the individual and the removal of the subjective from the poetic sphere. Yet there is a fundamental disconnect between the prefaces' stated support for anonymity and their role in the collection—as singly-authored,

individually signed pieces, printed on three separate pages in the original edition, they reinscribe the individual in a collective text. Furthermore, the poetry of *Ralentir travaux*—testifying more directly to the lived experience of collaboration that created the verses—portrays erasure as a menacing presence. One way to understand the internal discord of *Ralentir travaux* is in light of its three-author structure. The third partner, rather than uniting the other two, seems to have unbalanced the collection, pushing the call to dissolution to impossible lengths. Indeed, just under half of the poems in *Ralentir travaux* are actually the product of all three authors. It is as if the authors already realized that the two-person collaboration simply worked better, and fell back on the familiar, efficacious pair structure for 14 out of the 30 poems. The three-person collaboration seems fundamentally incapable of the contiguity of singular and plural that finds equilibrium in *L'Immaculée Conception*. However, we should also see the irresolvable individual-collective struggle of *Ralentir travaux* as an intermediate step toward the new theory of collaboration set out in *L'Immaculée Conception*. The authors seem to recognize in co-writing the need for something other than erasure, and register an impetus toward a greater freedom for the individual writers. After *Ralentir travaux*, Breton and Éluard seem to have completely reimagined collaborative work, finding a resolution for the problem of the individual-collective binary in perceiving the individual at the end of a process of the collective, rather than seeing the dissolution of the individual as collaboration's objective. Without the working-through of individuality in collaboration

that takes place in *Ralentir travaux*, Breton and Éluard may not have seen the fruition of the surrealist dialog in *L'Immaculée Conception*.

Prefaces

The prefaces to *Ralentir travaux* give three visions of a-subjectivity as essential to poetry. Each author meditates on the erasure of the individual through distinct metaphors. Breton's preface imagines each of the coauthors' associations for the word table:

Tout le monde a vu une table mais quand nous disons une table le malheur est que cette table à ce moment pour M. Breton est une table de café (car il boit), pour M. Char une table de jeu (car il ne joue pas), pour M. Éluard une table d'opération (car il est passé ce matin place de l'Opéra). Si l'un de ces messieurs dit ici : une table, vous voyez ce qui en résulte. Table rase une fois faite de ceux qui les écoutent prononcer le mot table, l'un après l'autre, la poésie suit son cours, comme le Tarn dans les ravissantes inondations du Sud-Ouest. (ÆC 1:269)

Breton views this dissonance in meaning negatively, and asserts the need for a cleaning of the slate, so that poetry can flood its banks like the Tarn. For Breton, then, subjectivity is a constraint and a hindrance to language and to poetry that must be overcome. Char's elliptical preface features an oft-cited description of the poems in *Ralentir travaux* as “de petits fagots hâtivement construits” (Ibid.). While this may indicate the speed of writing prized in automatism, Char especially focuses on the materiality of wood. I would argue that for Char not only the poems—the “fagots”—are a flammable substance, but also and more essentially the poets themselves. He proposes that the poems must be destroyed by fire in order to become smoke, but he introduces the image of fire thus: “l'habileté flambe

comme la paille” (269). It is the poets themselves, the skillful ones, who must burn away in order to release “la parole en liberté” (Ibid.). Of the three, Éluard is the most explicit in stating that the erasure of the poet is necessary to the work of art: “il faut effacer le reflet de la personnalité pour que l’inspiration bondisse à tout jamais du miroir” (270). The poet must first excise himself from the mirror in order for inspiration. Like the inverted cliché that concludes Éluard’s preface—“le poète est celui qui inspire beaucoup plus que celui qui est inspiré”—this articulation reverses our expectations, making the mirror itself the source of light and vision. While each of these authors presents a unique vision of language and the role of the poet, all three philosophies of poetry revolve around a destructive act. Unlike *L’Immaculée Conception*, which sees the tabula rasa as a starting point from which the individual discovers itself through collaboration, *Ralentir travaux* begins with three individuals who must be erased or even destroyed in order to collaborate.

While the prefaces figure erasure in positive terms, as source of inspiration, the loss of self hovers over the poems in *Ralentir travaux* in a more threatening and destructive guise. Instead of casting this a-subjectivity in abstract metaphors of water, fire, and mirrors, the thirty collaborative poems in the collection tend to inscribe the threat of erasure directly on the body, as the locus of the individual’s identity. Perhaps the most aggressive variation on this theme is the repeated reference to death, and particularly to suicide. As a manifestation of Éluard’s call to “effacer le reflet de la personnalité,” suicide represents the heavy demand on the poet to become other than

himself, a demand that becomes all the more intense in collaborative work. The most extreme image of bodily destruction appears in a poem titled “Le Partage,” tellingly connecting it to the shared work of collaboration. The poem oscillates between a natural decay of the body and an erasure inflicted by the *je*, making a kind of *blason* that lists the ruination of various body parts: “Les belles bêtes blanches qui te mangent les joues / Les pierres impatientes qui te creusent les yeux” (285). The body represents the retaining wall of the individual, and this construction is rendered physical in the final poem of the collection: “j’arrache les arbustes qui retiennent le suicide au bord des précipices” (287). The body is completely overwhelmed by the destructive force of anonymity in *Ralentir travaux*. Troublingly, death or suicide seem almost a precondition of co-writing. For Breton, the tabula rasa allows the flooding of the Tarn, for Éluard, the free flow of inspiration, while in the poems, death as a form of erasure permits writing, and possibly in some cases a kind of rebirth. Some verses reveal a rare flash of potential new life—“je t’enfouirai dans le sable / pour que le marée te délivre” (277)—although the majority focus on destruction. Collaboration seems to demand a sacrificing of the individual through which the poet can accede, not to a new self, but to the collective I.

In one poem in *Ralentir travaux*, called “L’Air se charge,” the shifting identity is clearly conceptualized as essential to the poet. Notably, this is also one of the poems for which all three authors wrote verses. They construct a figure of the poet as an unstable and unrecognizable *je*:

Demain à telle heure sautante

Je viendrai plus seul que je ne suis sans toi
Avec ma figure méconnaissable
Dans mes habits d'emprunt (272)

The encounter with the other, in this case a meeting between lovers, is predicated on the anonymity of the I, “celui que tu n’as pas connu.” The physical lack of identity manifests itself first in the face, in the unrecognizable features that are like borrowed clothes—the face of someone else. This thread of the changing or unrecognizable face recurs throughout *Ralentir travaux*—as “un visage perdu” or otherwise defigured, as “La Tête surprise,” one poem’s title—connecting the bodily destruction I have described above with a loss of identity that permeates the text. Above any other part of the body, we tend to associate the face with individuality. The loss of the face is profoundly troubling, even the somewhat disturbing suggestion in Éluard’s preface that the mirror might reflect something alien instead of the self. That the collection’s purpose is intimately linked with this undoing of identity becomes explicit in one verse that replaces the face with a road sign: “Son visage est remplacé par l’inscription Secours aux noyés” (“Ordre du jour,” 281). Just as the poets happened upon the collection’s eventual title, “Ralentir travaux,” on a road sign, “Secours aux noyés” would likely have been a sign on a building in a town they passed through. With this verse, the poets make their goal explicit: the poetry of *Ralentir travaux* replaces their individual faces with a shared inscription.

The poems at the end of the collection invoke death as the ultimate erasure of identity, in images such as the closed eyes of the cadaver: “Qui m’a fermé les yeux” (“Je m’écoute encore parler,” 287), “Les pierres impatientes qui te creusent les yeux” (“Le

Partage,” 285). On the other hand, the poet of “L’Air se charge” alters his identity metonymically through the clothing, as well as through changes in associations with time and place. This might seem to suggest a less direct and therefore a less radical erasure, but the poet proves to be unstable: “Je serai cette fois celui que tu n’as pas connu / Et qui n’aime qu’à te surprendre” (272) The final lines of the poem evoke a dissolution of the self into fog.¹⁵⁵ Through that dispersal, “L’Air se charge” parallels the decaying body with a more elemental image of erasure in keeping with the prefaces. Yet the threat of identity loss is specifically associated with the speaking *je*, a trope consistent throughout the poetry of *Ralentir travaux*. The functions of recognition or knowledge that create stability and continuity of identity are repeatedly disavowed: “Qui parle ce n’est plus la ressemblance ni la connaissance” (“On donne le change,” 280). While a greater number of poems employ the first person singular, use of the plural *nous* is marked by a more negative tone, as if the submerging of three voices into one identity brings out the strongest expression of doubt. A poem called “On ferme” begins each of three stanzas with a negation: “Nous n’avons rien retenu... / ...Nous n’avons rien perdu... / ...Nous n’avons rien été” (283), associating the number three with a backwards glance that eradicates the past, a source of identity and continuity. While rare verses seem to associate erasure with a kind of rebirth or, in “L’Air se charge,” as the power of the poet

155. “Et tu ne pourras rien prendre / L’amour s’étendra comme j’aime / Brouillard à couper au couteau” (EC 1:273).

to appear anywhere in any guise, the overwhelming experience of *Ralentir travaux* is one of the menace of erasure as a profound violence.

