

1925—*Montevideo in the Orient*
Lautréamont's Ascent Among the Paris Surrealists

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“The more we know about Isidore Ducasse, the less we understand Lautréamont.”¹ Thus claimed Michel Pierrssens in 1993, acknowledging the significant breakthroughs in Lautréamont Studies since the 1970s. That decade dispelled the myth and mystery surrounding Ducasse, the man behind the nom-de-plume “Comte de Lautréamont,” replacing them with a corpus of reliable facts. A similar comment could apply to studies of Lautréamont’s reception by the Paris Surrealists: the more we know of the Surrealists’ engagement with his legacy, the less we understand their original fascination with it. The movement drew inspiration from a number of other writers. How can we then explain that, out of all their predecessors, it is Lautréamont who seems to have held the most exceptional, continuous, and intensive fascination for the Surrealists? Why is Lautréamont, of all other writers they previously admired, the only one who escaped denunciation in the *Second Manifesto* of 1929?

One is tempted to look at strictly literary criteria for an evaluation of the Surrealists’ esteem for writers. It is well known that the Surrealists admired Lautréamont’s writing for its innovative literary techniques, imagery and content. As early as 1919, they republished Lautréamont’s second and final work, the *Poésies*, transcribed by hand from what was believed to be the last existing copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale; he has been firmly enshrined in the movement’s pantheon of predecessors ever since. To focus strictly on literary criteria, however, proves problematic since the movement vigorously defended itself against being reduced to a literary group. Rejecting the superficial and bourgeois *l’art pour l’art*, they did not consider themselves guided by mere artistic and aesthetic principles.

This essay argues that the Surrealists’ fascination for Lautréamont originates

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from another realm of their activity, their political engagement, as much as from poetic or aesthetic considerations.² The beginning of the Surrealists' appropriation of Lautréamont coincides with their first major political agenda in 1925, launched through the invocation of the "Orient."³ It is under this banner that the group members found a common outlet for the expression of their various critiques of occidental civilization. Beyond his two works, they knew almost nothing of Lautréamont, save that he was born far from Europe in Montevideo. Despite the Surrealists' adoration of what they called the Orient, none of the other writers they admired had a non-western background. Given his unusual birthplace, the Surrealists were able to re-read Lautréamont's works and discover in them an anticipation of their anti-occidental stance. It is precisely this political reading that singles out Lautréamont among all other literary predecessors as the only writer to be integrated not only into a surrealist conception of literature but also into their specific political agenda. This double quality explains Lautréamont's exceptional role for the Surrealists in Paris. After the 1925 agenda of the Orient, the Surrealists' appropriation of Lautréamont became even more obsessive and irrational; he was used as a quintessential symbol of Surrealism, and abused as a technology of power to resolve internal conflicts.⁴

Viewed in a broader context, the appropriation of Lautréamont by the Surrealists can be read as an early case study of an entangled history. They had included this shadowy figure in their genealogy since 1919. In 1925, they placed a major emphasis on his Uruguayan origin and thereafter appropriated him with increasing verve. We should take this heightened concern with Lautréamont's birthplace as a starting point for understanding how the Surrealists linked him to their own anti-French and anti-occidental political thinking. While the majority of intellectuals in France and Uruguay claimed Lautréamont for their respective national heritages, the Surrealists were unique in appropriating him *against* their own nation. Accordingly, this essay begins with an overview of how non-Surrealist intellectuals in both countries appropriated Lautréamont. Against this background, the Surrealists' endeavor will appear in stark contrast; the limits of their rebellion against prevailing social conventions will also be revealed. This essay then introduces the agenda of the Orient and examines how the lack of data about Lautréamont allowed the Surrealists to project this program onto him. A subsequent section provides a close reading of the *Chants of Maldoror* and the *Poésies*,⁵ analyzed from the perspective of the Surrealists in 1925. Finally, I will analyze the evolution of Lautréamont's function among the Surrealists as they shifted from the Orient to a communist agenda.