Ralentir travaux presents a schizophrenic viewpoint on erasure. Clinging to a-subjectivity as a model for poetic and collaborative creation, the authors vindicate its role in inspiration. At the same time, the authors' voices blend less harmoniously in the poetry of *Ralentir travaux* than in *L'Immaculée Conception*. Undeniably, the thirty poems produced in the authors' short time spent together testify to the fruitfulness of their chosen method. Even if half of the poems were written in pairs, the whole set reveal a remarkable continuity in reflections on erasure, anonymity, and death. Ironically, however, these very themes that hold the collection together also characterize group writing as a kind of suicidal act. In this sense, the prefaces, likely written after the collective poetry, seem like a kind of stop-gap measure against the tide of negation in the collaborative work. *Ralentir travaux* can best be seen as a transitional text, one that experiments with the a-subjectivity of early automatism and reveals the fractures in this model of collaboration. The authors' desire for greater individual freedom, visible in the three prefaces but also in the stylistic differences that confront the reader, sets collaboration on a trajectory to discover a new relationship between co-authors and to allow for different forms of expression. Breton and Éluard will find a solution to this problem in the relationality of dialog. *Ralentir travaux* underscores the natural course of collaboration toward the figure of the two. On the other hand, *Ralentir travaux* reminds us that the pair always leads to a larger collective. In any multi-author book project, more

than two people work together; we have seen, for example, Dali's influence in *L'Immaculée Conception*. Likewise, Myriam Boucharenc has highlighted the significance of Aragon as a reader of *Les Champs magnétiques* (112). Nonetheless, the partnership proves essential to the creation process. A third person may contribute to inspiration for the project, as in Dali's case, or may enter into the revision process as a reader, as in Aragon's case, as well as in the case of the editors who were essential to the art books in the next chapter. However, in the face-to-face of collaboration on the body of text or artwork, a third person can only participate as a kind of alternate partner and an element of superfluity.

Conclusion

By stepping back and looking at the two prefaces written by Éluard, his preface for *Ralentir travaux* and the "Note sur une collaboration" written for the Japanese edition of *L'Immaculée Conception*, his shift in thinking about collaboration and its meaning for the individual comes into focus. In Éluard's preface for *Ralentir travaux*, he focuses on the erasure of personality as essential to inspiration. Notes of passivity—the author as "celui qui est entendu"—suggest the subject-less creation of early automatism; spontaneity and the free play of influences, these are the tools Éluard invokes to the reader. We should especially contrast the image of the empty mirror at the heart of the preface with the relationship of resemblance in "Note sur une collaboration," where the reflecting relationship of two becomes a whole host of people. Instead of anonymity,

resemblance comes to the fore, and the dynamic of erasure changes. Where the collective seemed to move toward a zero of impersonality in *Ralentir travaux*, Éluard suggests that in *L'Immaculée Conception* the figure of the two moves in the opposite direction—toward the infinite. We have seen in *L'Immaculée Conception* that the dynamism of the pair can push the individual toward a different kind of undoing—not the end of life as in *Ralentir travaux*, but its beginning, the origin of collectivity that undergirds the creation of the individual. The collaborative work of art reflects the genesis of the human being, a third existence produced out of and despite the differences between the two progenitors. In moving toward the dialogic model and away from the anonymity of early practices of automatic writing, Éluard and Breton prepare the ground for a new mode of collaboration that operates across the binary of sameness and difference. While poetic collaborations, other than automatic games played as a private activity, would die away after *L'Immaculée Conception*, the genre would yield to one with greater differences between its two authors and a much lesser degree of anonymity: the art collaboration, in which each author's contribution can be easily ascribed to him or her, and in which the two sides of the dialog reveal a greater degree of separation, as they happen in different media. The Surrealist dialog proves more flexible for adaptation than automatic writing, and the Surrealists would ultimately reverse the trajectory: not from the individual to the collective, but from the collective to the individual.

CHAPTER FOUR

TU ES LA RESSEMBLANCE: BORDERS AND CONTACT IN NUITS PARTAGEES AND FACILE

Introduction

Surrealism's earliest adventures began with the privileging of contact: in the encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table in Lautréamont, in the rapprochement of distant realities that constitutes the surrealist image, and in chance meetings with other people. The encounter garnered the Surrealists' enthusiasm because of the tension between unity and difference at the point of contact between people or between things. Breton's second manifesto casts this relationship in Hegelian terms: "Tout porte à croire qu'il existe un certain point de l'esprit d'où la vie et la mort, le réel et l'imaginaire, le passé et le futur, le communicable et l'incommunicable, le haut et le bas cessent d'être perçus contradictoirement. Or, c'est en vain qu'on chercherait à l'activité surréaliste un autre mobile que l'espoir de détermination de ce point."¹⁵⁶ Contact had enormous consequence in surrealist art in the 1930s: tactility was depicted in photographs

156. André Breton, "Second Manifeste du surréalisme," in *Œuvres complètes*, 1:319.

and objects,¹⁵⁷ encouraged from the viewer,¹⁵⁸ and used as a method for creating art.¹⁵⁹

This chapter argues that Surrealism's interest in the encounter, of objects and of opposites but especially of individuals, arises from a desire to understand the relationship between self and other, which finds expression in the surrealist art books of the 1930s. Two collections from 1935, *Nuits partagées*¹⁶⁰ and *Facile*,¹⁶¹ each a collaboration between Paul Éluard and an artist, focus on the threshold as a site of contact that troubles the division between self and other. These art and poetry collaborations are indebted to a series of essays written by Éluard in the 1930s, in which the term resemblance crystallizes as an alternative to similarity or difference. In these collections, contact draws our attention to the borders between things rather than to things in themselves.

One prism through which the encounter has been understood is that of the erotic. Sexuality played an increasing role in Surrealism in the 1930s, holding sway over the movement's artistic output as well as the theoretical writings of Dali, Breton, and others. In her essay on the role of desire in Surrealism, Jennifer Mundy writes that desire seeks to remove boundaries between the self and the other, but that these boundaries

157. Most obviously in the abounding examples of hands in surrealist artwork; for a discussion on this theme, see Kirsten Powell, "Hands-on Surrealism," *Art History* 20 no. 4 (1997): 516 - 637.

158. Famously in Duchamp's "Prière de toucher," a rubber breast made for the cover of the 1947 Surrealist exhibition catalog, but equally evident in Giacometti's "Suspended Ball" and other mobile objects or in Oppenheim's fur tea cup, "Déjeuner en fourrure."

159. Such as in Man Ray's rayograms or Max Ernst's frottages and grattages.

160. Paul Éluard and Salvador Dali, *Nuits partagées* (Paris: G.L.M., 1935).

161. Paul Éluard and Man Ray, *Facile* (Paris: G.L.M., 1935).

themselves produce desire, making the pursuit of the object pleasurable.¹⁶² The impulse toward fusion can likewise be seen in artworks that merge the body with the world, such as the multiple bodies of Hans Bellmer, turning sexuality into a disturbing unity, or the integration of objects into the body, as in Dali's *Venus de Milo with Drawers*. Sébastien Galland, describing the famous throbbing, pink-velvet room and "porte vaginale" of the 1959 *Exposition internationale du Surréalisme* as "un retour du *heim*" (41) concludes that "l'éros est le 'liens des liens,' qui unit les êtres, la faune, la flore et les éléments" (49).¹⁶³ In love poetry in particular, the union between lovers becomes an aspirational quality that, according to Katharine Conley, never fully materializes: "since the surrealist poet often invokes the the beloved while himself in the immobilised dream-state of automatism, she has more potential for union with him as a dream-wraith than as a flesh-and-blood person."¹⁶⁴ In Éluard's poetry, however, Conley argues that the woman enables the poet to "momentarily hope to achieve the 'sublime point' where dream and reality, body and mind, man and woman, cease to be separate entities and coalesce into one," evoking the myth of Androgyne.¹⁶⁵ In each of these accounts, contact is a step on the path to unity, a striving toward the removal of boundaries and the integration of the self either with the other or into a cosmic unity.

162. Jennifer Mundy, "Letters of Desire," in *Surrealism: Desire Unbound* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001): 31.

163. Sébastien Galland, "Une Érotique de l'objet surréaliste," in *Éros c'est la vie!, Mélusine* 35, ed. Henri Béhar (Lausanne: Âge d'homme, 2015): 41-50.

164. Katharine Conley, "Anamorphic Love," in *Surrealism: Desire Unbound* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001): 112.

165. *Ibid.*, 116.

Contact has also been seen in a material and perceptual light, in response to the surrealist artworks that made contact a condition of artistic creation, such as Max Ernst's frottages, or which depicted the physical realization of the work of art, as with Man Ray's photograph of Meret Oppenheim at the printing wheel covered in ink. Margaret Cohen associates this mode of production with Surrealism's desire for the artist to come into direct contact with reality.¹⁶⁶ In a similar vein, Katharine Conley discusses how Dorothea Tanning's soft sculptures invest artwork with human liveliness through their deployment of the material and the corporeal.¹⁶⁷ Another point of contact is that of the viewer, who is urged to become a more active participant in the artwork. The art form of the surrealist object in particular draws attention to physical interaction with artistic work, most famously in Duchamp's exhibition catalogue for *Le Surréalisme en 1947* with a rubber breast on the cover, entitled "Prière de toucher." In her book *Please Touch: Dada and Surrealist Objects After the Readymade*, named for Duchamp's piece, Janine Mileaf shows how tactility functions in various surrealist artworks to construct an interactive and intersubjective experience.¹⁶⁸ In a similar way, Surrealism's interest in materiality produced an approach to book creation that treated the book itself as an object, a consideration often visible in extravagant covers of surrealist books, such as the

166. Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surreal Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993): 133.

167. Katharine Conley, *Surrealist Ghostliness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 20130), 142-149.

168. Janine Mileaf, *Please Touch: Dada and Surrealist Objects after the Readymade* (University Press of New England: Hanover, NH, 2010).

binding created by Mary Reynolds for Éluard's and Man Ray's 1937 *Les Mains libres*, with gloves sewn onto the cover. These developments surface the physicality of the act of reading, a tactual experience explored by Danièle Méaux in her analysis of *Facile*, which foregrounds the sensuality of turning its pages.