Early National and Chauvinistic Appropriation of Lautréamont in France and Uruguay

In his *Chants*, Lautréamont mentions both his native town of Montevideo as well as Paris. His father was French and worked for the French embassy, and both of his works were written in French. Lautréamont fell into oblivion for twenty years after his death in Paris. He was re-discovered and appropriated with great symmetry on both sides of the Atlantic. Most intimate accounts produced in both France and Uruguay were no more than wishful fantasies created to support claims of national affiliation. Ironically, the impetus behind the first attempts to appropriate him can be considered both patriotic and progressive. It is not until the second half of the twentieth century that conservatives—classically considered more patriotic—accepted Lautréamont as a writer.

In France, the first reprint of the *Chants* was published by Léon Genonceaux in 1890, while Rubén Darío published parts of it in South America in 1896, in an anthology of obscure writers called *Los raros*.⁶ Since France was at the height of its cultural radiance, it seemed only natural that Lautréamont was considered to be French all over the world, even for the Uruguayans. This feeling of cultural imbalance provoked claims about the native son of Montevideo as early as 1900, led first by the artists around the journal *La Alborada*. One of these artists, Juan de Mendoza, dedicated an altar to Lautréamont in 1906: “to a Montevidean poet without fear and without reproach. Passer-by, go and announce to the *Mercure de France* that Lautréamont saved both his hometown and French literature. He is for Montevideo what Saint James was for Spain.”⁷ The first critiques of the *Chants* appeared in the 1920s and claimed that Lautréamont’s origin was crucial for the genesis of this work, “written almost completely in Montevideo with impressions of Uruguay, extremely abundant with cruel emotions, given the civil war in which two parties fought each other with violence and rancor.”⁸

Even before the Surrealists’ initiative to reprint the *Poésies* in 1919, interest in Lautréamont had been on the rise in France. Fueled by the 1919 reprint, by 1925 the number of publications concerned with Lautréamont had reached such an astonishing extent that the literary journal *Le disque vert* dedicated a special issue to “le cas Lautréamont.”⁹ The great majority of the forty writers and intellectuals surveyed by the editors compared Lautréamont to Rimbaud or Baudelaire. This frequent comparison implied that the number of *poètes maudits* had grown by one, and that this type of writer was to be considered a genuine French cultural phenomenon. Lautréamont’s birthplace was scarcely mentioned. When some drew attention to it, they pointed to it as some kind of biographical accident. André Malraux knew it all: “hating his family, desiring to leave Montevideo as soon as possible, Lautréamont came to Paris at age twenty with the ludicrous pretext to enroll in preliminary courses

at the École Polytechnique.”¹⁰ Given his French name and his works written in French, most people in France had no reason to think of him as anything else but French. Being both French and foreign-born was not uncommon, given France’s vast colonial empire.

The first eyewitness accounts came to light in the 1920s, due to the high interest in Lautréamont and the absence of any real data. In Uruguay, the Guillot-Muñoz brothers solicited relatives and friends who had known Lautréamont in his youth, some seventy years before, while François Alicot did the same with former classmates at the boarding schools Lautréamont attended as a teenager in Pau and Tarbes in Southern France. Although these testimonies might resemble the foundations of Lautréamont Studies, the reports of events having taken place so long ago are more than unreliable, or seem overly exaggerated. After the wild nature of the *Chants* became known to a wider public, the life of their author was imagined to be equally so, which might explain some of the more outlandish anecdotes “remembered” by old friends.¹¹

The nationality issue lingered in the following decades. In his *Cantos Ceremoniales* of 1961, the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda—one of the few to take a perspective close to the Surrealists’ anti-nationalist stance—attempts to make Lautréamont a citizen of freedom rather than of a specific country. Neruda extends Lautréamont’s life by a year and depicts him fighting side by side with the Paris Commune, a clear indication that he believed that Lautréamont would have been on the side of the oppressed and for liberty, regardless of time and country, be it during the Commune, the Spanish Civil War, or later in Chile against Pinochet. Accordingly, the poem titled “Lautréamont reconquistado” portrays him as a South American son who is freed from his Paris captivity by the angel of death and returned to his native home. For the sake of liberty and justice, there was need for a South American *reconquista* against French cultural domination. Still, a patriotic Uruguayan could easily miss the point and feel his nationalism flattered by the final verses of the poem:

It is only the death of Paris arriving,
asking for the unbowed Uruguayan,
for the fierce boy who wanted to return,
who wanted to smile, looking at Montevideo,
it was only death who came to call for him.¹²