In these accounts, we begin to see contact as an experience that draws attention to the interactions between body and world, through the textures, dimensions, and movements that tactility imprints on our consciousness, and through which we impact our surroundings. This perceptual framework at once intensifies our awareness of the boundary between self and world, and also of the ways that boundary is always in flux. In the conclusion to her book on the object, Johanna Malt writes about positive and negative space, noting that “the object is identified by the space it creates for itself in the environment,” using the example of shoes and gloves.¹⁶⁹ In the two art books examined in this chapter, contact between word and image mutually imprints the two parts of the book, making each the mold and the negative space of the other. The threshold between media reverberates in both the verbal and visual accounts, shaping a reflection on the boundary between self and world. Instead of an erotic union between self and world, this threshold experience sends the self on a trajectory from union to individuation. Chiara Palermo, drawing parallels between Merleau-Ponty and Surrealism's theorization of the erotic, defines the sujet as a “passage au sein d'un magma, une unité primordiale avec le

169. Johanna Malt, *Obscure Objects of Desire: Surrealism, Fetishism, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 217.

monde.”¹⁷⁰ Rather than seeing this process as a unidirectional and finite one, she writes that “les corps et les positions restent alors des ‘positions’ qui se produisent au sein de ce tissu, mais qui en demeurent inséparables.”¹⁷¹ In the same way, Éluard’s book collaborations feature contact—between art and poetry, between self and other—as a process of mutual formation out of common ground. Éluard’s own theorization of the term “ressemblance” as means of understanding the connections between things operates at the same frontier of becoming-non-becoming between self and other. A closer examination of the relationships set up by “la ressemblance” reveals the tension between particularity and universality in Éluard’s poetry and theory.

Resemblance and the Woman

Before the term begins to show up in Éluard’s theoretical writings, the adjective “ressemblante” and its close cousin “semblable” appear as a descriptor for the woman in poems. In his verses, the poet doubly dislocates “resemblance” from its usual meanings, using it in non-visual contexts and in impossible comparisons.¹⁷² In doing so, he frees the term to become a broader nexus than mere similarity. Resemblance begins to feature in Éluard’s theoretical writings in the 1930s with regard to his beliefs both about

170. Chiara Palermo, “L’Éros, force de négation: Merleau-Ponty et le Surréalisme,” in *Éros c’est la vie!*, *Minotaure*, no. 35, ed. Henri Béhar (Lausanne: Âge d’homme, 2015): 180.

171. *Ibid.*, 182.

172. See for example a line in a representative poem from *La Vie immédiate*—“un visage semblable à d’autres visages oubliés” (EC 1:363)—which makes a plainly impossible comparison to forgotten faces, as well as the title itself, “Belle et ressemblante,” which isolates the the term “resembling” from any point of reference.

poetic and artistic creation and about their political and ethical urgency. In the first place, resemblance signifies the limitless connections between things, in particular as activated by an artist. In 1937, he would write: “tout est comparable à tout, tout trouve son écho, sa raison, sa ressemblance, son opposition, son devenir partout. Et ce devenir est infini” (EC 1:527). In the close proximity of “resemblance” and “opposition,” we see the same distancing of resemblance from visual similarity as that effected in Éluard’s verses. Resemblance becomes something more akin to the flood of possibility the Surrealists found in imagination, which Éluard names “la source et le torrent qu’on ne remonte pas” (514). In the first place, then, resemblance is a potential relationship between all things that, as we will see, can be activated by the poet. As early as 1933, Éluard writes that “le poète, halluciné par excellence, établira les ressemblances à son gré entre les objets les plus dissemblables” (955).

It is tempting to see in this all-encompassing flow of resemblance a kind of universality. In fact, several scholars working on *Facile*, whose famous opening poem concludes with “Femme... ..Tu es la ressemblance” (459), make a case for the addressee to be understood as a universal woman. Among others, Jean-Yves Debreuille argues that Éluard’s concept of resemblance opens onto universality: “ressemblance sans objet, donc universelle.”¹⁷³ While the potential conjunctions of resemblance are countless, Éluard specifically argues against a singular entity becoming a concretization of all its kind: “la

173. Jean-Yves Debreuille, “Aspects du discours amoureux dans la poésie d’Éluard,” in *Éluard à cent ans*, ed. Colette Guedj (Paris-Montréal: L’Harmattan, 1998), 62.

ressemblance niant l'universel, on ne fait pas le portrait de l'homme. C'est *un* homme qui parle pour l'homme, c'est *une* pierre qui parle pour les pierres, c'est *un* arbre qui parle pour toutes les forêts” (ŒC 1:937). This article, first published in the sixth issue of *Minotaure* in 1935, was entitled “Physique de la poésie,” and laid the groundwork for Éluard’s theorization of poetry and the arts in the 1939 volume *Donner à voir*. The title of the latter returns to resemblance its visual quality, picking up on a 1937 collection called “L’Avenir de la poésie” in which Éluard describes poets and artists as “contemplateurs et miroirs fidèles,” saying “voir c’est recevoir, refléter c’est donner à voir” (525). The poet becomes a mirror reflecting the world and giving it back as a gift.

Reflection and vision are central to the role of the poet, but its medium is unexpected: if the poet is a mirror, he reflects through his bodily existence. Éluard’s understanding of the ethical nature of resemblance is anchored in the physicality of both poet and ideas and the connections between them. The “devenir” of resemblance is rooted in bodily existence,¹⁷⁴ in terms of its creative potential for the poet, but perhaps more importantly as the key to the specificity, the *un / e* so strenuously insisted upon by Éluard as the point of connection of resemblance. In “L’Évidence poétique,” he writes: “tout ce que l'esprit de l'homme peut concevoir et créer provient de la même veine, est de la même matière que sa chair, que son sang et que le monde qui l'entoure.” (ŒC 1:516). In creating, the poet offers his own body to the world — he shows, or gives to be seen,

174. Éluard writes in “Avenir de la poésie” that humankind’s duty is to “[vivre] en faisant corps avec l’univers, avec l’univers en mouvement, en devenir” (ŒC 1:526)

through his own flesh. The poet's offering of his body imbues the poem with ethical potential: "la poésie ne se fera chair et sang qu'à partir du moment où elle sera réciproque. Cette réciprocité est entièrement fonction de l'égalité du bonheur entre les hommes. (526). The one-for-all of resemblance is not directed toward a universal fusion, but toward contact at the border between self and others. For Éluard, resemblance is the tissue between things, between people, that is perceptible in contact—tactile or otherwise—between individuals. It is visible in *Facile*, where he writes "les chemins tendres que trace ton sang clair / joignent les créatures" (461).¹⁷⁵

Word and Image, Self and Other

Resemblance, then, is not only a matter of poetic and artistic creation, but also of the relationship between individuals. In the two poetry collections examined in this chapter, *Nuits partagées* and *Facile*, it operates both in the relationship between co-authors and in the triangulated relationship of poet, lover, and humankind. Éluard's personal theory of collaboration hinged on a belated recognition of the common ground between self and other: "pour collaborer, peintres et poètes se veulent libres. La dépendance abaisse, empêche de comprendre, d'aimer. Il n'y a pas de modèle pour qui cherche ce qu'il n'a jamais vu. A la fin, rien n'est aussi beau qu'une ressemblance

175. It is interesting that both Éluard and Breton resort to bodily imagery to think the connections between things. See Breton's use of the term "capillary tissue" to describe the interchange between internal and external worlds in *Vases communicants* (André Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 2:202)

involontaire” (982). He suggests that the relationship between collaborators springs from their ability to be independent from each other in their work. This independence, engendering stark differences between word and image, demands the formulation of a new kind of resemblance between co-authors and between media in the book. In Éluard’s art book collaborations, and in surrealist art books more generally, the traditional relationship between word and image is subverted. In traditions as far back as illustrated manuscripts, images in books were secondary, serving to replicate or paraphrase the text. Andrea Oberhuber argues that “le principe de collaboration avant-gardiste ne vise pas ce type de rencontre essentiellement ‘convergent.’”¹⁷⁶ When technological developments in the 19th century made woodcuts and etchings more easily reproducible, books with visual accompaniment to the text became more common.¹⁷⁷ In her discussion of the precursors to the Surrealist book, Renée Riese Hubert locates the beginning of a looser relationship between text and image at the turn of the century, with collaborations such as André Gide and Maurice Denis on *Le Voyage d’Urien* and especially Pierre Bonnard and Paul Verlaine’s *Parallèlement*.¹⁷⁸ The Surrealists’ collaborative art and poetry volumes continue in this framework, giving greater freedom to the artists in their illustrations,¹⁷⁹ with artistic work seen as a response to the text but rarely portraying its content, whether

176. Andrea Oberhuber, “Livre surréaliste et livre d’artiste mise en jeu,” *Mélusine* 32, ed. Oberhuber (Lausanne: Âge d’homme, 2012): 21.

177. Among other studies of the subject, see Walter J. Strachan, *The Artist and the Book in France: The 20th Century “Livre d’artiste.”* (London: Owen, 1969).