The publication in 1970 of François Caradec’s first thoroughly-researched biography marked a turning point in Lautréamont Studies.¹³ In 1977, his fellow Frenchmen Jean-Jacques Lefrère discovered the only known and authentic

photograph of Lautréamont—thus giving a proper face to the phantom—as well as a book from Lautréamont’s personal library in which he had written a few words in Spanish.¹⁴ This led Emir Rodríguez Monegal and Leyla Perrone-Moisés to claim Lautréamont’s bilingualism in 1983, which they proved by pointing to the influence of works he had read in Spanish, not French, on the genesis of his writings.¹⁵ The political climate in both countries had eased by the mid-1980s, supported by the end of repressive language politics—against Brazilian in the north of Uruguay, against regional languages in France. This helped the claim of Lautréamont’s bilingualism to gain currency on both sides of the Atlantic. Today, an international community of scholars believes that Lautréamont’s legacy will gain in richness by acknowledging both his Uruguayan origin and his subsequent move to France.

In 1995, after the death of Emir Rodríguez Monegal, Leyla Perrone-Moisés published *Lautréamont Austral*, which they had co-authored.¹⁶ Amid a climate of *détente* in the transatlantic wrestling over Lautréamont, Perrone-Moisés became interested in understanding how this cultural conflict could have taken so long to be resolved. Aiming at a final deconstruction of the paradigm that had sustained a century of French hegemony over Lautréamont, she proposed the following argument: if most of the South American authors since the Guillot-Muñoz brothers have stressed the Uruguayan origin of Lautréamont, it was not motivated by chauvinism but rather by its opposite, a cultural inferiority complex resulting in the perpetuation of French domination, “because the South American commentators of Lautréamont have always done nothing more than accommodate themselves to a French gaze, supplying an image of Ducasse that exactly corresponded to the European demand.”¹⁷

Perrone-Moisés drew attention to the relation of dependency that links the periphery to the center. The South Americans did not insist on Lautréamont’s origin in order to make him one of their own, but rather to cater to European voyeurism and an urge for exoticism. If we accept this explanation of the attitude of South American authors, we can locate the Surrealists between the two continents: like their fellow Europeans, they were lured to Lautréamont by exoticism; and like the South Americans, they gave great importance to his origins. Desiring to claim Lautréamont as a Surrealist neither French nor Uruguayan, they created a position for themselves in which they attempted to short-circuit the transatlantic economy of supply and demand for exoticism. They aimed to annihilate European culture and yet, paradoxically, sought to achieve this goal by invoking the Orient, a trope itself fragrant with exoticism.

The Surrealist Orient

In 1925, the year after the movement officially labeled itself “Surrealism,” many publications and political actions appeared under the banner of the Orient, which can thus be seen as the first surrealist political agenda. Marguerite Bonnet gave a comprehensive overview of these first steps into politics in her 1980 essay “L’Orient dans le surréalisme: mythe et réel.”¹⁸ The agenda of the Orient can be considered an abrupt and passionate transition in the movement’s history, leading the Surrealists from literary concerns to political action. The first manifestation of their emerging political consciousness consisted of anti-French reflexes. This thrust grew more concrete in early 1925, when the Surrealists decided to participate in what they felt was the imminent invasion of the Occident by outside forces, and assisted by subversive collaborators from within. They dubbed these forces the Orient, the antonym of the Occident. The Surrealists lent their support to rebellious Berbers in French Morocco, which helped them realize that less abstract forces would prove more effective in inciting the overhaul of Western society. By the end of 1925, the Orient was absorbed into a new political agenda that attempted to align the movement with Communism.