178. Hubert, *Surrealism and the Book*, 3-4.

179. For a breakdown of the different types of surrealist art books and the techniques used to reproduce artworks, see Julien Schuh, “Quelles traditions pour le livre d’artiste surréaliste?” *Mélusine* 32, ed. Andrea Oberhuber (Lausanne: Âge d’homme, 2012): 43-60.

directly or metaphorically. Éluard's art and poetry volumes activate involuntary resemblance by allowing both word and image to be shaped by contact on the page.¹⁸⁰

Nuits partagées and *Facile* are both love poems in the style of the lyrical address, one of Éluard's most frequent genres. The prose poem "Nuits partagées" was originally published in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* in the December 1931 issue (no 3), and later included in the collection *La Vie immédiate* (1932), but it was reprinted as an art book in 1935. Dali did two drawings for the reprint, which are positioned after the title page, facing the first and last pages of the text, rather than before the title page as a frontispiece, as in the case of the drawing he had done for *L'Immaculée Conception*. *Nuits partagées* is a reflection on Éluard's failed relationship with Gala that mourns both their union and his sense of the connectedness of things through her. Dali's drawings and Éluard's verses crystallize around the concept of contact between interior and exterior, between singular and multiple, and between self and other. The poem ultimately concludes with the relationship's dissolution and, from the poet's perspective, the failure of the *toi* to create a relationship between all women, remaining visibly on the hither side of the woman's generation of herself through others. The theme of relationship outside similarity or difference are further developed by *Facile*. Published in 1935 by Guy Levis Mano, *Facile* consists of 12 photographs by Man Ray, over which are

180. Éluard's reverse collaborations speak to his desire to produce resemblance through contact: he produced many poems "illustrating" artworks, including the art books *Les Mains libres* with Man Ray's drawings in 1937 and *A l'intérieur de la vue* with collage drawings by Max Ernst in 1948. He also wrote numerous poems about artists he admired.

superimposed poems by Paul Éluard. The merging of text and image has been celebrated as a beautiful hymn to Éluard's second wife, Nusch. In *Facile*, Éluard's poems portray bodily contact—the handshake, the shared gaze, or the network of veins that, in the poet's vision, reaches beyond the body. In shifting focus to the space of the self as the embracing negative of the other, the collection posits resemblance as a connection operating through reciprocity. Both *Facile* and *Nuits partagées* lay the groundwork for a surrealist ethics that approaches the other through contact, finding self and other shaped by the encounter that precedes both.

On the Threshold: Nuits partagées

Nuits partagées evokes the failed romance, and in doing so opens up a meditation on both union and division that seems suspended as the poet himself is, on the doorstep of a once shared apartment. The threshold casts a long shadow over both drawings and the text of the collaboration, becoming a means of understanding both the relationship and its failure. Dali's drawings (Appendix A, Figures 1 and 2) are at the beginning and ending of the poem, but at first glance, seem disconnected from the text, although both include female figures that might relate to the woman in the poem, which focuses on Éluard's difficult relationship with his first wife, Gala, now married to Dali. The images are both architectural scenes dominated by a pentagonal doorway in a stone wall. The two drawings are remarkably similar, perhaps featuring the same scene from two different angles. Symbolic of the book's layout, the drawings themselves function as

a kind of visual threshold that must be crossed to enter into the text. The architecture of the threshold is also central to the poet's understanding of his relationship with the woman. Love is both a dividing and uniting force in *Nuits partagées*, and encounters with the woman provoke as often the experience of union as the certainty of separation and loss. While the threshold becomes a way of understanding the experience of erotic love, it also structures the relationship between self and world that is always at stake in Éluard's poetics. In *Gala*, he sees a point of connection with other beings, a self that is both intact and yet divided. This hesitation at the edge of unity manifests itself on the page as well, where the image seems to open up a passageway in a new direction, while undeniably marking the boundary lines of the poem. For the coauthors, the point of contact, between self and other and between media on the page, shape the forms of things—of artworks, of beings—while also creating a permeable threshold.

Nuits partagées typifies Eluard's poetics of erotic love and the sometimes joyous, sometimes disturbing inherence of the self in the world and the world in the self that erotic love catalyzes. In the metaphor of the threshold, the poet finds a setting in which to analyze the liminal experience of love. The poem opens with a description of walking into the home after a journey, an evocation underscored by the facing drawing, depicting a doorway in a wall. The whole poem flows out of this pause at the threshold as the poet looks inside the household space as well as looking back into past:

Au terme d'un long voyage, je revois toujours ce corridor, cette taupe, cette
ombre chaude à qui l'écume de mer prescrit des courants d'air purs comme de
tout petits enfants, je revois toujours la chambre où je venais rompre avec toi le

pain de nos désirs, je revois toujours ta pâleur dévêtue qui, le matin, fait corps avec les étoiles qui disparaissent. Je sais que je vais encore fermer les yeux pour retrouver les couleurs et les formes conventionnelles qui me permettent de t'aborder. (ŒC 1:372-373)

The poem strays into memory, but ultimately loops back to the threshold at the end, as the poet seems to return to himself from reverie, to return, so to speak, to where he is standing: “au terme d'un long voyage, peut-être n'irai-je plus vers cette porte...” (377). The physical space of the home he shared with his lover recalls her presence to him, as testified to by the transmutation of the house into her body, from “je revois toujours ce corridor” to “je revois toujours la chambre” to “je revois toujours ta pâleur” (372-373). More than simply a matter of the space being marked by memories of her, this liminal quality extends indefinitely outward, as the woman “fait corps avec” the stars fading in the sky, as if the constellations themselves were extensions of her body. For Éluard, the experience of love, and especially erotic love, opens our eyes to the marvel of the body itself as a threshold onto the world, both infinitely extensible and at the same time a delineated space.

As the poet transgresses the boundary of the home, he looks not only inside the house but inside himself—“je vais encore fermer les yeux pour retrouver les couleurs et les formes conventionnelles qui me permettent de t'aborder...” (372-373). Ironically, in shuttering the windows, the poet only lets more light in. By closing his eyes, he sees the colors and shapes of the woman more clearly, as if she is imprinted within him.¹⁸¹ His

181. The theme of the eye is recurrent in Éluard's work, and a similar verse in “L'Amoureuse” in the collection *Capitale de la douleur* imagines love as a physical and even violent action toward the eye: “Elle est debout sur mes paupières” (ŒC 1:140)

later question to the woman—“que veux-tu que cet aigle aux yeux crevés, retienne de nos nostalgies?” (375)—ominously echoes the poet’s inwardly-turned eyes with the more violent image of a pierced eye. While the poem is spare in references to the physical act of love, it is the poet’s body that is penetrated by the woman he addresses. Through this brokenness of his body that allows him to perceive the woman, the poet can approach her. Dali’s drawings cast this in an architectural form through the large, thick, pentagon-like arches in the foreground (see Appendix A, Figures 1 and 2). Though divorced from the text’s other descriptive passages, the images incarnate the liminal spaces evoked in the beginning and end of the poem. The archways are miniature passages, offering entry to the female figures in the drawings. On the other hand, they hold the viewer at arm’s length, emphasizing that we stand outside the wall, though we can catch a glimpse of the jumble of buildings within. The structures, like the woman’s body, are open to the outside—they are incomplete, with exposed brick from a cracked façade, the edges craggy and crumbling. In the triptych of the poet, the lover, and the threshold, each is pierced through, allowing the external to have entry into the self.

Through the Looking-Glass

The relationship between text and image in *Nuits partagées* hinges on a similar interpenetration. Dali’s drawings frame the text in the same way that the arches frame the female figures in the images, holding the poem in an embrace, while simultaneously offering it a kind of escape through the extension of its themes. In particular, the poem

extends into the drawings in the themes of light and shadow, seeing and not seeing, emblemized by the threshold but present in other facets of the drawings. On the opening page, a nude female figure leans against the wall with an arm over her face, paralleling the sentence on the facing page (see Appendix A, Figure 1), “je sais que je vais encore fermer les yeux” (373), while also presaging a later line addressed to the woman: “tu fermes les yeux et c'est la chute d'une ombre sur un corps” (375). The artist's use of strong shadowing emphasizes the play of light that the poet describes in several paragraphs, most noticeably in the long shadow cast by the small bat, a night creature whose presence inscribes the title of the book in the drawing. Most obviously, Dali picks up on the singularity of the woman to whom Éluard addresses himself, represented in the haunting figure of the girl with the jump rope, a recurrent figure in Dali's work of the 1930s,¹⁸² as well as the many women to whom the poet only has access through the woman. Éluard's “maisons inhabitées, je vous ai peuplées de femmes exceptionnelles, ni grasses, ni maigres, ni blondes, ni brunes, ni folles, ni sages, peu importe, de femmes plus séduisantes que possibles” (376-377) becomes a double row of women seated across from each other in Dali's drawing, with blurred faces turned toward the viewer. The

182. See the final painted version of the sketch for *Nuits partagées*, titled *Écho nostalgique* (1935), see also *Echo morphologique* (c. 1935), *Banlieue de la Ville Paranoïaque-Critique* (1935), *Paysage avec jeune fille sautant à la corde* (1936), *Femme à la tête de fleurs* (1937), a version of which featured on the June 1939 cover of *Vogue* magazine, his 1946 short film *Destino* with Walt Disney, and even much later, in 1969, his frontispiece and illustrations for *Alice in Wonderland*.

structure of the book, suggesting that the drawings bookend the text, belies a relationship that functions more as reflecting mirrors.

The references to the eye in the poem, which the drawings embody not only through the human figures but also through the architecture of open arches capped with eye-like circles, call attention to the gaze of the poet and that of the artist. The poet and the artist seem to stand back-to-back: where Éluard's poem looks into the home, Dali's drawings look onto an outdoor view. In both cases, the co-authors pause at the thresholded, suspended between interior and exterior. The double row of facing women in Dali's artwork (see Appendix A, Figure 2) reflects the composition of the book itself, the facing pages in which poem and illustration mirror without duplicating each other. The drawings do not close off the poem, but rather face it as one mirror to another, as a *mise-en-abyme* that doubles and extends. Dali imports the relationship of reflection and extension in the *mise-en-abyme* effect of the multiple arches in his drawings, visible through the portal in the foreground. In the visual field of the text, editor Guy Levis Mano signals this mode of extension and continuation through a playful typographic element. He closes each of the sections of the poem with a flower-like arrangement of a period from which two commas branch out (see Appendix A, Figure 2), taking the finite terminus of the period and expanding it into the infinite with the comma. The large period at the end, a seemingly firm close to the poem, echoes the circular shapes in Dali's drawings, where the hoop of the jump-rope over the girl's head suggests the eternity of the ring. Through both drawing and typographical layout, *Nuits partagées* uses the

threshold as a horizon that is indefinitely deferred. The gutter between the pages, separating the poem from the drawings, becomes instead a thoroughfare for poetic images.