In October 1924, the first issue of the Surrealists’ journal, *La Révolution surréaliste*, answered the question publicly raised by the *Cahiers du Mois* about the potential for reciprocal influences between the Orient and the Occident. Breton wrote, “I like the fact that the occidental civilization is at stake. It is from the Orient that our light comes today. I do not expect the ‘East’ to come to enrich us or to renew us, but to conquer us completely.”¹⁹

After the members of the movement dealt individually with the question of the Orient, a common resolution was accepted unanimously at a group meeting on January 23, 1925:

Given the importance of putting all our strength at the disposal of the Orient against the Occident [...] we ask that the value and the fate of our active participation in the oriental invasion be acknowledged in cold blood and very seriously. We consider it to be our only chance for salvation right now and the last remaining way to prove that our pledge is not motivated by personal interest. [...] Dedicating poems or loving gazes to the Orient will not do, we have to achieve the unity of forces prone to serve the Orient through all available means.²⁰

The Orient clearly held great importance for the emerging self-understanding

of the group, as revealed by their eagerness to prove the absence of personal interest. Moreover the Surrealists rejected all notions of exoticism when they ruled out “poems or loving gazes,” in other words, texts and paintings, the mediums in which exoticism traditionally manifests itself. Contradictorily, the projection of this agenda onto Lautréamont revealed just how much exoticism had been at work in formulating the surrealist Orient.

The favored resolution also singled out two political movements that would help bring about the oriental invasion: “thus, for example, we should proceed to the immediate investigation of the Jewish question and of Bolshevism.”²¹ The discussions of the following weeks reveal that the Surrealists were still far away from a sound political understanding of either Zionism or Communism, which turned out not to be at the center of their debates. The Surrealists’ main focus was the subversion and dissolution of their own occidental society.²²

After this build-up, the strongest manifestation of the surrealist Orient appears in the third issue of the *La Révolution surréaliste* of April 1925. Its cover page announces in capital letters: “1925: END OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA.” The individual contributions in favor of the Orient are grouped around the collectively-edited double page in the middle of the journal, where an open letter to the Pope is juxtaposed with an open letter to the Dalai Lama. “We think of another war, war against you, Pope, dog”; this message is as clear as its pendant addressed to the Dalai Lama: “for you know to what transparent liberation of the souls, to what freedom of the Spirit in the Spirit we aspire, O acceptable Pope, O Pope in the true Spirit.”²³ The author of one of the most comprehensive histories of the movement, Gérard Durozoi, follows Bonnet when he points out that this double page is not meant as a direct call to convert to Buddhism. Rather, the Surrealists conceive the Dalai Lama as a kind of anti-Pope, as a “reference to the Other, to the opposite of the occidental (non-)thought.”²⁴

It is crucial to be aware of the role ascribed to the Orient within Surrealism as a cipher for Europe’s contestator, or as the Occident’s hoped-for nemesis. The surrealist Orient as the summed-up Other, aggressively turned against the Self, is a most radical manifestation of Orientalism as it has been defined by Edward Said. Especially for France and its culture—to which most of the Paris Surrealists belonged at that time—the Orient was always perceived in terms of antagonism:

The Orient is [Europe’s] cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. [...] Historically and culturally there is

a quantitative as well as a qualitative difference between the Franco-British involvement in the Orient and [...] the involvement of every other European or Atlantic power. To speak of Orientalism therefore is to speak mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural enterprise, a project whose dimensions take in such disparate realms as the imagination itself, the whole of India and the Levant, the Biblical texts and Biblical lands.²⁵

Driven by a passion for the Other, the Surrealists created a map of the Orient beyond geographic verisimilitude. They insulted one of their favorite enemies, the poet and diplomat Paul Claudel, for “spreading the occidental poison to the Orient” while he represented France as ambassador to Japan.²⁶ The Orient further encompassed the Dalai Lama’s Tibet, the Bolsheviks’ Russia, the Zionists’ biblical lands, the Berbers’ Morocco; surprisingly enough, the Orient was even found on the other side of the Rhine River in Oswald Spengler’s Germany.²⁷ The surrealist “Orient” took in, just as Edward Said put it, “such disparate realms as the imagination itself.”

In his summary of the genesis of an agenda of the Orient, Bonnet does not neglect to mention its literary quality: “born out of a poetic urge, of a determination to break with an unbearable reality, and of the insistent pressure of the century, this myth temporarily brought about a synthesis of various surrealist concerns, carrying them along and opening up new horizons and new hopes.”²⁸ When Bonnet discusses these literary or poetical roots, she singles out Rimbaud and Nerval. However, she omits any mention of Lautréamont, perhaps the most important figure in this cult for predecessors. Similar to the emergence of the surrealist Orient itself, this cult was motivated by poetical considerations and the desire for a break with reality, both of which were unthinkable outside of its specific historic setting.