Union and Resemblance

Éluard's poem progresses from an erotic union to the union of body and world, and ultimately perceives in the figure of the woman the nexus of self and other. The poem begins with the sexual imagery of the bedchamber—"la chambre où je venais rompre avec toi le pain de nos désirs" (372). The vocabulary of broken bread, with its Christic overtones, evokes the body laid open. Rather than describing a sexual encounter, the following sentence unites the woman's "pâleur dévêtue" with the morning stars, as if the woman has become permeable to the sky. This first iteration of a permeability of the self to the outside world is rooted in the body's physical attributes—in this case, its paleness. Éluard's later passage about shadows—"une ombre chacun, mais dans l'ombre nous l'oublions"—envisions not only the merging of shadows in the night, but, metonymically, of bodies as well. The shadow relates the potential for union to the body as a double existence. The body is both the locus of subjectivity, the physical borders of the individual, but also an object among other objects in the world. The tension between these two realities of the body comes to the fore in the experience of touch, sexual and otherwise, as the poet acknowledges: "comme on transforme sa main en la mettant dans une autre" (375). The remembered sexual encounter in the opening lines of the poem

triggers the woman's incorporation into the stars, as well as the poet's sense of himself as a part of a "nous." These surrealist tropes—the erotic as an experience uniting reality and the marvelous, and pushing the self to the limit of its rational individual existence—shape the encounter of word and image in *Nuits partagées*. The positioning of the drawing as a point of entry to the text, as the skin of the text in some sense, like the special covers made for this and other collaborations, imagines the other at the heart of the self, modeled by the verbal within the visual.

While the poem's title and opening paragraph betoken its attention to the erotic relationship, the poet is equally interested in the woman's relationship to other women. As in a later poem in *La Vie immédiate*, titled "Une pour toutes" (398) which uses the repeated refrain "une ou plusieurs," *Nuits partagées* identifies in the beloved a kind of nexus of all womankind. The central passage of the poem relates both the woman's own understanding of herself as a multiplicity, and the poet's inability to see her as a point of connection any longer. More specifically, the breakdown in the erotic relationship erodes the poet's ability to perceive the unity of opposing forces in the world around him: "que ne puis-je encore, comme au temps de ma jeunesse, me déclarer ton disciple, que ne puis-je encore convenir avec toi que le couteau et ce qu'il coupe sont bien accordés. Le piano et le silence, l'horizon et l'étendue" (375). In the language of the poet, at once the woman's lover and her disciple, the opposites brought together in this philosophy are betrothed, "accordés." The amorous relationship of the man and the woman opens out onto reflection on the relationship between the self and the other, here captured in the

opposites that seem to condition each other's existence through negation: the silence as the absence of the piano, etc. From this framework, that which seems to divide—the knife—may become a point of contact.

The woman's relationship to other women takes place through the horizon of the body. *Nuits partagées* revolves around the cleft body—the broken body of love-making and the dissolving body of the woman, whose fecund presence produces a merging of world and self. Where the opening paragraph of the poem compares the lovers' bodies to broken bread, the woman compares herself to the firmer substance of rock: "Que dis-tu? Que tu n'as jamais cru être seule, que tu n'as pas rêvé depuis que je t'ai vue, que tu es comme une pierre que l'on casse pour avoir deux pierres plus belles que leur mère morte, que tu étais la femme d'hier et que tu es la femme d'aujourd'hui, qu'il n'y a pas à te consoler puisque tu t'es divisée pour être intacte à l'heure qu'il est." Imagining a rock like a geode with two more beautiful halves,¹⁸³ the woman sees herself as at once the dead mother, the new stones, and the undivided rock, at once herself and yesterday's woman. Picking up on Éluard's imagery of light and shadow— "la lumière m'a pourtant donné de belles images des négatifs de nos rencontres"—Dali figures the woman divided through heavy shadows that anchor the buoyant girl skipping rope, and multiplies the shadow through the anthropomorphic figure of the bell hanging in the tower. The cracks

183. See a few lines previously, "dans les cavernes terrestres, des plantes cristallisées cherchaient les décolletés de la sortie" (EC 1:374).

that snake down the walls echo the fissure the woman identifies in herself and which sparks the division of the individual into the multiple.

In the poet's backward glance, the gamble of commingling opposites, of forming a unity with other women through a relationship of difference, has failed:

Par ta force et par ta faiblesse, tu croyais pouvoir concilier les désaccords de la présence et les harmonies de l'absence, une union maladroite, naïve, et la science des privations... .. Dans les rues, dans les campagnes, cent femmes sont dispersées par toi, tu déchires la ressemblance qui les lie, cent femmes sont réunies par toi et tu ne peux leur donner de nouveaux traits communs et elles ont cent visages, cent visages qui tiennent ta beauté en échec. (375-376)

The poet centers both the woman's attempt to create commonality between women and her failure in the specificity of the face, in the "traits communs" that never materialize. Instead, the woman's own features highlight the differences between them and the multiplicity of their hundred faces. While the lyrical other to whom Éluard addresses himself in his love poetry is often thought of as a generalized or universal woman, in *Nuits partagées* she does not transcend to a generality. Instead, she remains distinctive, individual. The melancholic tone of the poem stems from its apparent pining for the poet's lost relationship, but also from his inability to believe, as he once did, that "le couteau et ce qu'il coupe sont bien accordés." In the poet's evaluation, the woman is unable to mediate as an individual between the many. At the same time, he calls her "une oasis qui profite du désert," suggesting that the relationship between the singular and the multiple can bridge an apparent oppositions. *Nuits partagées* stands on the edge of the knife, dispersing and reuniting the poet and the *toi* as individuals on the cusp of a broader

connection that ultimately does not materialize, but whose shaping of each other persists in their understanding of the continuity between interior and exterior worlds.

Facile and the toi ressemblante

While other of Éluard's poetry collections included images of the woman he loved,¹⁸⁴ *Facile* is singular as the first of Éluard's collaborations to include photographs, and as the first of his collaborations to merge art and poetry on the page, rather than following the traditional layout of facing text and image. Photography, which was well-represented on the pages of surrealist journals, featured more rarely in books, with the notable exception of Breton's *Nadja* (1928), where photographs by Boiffard are included on separate pages, as well as the 1937 *L'Amour fou*, and later, in 1944, *Arcane 17*.¹⁸⁵ Éluard also went on to collaborate with Hans Bellmer on several versions of a book with photographs of Bellmer's famous dolls facing Éluard's poems, *Jeux vagues la poupée* in 1939 with two photographs and an expanded version, entitled *Les jeux de la poupée*,¹⁸⁶ in 1949, with 15 photographs. In *Facile*, Man Ray's stylized photographs of Nusch (see

184. Most notably in his collaboration with Max Ernst on *Au Défait du silence* [Paris, 1925], for which Ernst created numerous drawings of Gala's face, but also in the frontispiece for *Les Dessous d'une vie* (Paris: Cahiers du sud, 1926). Later, his *La Barre d'appui* (Paris: Cahiers d'Art, 1936) included a portrait of Nusch by Pablo Picasso, and the collection *Le Temps déborde* (Paris: Cahiers d'art, 1947), written upon Nusch's death in 1947, included photographs of her by Dora Maar and Man Ray.

185. For a discussion of the use of photographs in *Nadja*, see Normand Lalonde, "L'Iconographie photographique de *Nadja*," *The French Review* 66, no. 1 (1992): 48-58; and Ian Walker, "'Her Eyes of Fern': The Photographic Portrait in *Nadja*," *History of Photography* 29, no. 2 (June 1, 2005): 100-113.

186. Paul Éluard and Hans Bellmer. *Les Jeux de la poupée* (Paris: Éditions Premières, 1949).

Appendix A, Figures 3-5) borrowed from the tropes of his contemporaneous fashion advertising (for which Nusch had also modeled). At the same time, his extensive use of solarization, back-lighting, and double exposures brings the photographs squarely into the artistic realm. Several aspects of *Facile*'s construction make it an unusually unified art book. In the first place, the book appears to have been created through a genuinely collaborative effort on the part of Éluard, Man Ray, and their editor, Guy Lévis-Mano. Éluard himself initiated the project and gave the book its title, while Man Ray and Guy Lévis-Mano arranged poetry and photographs on the page.¹⁸⁷ Éluard praised the editor a year later for his typography and setting: “dans les murs épouvantablement opaques des bibliothèques certains livres sont des portes... ..Guy Lévis-Mano, ouvrier et poète, ne cesse de travailler à donner à la typographie une optique, une voix nouvelles” (ŒC 2:812).

While it remains unclear whether the photographs preceded the poems or the reverse, their physical and thematic coordination on the page are unmistakable. Several passages of Éluard's poems seem to refer directly to the play of light and shadow in the images,¹⁸⁸ although some of the poems had been published several months before *Facile* in literary magazines.¹⁸⁹ In the superimposition of the poems on the photographs, word

187. Nicole Boulestreau, “Le photopoème *Facile*: un nouveau livre, dans les années 1930” in *Le Livre surréaliste, Minotaure 4* (Editions L'Age d'homme: Lausanne, 1983), 165-167.

188. See for example the verses “sous le soleil au haut du ciel qui te délivre de ton ombre” (ŒC 1:460), “Que tu sois pâle et lumineuse” (472), and “Nue dans l'ombre et nue éblouie / Comme un ciel frissonnant d'éclairs” (473).

189. Dumas and Scheler note in the *Œuvres complètes* edition of Éluard's works that several of the poems were published in magazines a few months prior to *Facile* (1466-1467).

and image make contact, and each is shaped by the other. On some pages, the poem seems to conform to the curves of Nusch's body (Appendix A, Figure 4), yet in other spreads, the body frames the text like the decorative border of an illuminated manuscript (Figure 3). The medium of the photograph alongside the genre of the lyrical address, in which the poem speaks to an unspecified *toi*, reinforces not only the impression of a dialog on the pages of *Facile*, but also the tension between reality and the work of art. In introducing the question of lifelikeness through the photograph, the collection splits the central problematic of the book, resemblance, along two axes—on the one hand, the woman's representation in the work of art, and on the other, her representation of other women, a theme introduced in the second poem in the collection. With *Facile*, Man Ray and Éluard reproduce the meeting place of collaboration in the meeting between text and image on the page, elaborating a surrealist theory of the relationship between self and other based in contact.

Facile identifies in the curves of the body captured by Man Ray a metonymic geography of the whole world: “tu es la terre qui prend racine / Et sur laquelle tout s'établit” (459). This apparent dependence of the world on the female *tu*, recurrent in the Éluardian œuvre,¹⁹⁰ has led several scholars to examine the religious or mythological underpinnings of the work. In *La Poésie de Paul Éluard*, Nicole Boulestreau identifies liturgical and eucharistic acts in the four poems of *Facile*, making the case that the sexual

190. For example, in his well-known poem “La Courbe de tes yeux” from the 1926 *Capitale de la douleur*: “Le monde entier dépend de tes yeux purs” (CEC 1:196).

act results in a multiplication of being that supersedes the couple.¹⁹¹ Describing the opening poem as “un hymne de louange,” Jean-Louis Benoît charts the deification of the woman through religious lexicon and syntax. He argues that the poem transforms the female figure into a kind of feminine universal.¹⁹² In her analysis of *Facile*, Hubert agrees that “the model becomes the mediator of beauty, thus acquiring universality.”¹⁹³ These scholars put the finger on an outward expansion in the text that is undeniably connected to the addressee, in verses such as “tu es la terre qui prend racine.” However, subsuming the woman into a deity or a universal woman becomes problematic in light of both Éluard’s verses and the specificity of the photographic medium. While Man Ray’s photographs investigate the myriad shapes of the body, even distorting it through techniques of lighting and cropping, they are far from rendering Nusch unrecognizable. In face and form, Nusch persists, visibly, as herself.

The notion of the universal woman also runs aground on Éluard’s own theoretical writings. As we have seen, he roots resemblance in particularity rather than universality, arguing in 1935 that the role of poetry is “figurer tel homme, telle femme, mais non pas l’homme, ni la femme” (937). The notion that one, specific individual can speak for all others—“c’est *un* homme qui parle pour l’homme” (Ibid.)—is closely echoed in the verses of *Facile*, in which the poet says to the woman: “écoute-toi parler tu

191. Boulestreau, *La Poésie de Paul Éluard*, 184-190.

192. Benoit, Jean-Louis. “La sacralisation de la femme chez Paul Éluard, à partir du recueil *Facile*,” *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. 110, no. 2, 2010, pp. 381-396.

193. Hubert, *Surrealism and the Book*, 74.

parles pour les autres” (460) This conception of speaking for the other is at the heart of the exploration of the self in *Facile* as well as of the exchange between text and image. The last line of the untitled first poem in *Facile* intimates the central focus of the book: “Tu es la ressemblance” (459). The positioning of the toi as resemblance itself is expanded upon in the following poem, “L’Entente,” with an unexpected substitution: “tu parles pour les autres” (460). Resemblance defines the woman’s understanding of herself and of others: her continuity as an entity through time—“toujours pareil”—and her evolving recognition that the self arises out of contact with others. *Facile* traces the boundaries of the self through reflections on the body as a space permeable to the outside world and offered to the other. In the correspondence between poems and photographs, contact shapes the body, both literally through touch and in other forms of sensory encounter. In *Facile*, both Man Ray’s photographs and Éluard’s poetry establish the relationship of resemblance that circumvents the universal and forms a connection between self and other on the basis of particularity.

From the Self to the Other

The watchword of the collection, “Tu es la ressemblance,” draws on the immediately obvious scopic mode of *Facile*, whose first spread bears a striking image of Nusch, both quintessentially a nude photograph and unexpected in the cropping that makes the shape of the body seem outlandish (see Appendix A, Figure 4). As early as the 1920s, Man Ray had experimented with techniques of lighting and cropping to present an

unfamiliar perspective of the body. Famous examples include his 1924 photograph *Violon d'Ingres*, cutting off the legs and arms of the actress Kiki de Montparnasse so that her back forms the shape of a violin, the 1929 *Anatomies*, in which Lee Miller's stretched and thrown back head reveals a neck shaped like a phallus, and, in a pose similar to one found in *Facile*, his cover for the 1934 *Minotaure* featuring a nude torso whose arms become the horns and nipples the eyes of a bull-like head.¹⁹⁴ The female figure in *Facile*, then, exemplifies resemblance as an aleatory power, her body twisting into different shapes, the camera always capturing her in a new light. The poet revels in these metamorphoses in the final poem of the collection, "Facile est bien," saying "Je m'émerveille de l'inconnue que tu deviens" (466). Yet the first poem in the collection indicates the opposite quality, one of continuity and consistency: "tu mets au monde un corps toujours pareil" (459). The photographs put into play the sameness and difference of the woman, multiplying her in different postures and lighting throughout the pages of *Facile*, while also allowing the reader to establish familiarity with her body—we never question that it is the same woman throughout. In parallel with the shifting photographs, the poet's insistent *toi* hesitates between identifying the woman as incomparably herself, or as a medium for all mankind. This tension between likeness and difference, connection

194. Man Ray was not alone in this interest. In a similar vein, Georges Brassai's nude series in the 1930s uses positioning to create phalluses out of female bodies. Hans Bellmer's photographs take this propensity to extremes, manipulating doll parts to create fantastical and horrific chimeras.

and rupture develops throughout the book through a reimagining of resemblance as something beyond visual similarity.

Éluard's intervention into the concept of resemblance begins by identifying it with the person of the woman. That she should be described not as resembling someone but as herself incarnating resemblance makes it clear that the poet is concerned with a notion of connection rather than a visual likeness. In "L'Entente," he compares her eyes with mirrors that do something more than reflecting:

Multiple tes yeux divers et confondus
Font fleurir les miroirs
Les couvrent de rosée de givre de pollen
Les miroirs spontanés où les aubes voyagent
Où les horizons s'associent (460)

By calling the mirrors spontaneous, Éluard unravels the usual definition of mirrors, which simply duplicate what they are set before. These mobile, fluid mirrors break down the boundaries that separate, merging horizons. Symbolic of the roving eyes of the woman, they recall Éluard's writing on the subjective nature of resemblance in his essay "Le Miroir de Baudelaire:" "la ressemblance entre deux objets est faite autant de l'élément subjectif qui contribue à l'établir que des rapports objectifs qui existent entre eux" (955). Resemblance in *Facile* arises out of a disruption of boundaries rather than objective similarity. The woman's eyes make connections beyond the visual realm, shifting resemblance into a mode of contact where disparate entities "s'associent." In the same way that the photographs capture her reflection from diverse angles, the woman herself becomes a mirror for other people as "la ressemblance."

The development from self-likeness to resemblance to others takes place in the transition from the first poem to the second. The first poem makes the world like a mirror to the woman, a theme present throughout the poetry of *Facile* in verses that describe “une mer qui a la forme et la couleur de ton corps” (462), among other reflections of the self in the world. The opening lines of *Facile* describe a being whose ordinary movements shape the world around her: “Tu te lèves l’eau se déplie / Tu te couches l’eau s’épanouit” (459). The primordial water—“l’eau détournée de ses abîmes” (Ibid.), echoing verses in Genesis—merges with the rising and reclining body in the poet’s unpunctuated parallel phrases. The world becomes a counterpart to the woman, while at the same time, in the photographs, her body mirrors the world. The technique of solarization, which flattens and simplifies the image, transforms the body into an abstracted terrain resembling a map on the page (Figure 4). In the first poem, resemblance seems to perpetuate the self, with the repetition of self and world extending outward like the flood whose imagery recurs in *Facile*. The embeddedness of the body in the world anchors the relationships *Facile* goes on to describe, and in particular the sense of physical and spatial orientation deriving from bodily existence.

The concluding lines of the first poem—“Femme tu mets au monde un corps toujours pareil / Le tien / Tu es la ressemblance” (459)—turn attention to what seems like an internal coherence, separate from the world or from the others who intervene in later poems. The *toi* as an entity that is “toujours pareil” creates an odd comparison of the self to itself, a mirroring exemplified by the photographs that replicate the self. This self-

identical quality is anchored in her material existence. The poet hymns the woman's resemblance by considering the body as a site of continuity. Man Ray's photographs use solarization to simplify the body, making it almost an abstract archetype in some images, while the diversity of poses suggests that the "corps toujours pareil," like the mirrors of the woman's eyes, is not a static sameness. In Benoît's analysis, the verses "Tu es la terre qui prend racine / Et sur laquelle tout s'établit" reflect the continuity of the woman, "qui s'auto-produit, en quelque sorte. D'ordinaire, ce sont les plantes qui prennent racine. Ici, la terre ne donne pas naissance à autre chose qu'à elle-même. Ce motif d'une fécondité absolue prépare la conclusion audacieuse du poème, celle de la femme, phénix renaissant, qui accouche d'elle-même."¹⁹⁵ Yet the final sentence of the poem to which Benoît refers, "tu es la ressemblance," set apart on the page from the rest of the verses, seems to crack the isolation of the *toi*. Resemblance implicitly introduces the presence of another entity. The movement from "pareil" to "ressemblance" initiates a series of comparisons, relationships, and transmutations in the following poem, "L'Entente." If the first reflection of the poem seems to be an extension of the self, the reciprocity established in self-mirroring realizes a new, outwardly-focused relationship.

Reflecting Mirrors

"L'Entente" opens the closed loop of the mirror, revealing the woman as both fundamentally herself and at the same time a locus of others. It does so firstly by

195. Benoît, "La Sacralisation de la femme," 385.

extending resemblance beyond the self by means of the experience of the body. Through the hand, which is doubly present in the photographs (see Appendix A, Figure 5) that encapsulate the poem, and repeated hypnotically in the poem, *Facile* moves from the duplication of reflection to the reciprocity of exchange. Éluard's use of *verbes réfléchis* in the following stanzas initially speaks to a meditation of the self on the self:

T'es-tu déjà prise par la main
As-tu déjà touché tes mains
Elles sont petites et douces
Ce sont les mains de toutes les femmes
Et les mains des hommes leur vont comme un gant

Les mains touchent aux mêmes choses

Écoute-toi parler tu parles pour les autres
Et si tu te réponds ce sont les autres qui t'entendent
Sous le soleil au haut du ciel qui te délivre de ton ombre
Tu prends la place de chacun et ta réalité est infinie (CEC 1:460)

In the first two lines of the second stanza, the gesture of the woman touching her own hand seems focused on the self. The woman's experience of her hand suddenly alters from agency to passivity in the reciprocity of touch, allowing the hands to become an object of touch, "petites et douces." By experiencing her own body as those outside it do, the woman moves from a reflexive action to a reciprocal one, hinting at the image of the handshake that arises later in the poem. The following line represents this transformation, from the woman's own hands to "les mains de toutes les femmes," and specifically by means of touch, touch of "[les] mêmes choses." In turning from the reflexive to the reciprocal, the poet opens from the self to all others. Uniting resemblance with reciprocity, *Facile* suggests an interchangeability without sameness that operates in the

photographs by Man Ray, in the relationship between text and image, and ultimately between self and other.

In the first spread for “L’Entente,” the photographs alongside and above the poem reiterate the theme of touch. The photograph above the poem is the only one to give prominence to an object: a pair of gloves (Figure 5). The gloves are arranged so that they appear to touch, a ghostly mimicry of the hands in the poem. As a metonymic depiction, the photograph repeats the poem’s transformation of the hand into an object. Man Ray underscores the playful replacement of the hands by positioning Nusch on the facing page so that her arms stretch out as if to fill the glove, were she not cut off by the book’s gutter. Yet the lifelike quality of the gloves, brushing fingertips, also echoes the model’s agility in each of the other photographs. Her body arches and twists in almost athletic poses, a fluidity controverted in the relief pattern of rib bones and shoulder blades visible in several photographs. The cropping at the edge of the arm, especially obvious in the first two photographs of *Facile*, repeats itself in all but the final spread, where the hands finally come into view. In the poem, the hands hide as an invisible extension of the body, so integral to the self as to escape notice, until they emerge as material objects. Tactility returns emphasis to the edges of the body, leading away from the self and toward the other.

The spaces of the boundary line and the mirror play a role in the collaborative work of Éluard and Man Ray in their respective contributions. Their understanding of resemblance as a mediating force within and outside the self also shapes the relationship

between text and image. Rather than photographs duplicating the text, Man Ray's images stand as "miroirs spontanés" to Éluard's poetry and vice versa. Certain images pierce the boundary between verbal and visual realms, especially those of light and shadow. Man Ray's use of lighting, especially backlighting and high contrast, makes the woman's body alternately pale or dark, with some spreads featuring both an illuminated and a shadowed body. On some pages, a ghost of an image emerges from a pale background, and on others a dark shape stands out sharply from the page. Mostly devoid of objects or backdrops, Man Ray's photographs isolate the woman, keeping the focus on her contours. This emphasis on light and shadow extends into Éluard's poetry, where certain verses can seem almost descriptive of the photographs, relating the *toi* "nue dans l'ombre et nue éblouie / comme un ciel frissonnant d'éclairs" (465). However, the poet's usage of light and shadow connects rather than isolating, activating light as both a source and a gift in "L'Entente": "le soleil au haut du ciel qui te délivre de ton ombre." The eyes in particular, spontaneous mirrors, form a connection: "entre des yeux qui se regardent la lumière déborde" (461). Light not only moves directionally but spills out beyond the two individuals. These different deployments of light mark the starting and ending positions of the self, at first isolated in what seems to be an inward-turned gaze, and as the book develops, in a face-à-face of reciprocity.

Reciprocity, Tactility, Exchange

If there is a striking resemblance between text and image in *Facile*, it is on a structural level, in the way that the shape of poem and body coalesce. While it is unclear how much of the layout can be attributed to the coauthors and where editor Guy Levis Mano intervened to coordinate photographs and poems, the graceful curves of the body seem to shape Éluard's verses, making it appear as if they were written directly on the printed photographs. The words become like the negative space to Nusch's body, tracing the edges of her legs, arm, or torso. Éluard evokes the relationship of counterparts in "L'Entente:" "Le creux de ton corps cueille des avalanches," imagining the descending verses of the poem as an avalanche harbored by the hollows of the body. The poem inverts the shape of the woman's body rather than mirroring it. The curving line marking the boundary between body and word plays on the typical disposition of text and illustration across the straight gutter in the center of the spread, and in one case centers the photograph of the body in the middle of the gutter, emphasizing the disruption to traditional text-image relations. The body transforms a line of division into a site of contact. By shifting the relationship of word and image from one of similarity to a spatial and tactile relationship, *Facile* manifests on its pages the relationship Éluard sets out between the *toi* and the others, in which the *toi* stands in the place of the other.

Just as the communing lines of text and image make contact on the page, Man Ray's photographic techniques draw attention to the borders of the woman. The use of solarization and highlighting creates thick, velvety shadows that limn the body, making

its tactile qualities a central component of the photographs. Éluard seems to comment on the turn from visibility to tactility in his poem: “la paupière du soleil s’abaisse sur ton visage / Un rideau doux comme ta peau” (460) as if the woman were draped in sunlight and shadow. The movement from the optic to the tactile plays out in the processes of book creation as well. As with any photographic print, the mechanism of these images recalls the fact that light itself has material properties. In the heliogravure procedure used to create the prints for *Facile*, the transfer of the photographs occurs by the medium of a gelatin that hardens where it is exposed to light. This process, materializing a visual perspective, may be invisible to the reader, but Man Ray’s cover (see Appendix A, Figure 6) reinforces the creation through contact behind the book. Instead of in a flat font, the title is spelled out with actual typesetting sorts, underscored with drawn-in shadows that make the sorts appear three-dimensional. These emblems of tactility in the landscape of *Facile* propose the fundamental role of touch in the relationships the poet describes, and particularly those anchored in the woman, the subject of Man Ray’s photographs.

In “L’Entente,” tactility allows an experience of the self as other, and this reversal leads to an exchange of positions: “écoute-toi parler tu parles pour les autres / et si tu te réponds ce sont les autres qui t’entendent” (460). In writing that the woman speaks for the other, Éluard allegorizes the practice of collaboration, in which artist and poet not only answer themselves but speak on behalf of the other. The poet’s affectionate appellation for the woman later on in the poem, “ma double lèvre en flammes” (461) insists on the plurality of speech at the level of the woman who is the subject of the

poem, the collaboration itself, and language writ large. The “pour” in these verses characterizes resemblance as a form of exchange, one brought to fruition in the final poem of the collection: “Tu te livres à toi-même / Pour te livrer aux autres” (465). The exchange of the self for the other describes a change in positions—“tu prends la place de chacun” (460)—accomplished in the experience of the body as foreign and in speaking for the other. At the same time, it focuses on a process of mutual shaping visible in the exchange between text and image on the pages of *Facile*. In the collection, verses conform to the shape of the body, but the body also shapes itself to the verses, revealing a reciprocal act of co-creation. As in the text-image relationship of *Facile*, the woman’s relationship to herself is shaped by contact with the other. The experiences of “L’Entente” run backwards—from the internal relationship focused on the self toward a recognition of the other at the heart of the self. Éluard describes this belated discovery as a “ressemblance involontaire,” one that collaboration can only happen upon as a terminus. In the same way, though the individual enters into a partnership with the other, both the toi of the poem and the poet himself, the process entered into is not one of dissolution of the self, but rather one that forms the contours of the individual. In the final lines of *Facile*, the sense of wonder expressed by the poet—“Je m’émerveille de l’inconnue que tu deviens” (466)—realizes the self’s becoming as it is revealed in the processes of collaboration.

Toward a Surrealist Ethics

These two art book collaborations experiment with the borders that give shape to things, with the intersection of verbal and visual symbolism in the book and, more essentially, with a relationship of resemblance that approaches the other by perceiving the self as a negative space. Pushing the interaction with the other to the edges of the self, Éluard and his coauthors locate a reciprocity established through contact. With verses that imagine the connection between self and other in the guise of the handshake—“mains qui s’êtreignent ne pèsent rien” (461), “comme on transforme sa main en la mettant dans une autre” (374)—these collections propose an interchangeability of self and other without rendering them identical. On a structural level, text and image relate to each other through contact. Drawings and photographs become like a doorway opening onto the poems, a container made to measure for the contained, like the gloves in Man Ray’s photograph. Word and image leave traces on each other, which are visualized in the material of the book. In Éluard’s vision, the poet constructs the reciprocity of poetry by offering his body to the world. Poet and artist do the same as collaborators, inviting the other into their work, giving each other freedom to create differently in verbal and visual registers while also responding to each other’s work in the process of creation. The involuntary resemblance privileged by Éluard appears as an offering of the space of the self to the other. In the shared space of collaboration and in the threshold of the erotic encounter, he finds sites that reveal the liminal sense of self hinted at in his poetics of the lyrical address. For Éluard, the relationships created by these encounters function in the

same way as an ambiguous image such as Rubin's vase—our perception of background and foreground, exterior and interior, container and contained can be suddenly reversed. Both self and other are imprinted through contact, while also discovering their own boundaries.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has shown a reversal in Surrealism's conception of the self from the 1920s to the 1930s—from anonymity and a “conscience universelle”¹⁹⁶ to the individual as a response to a pre-existing collective. In 1930, Surrealism, which had seemed to pursue the destruction of the author and the abolition of the self, drew new inspiration from a rethinking of the beginnings of individuality. Repositioning collaboration as a practice that brought the formation of the individual to the fore, the Surrealists embraced a dialogic model of collaboration in art and poetry collections that brought into focus the border between self and other through the contact between verbal and visual. The artistic practice that formed these collections emphasized freedom within the *œuvre à quatre mains*, while also conditioning the creativity of the artist or poet on the act of responding to the other. This same tension between union and divergence plays out in the finished collaborations, where text and image relate across the threshold of the gutter between pages and between their different media. These collaborative spaces encourage us to think about the relationship between self and other outside of an oppositional framework, paradoxically by invoking the negative / positive of absence / presence in the container and the contained. The pressure of text and image shapes each, enforcing yet also changing the borders between the two. As a microcosm of the collective, limited to the figure of the pair, surrealist illustrated books navigated the

196. Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:274

potential of the face-to-face as a space in which ethics could be explored at a more intimate level than that of their political engagement.

In the collaborative works studied here, the body is central to the Surrealists' understanding of the relationship between self and world and between self and other. In *L'Immaculée Conception*, through the shared body of mother and child as well as life in the womb and in *Ralentir travaux*, through the erasure of the face, both the collaborative relationship and the subject are defined corporeally. The body becomes a cipher for the relationship between self and other, other and plurality in the multiplication of the female form in *Facile* and *Nuits partagées*. However, this attention to the body as it makes manifest the self's communion with the world is not unique to collaborative works. I have shown in chapter two the emergence of the self in bodily perception, especially vision and touch, in Éluard's individually-authored. The concept of the body as a subject-object experienced in its directedness toward the world, and, chiastically, as the schema through which the world is understood, would be delineated only a few decades after the 1930s by philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty.¹⁹⁷ Surrealism's twisted and transformed bodies, use of objects in place of limbs and organs, and poems whose verses disassemble the anatomy do not seek to enact random violence or even simply to shock their audience. The Surrealists reflect on the lived co-presence with the world at the heart not only of perception, but of the formation of the self through paintings like Dali's 1937 "Métamorphose de Narcisse" and poems like Breton's "L'Union libre:"

197. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945).

Ma femme à la bouche de cocarde et de bouquet d'étoiles de dernière grandeur
Aux dents d'empreintes de souris blanche sur la terre blanche
A la langue d'ambre et de verre frottés¹⁹⁸

In these encounters, the mutual impression of world and body becomes a creative act, shaping the self from the site of contact.

A preponderance of the experimentation with the human form appears in the 1930s, a decade in which desire dominated the writing, fictional and theoretical, and the artwork of the Surrealists. While I would argue that these works participate in a reimagining of the human through lived experience and through the body, they also do so through the erotic, a mode of relating to the other that has certain overlaps with the collaborative relationship studied in this research, but that also deserves attention as a separate phenomenon. In Eluard's collaborations, the female lover is a third presence, sometimes visibly so, as in *Facile*, and at other times beneath the surface, as in *Les Nuits partagées*. In part, the woman appears as the ordaining gravity that pulls the lyrical subject into the world and the experience of intersubjectivity. However, for Eluard the one that he loves embodies the creation of the self out of the collective—she speaks the one from all at the heart of every individual. Thus, the externalizing force of desire, for Eluard, directs the self to a recognition of its origin in the other, which is distinctly apparent in the female body. More than the man, the woman recalls the creative potential of flesh. This is particularly clear in *L'Immaculée Conception*, in which the hinted-at virgin birth becomes a metaphor for the asexual reproduction of collaborative practice. In

198. Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:285.

the context of *L'Immaculée Conception*, the women's body represents a site of miraculous creation. In the section "Conception," Éluard and Breton insist twice that "l'homme ne se reproduit pas" (EC 1:307) a statement that accentuates the difference between male and female bodies. I would argue that for the Surrealists, who privileged the spontaneous generation of language through automatic writing, the capacity of the woman's body to form new life was rather a point of envy. More importantly, reproduction becomes a means of understanding both creative production and the formation of the self through contact with the world. The self's communion with and contingency upon the world are vividly depicted in the intrauterine life of the embryo in *L'Immaculée Conception*. In the same way, the female body becomes a cipher for the fleshly creation that can ultimately be understood as the creation of the self.

Nonetheless, the dismembering of the body, and especially the female body, in the surrealist canon betrays the complex intersubjectivity involved, both historically and artistically. There is still a potential for "absorbing" the other when perception springs from the body as seat and center of consciousness. Breton describes the acquisitiveness of desire in *Les Vases communicants* (1930): "l'exigence du désir à la recherche de l'objet de sa réalisation dispose étrangement des données extérieures, en tendant égoïstement à ne retenir d'elles que ce qui peut servir sa cause."¹⁹⁹ This problem can be seen especially with the female other. In the same way that the woman could become a mere symbol for the unconscious, she could equally become a vehicle for male creative production.

199. Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 2:177.

Scholarship has debated whether the movement's appropriation of women's bodies amounts to misogyny,²⁰⁰ regardless of the purposes for which it was used. As muses, lovers, and creative partners,²⁰¹ women often appear to be absorbed into male-directed projects, relegated to the supporting role, and, until recent decades, seen as less significant figures in the movement.²⁰²

No less than automatic writing and its negation of the self, the union of body and world entailed certain risks. The boundaries that constrain the self also protect it, making Surrealism's experimentation with the divide between self and world a dangerous one. Likewise, contact represents a pressure of the self on the world and the reverse that translates into the tension between plurality and singularity in Surrealism's collaborative projects, which could result in what Breton described as an "éclipse du sujet,"²⁰³ or in the relationship between self and other, the other's transformation into what Katharine Conley calls a dream-wraith.²⁰⁴ In particular, the pre-personal intercorporeality that materializes in surrealist art and poetry creates a vulnerability between self and other.

200. See Katharine Conley, *Automatic Woman: the Representation of Woman In Surrealism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996)

201. Surrealism's female artists received little attention in early critical work on the movement. Whitney Chadwick's *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985) and *Surrealism and Women*, ed. Caws et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991) offered a corrective to this gap.

202. In particular, Lee Miller, Leonora Carrington, Dorothea Tanning, and Valentine Hugo were romantic partners of surrealist men and were seen as less important artists and writers for many years. For essays on creativity in romantic partnerships, see Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle De Courtivron, *Significant Others: Creativity & Intimate Partnership* (New York, N.Y: Thames and Hudson, 1993).

203. Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:1129.

204. Conley, "Anamorphic Love," 112.

Hans Bellmer's famous "poupée" photographs take the manipulation of the body to an extreme, fusing supplemental plastic legs and arms on the doll and manipulating its position to create disturbing images. In setting aside a notion of the self as a transcendental ego, Surrealism exposes the body, and therefore with the self, as both forceful and susceptible in material ways. From the bloodless "faits mentaux" of Aragon²⁰⁵ or the "photographie de la pensée" of Breton²⁰⁶ in the 1920s, we come to consciousness in the body: "Un soi, non par transparence, comme la pensée, qui ne pense quoi que ce soit qu'en l'assimilant, en le constituant, en le transformant en pensée - mais un soi par confusion, narcissisme, inhérence de celui qui voit à ce qu'il voit, de celui qui touche à ce qu'il touche, du sentant au senti."²⁰⁷ The inherence of self in world is precisely what makes the corporeal transgressions of surrealist art so effective, threatening not only to the body, but to both self and world in their perceptual unity. If Surrealism's early forms of collaboration emphasize anonymity, the partner book collaboration was nonetheless there as a dialogic practice from the very beginning of the movement, rarely commented on in theoretical texts but present as a lived experience that almost every member of the movement shared once or many times with different partners. The art book collaboration materializes the dialog between partners on the page, a visual and spatial expression of the way the other calls the self into being. However, it took a new emphasis on materiality and the body in surrealist art and literature in the

205. Louis Aragon, *Traité du style* (Paris: Gallimard, 1928), 188-189.

206. Breton, *Œuvres complètes*, 1:245.

207. Merleau-Ponty, *L'Œil et l'esprit*, 18.

1930s to illuminate the motivation behind collaborative books, a practice directed not toward the dissolution of the self but toward an experience of the self's emergence in the perceptual field.

APPENDIX

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Figure 1

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Figure 2

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Figure 3

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Figure 4

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Figure 5

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Figure 6

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