The historical situation of the 1920s saw an immense increase in ideological thinking in which political affiliation held great importance, both for the individual’s self-understanding and for the coherence of social strata and their numerous fragmented groups. The public demarcation of one stratum or group from another, especially if they shared the same general vision in terms of political left and right, became more and more symbolic: pastimes pursued, vocabulary used, songs sung, or flags and insignia displayed. The political or cultural genealogy to which one subscribed was another important symbolic demarcation. The Surrealists were no exception to this need for symbolic demarcation.

What Bonnet described as a desire to break from empirical reality can be reformulated in sociological terms. The Surrealists were sensitive outsiders who

gradually dropped out of university or vocational training because they were antagonistic to their society. Moreover, most of them had been to the war and returned horrified, determined to reject the whistled tunes of jingoism while more young men were shuffled to the front as cannon fodder.

As the group gradually converged, at first meeting each other in progressive libraries or through their work in literature reviews, they started to develop a common identity and quickly realized that most of them had already been in touch with the same literature. Their desire to unite under a common rebellious banner was matched by their iconoclastic attacks on the literature of mainstream society. They published charts with the headers “Read” and “Don’t read,” under which past and present writers were grouped according to the daring of their writings and their (lack of) social appreciation.

The Surrealists soon established a pool of authors and works they considered forerunners to their own first literary forays. In them they saw their own distance from their current society. Mainstream or bourgeois society could not appreciate the beauty of those works because of their repellant and inappropriate style or content. Today, the search for ancestors might seem less amazing than it once did. A similar trend can be observed in many subcultures defined by music genres which have their own historical predecessors and idols. From a distance the Surrealists’ behavior may even seem to be a dandyish mirror image of bourgeois social practice. But in the 1920s, amid tense ideological atmosphere and a resulting need for distinction, a categorical opposition to the national grain was a highly political act, even in literature. At least in the realm of high culture at the time public morality was still very strong. A good citizen would not talk openly about the Marquis de Sade, another important figure included by Surrealists in their genealogy.

It is within this context that we might see how the Surrealists first became interested in Lautréamont. To evaluate if the *Chants of Maldoror* was a book suitable for the bourgeoisie, we need to look no further than the scene in which Maldoror enters a ruin where he finds a hair that recounts in great detail how its master, from whose head it has fallen, raped and skinned a young boy over a long period of time. Then, the hair’s master speaks himself, revealing his identity: “until now I had considered myself the Almighty; but no; I must bow my head before remorse which cries to me: ‘you are only a wretch!’” (*Chant* III, 5). The introduction of this violent and homoerotic blasphemy—the illogical and morbid setting of a talking hair in a ruin—was certainly not an ideal topic for an average bourgeois dinner conversation in 1920s France. It was therefore predisposed to catch the Surrealists’ interest. Nevertheless, in the absence of the oriental agenda, it is difficult to explain how Lautréamont grew from one of many admired historical writers to be the only one

exempted from the Surrealists' purge of their elected predecessors.

Lautréamont "le Montevidéen," First Oriental Poet of Surrealism

As their oriental agenda took shape in December 1924, the Surrealists showed interest in gathering information about Lautréamont. Benjamin Péret even wrote to the French consul in Montevideo and asked for a copy of his birth certificate.²⁹ As late as 1931, however, they had made little progress. One of the most ardent advocates of the oriental agenda, Robert Desnos, admitted that the Surrealists still possessed only a few hard facts about Lautréamont: "about Isidore Ducasse, we know only: his date of birth; his date of death; a little information about his family and his school years; the *Chants of Maldoror*; the *Poésies*; a couple of letters, more revealing of his economic situation than of his literary concerns. Nothing else."³⁰ This corpus of facts they knew; everything else was mere projection. In the absence of facts, the Surrealists found in his works their own aspirations for revolutionary change and a non-western, non-French socio-political order that they titled the Orient.

There are two pieces of evidence that indicate that the Surrealists read and discussed Lautréamont in an oriental way. First, Desnos explicitly linked Lautréamont's origins with his desire for a rupture, designated by the famous two French revolutions:

The boy that the Ducasse family sent to France to study [...] took with him the ideals of [17]89 and [18]49 that had been revised and exaggerated in the lyrical domain by those severe, story-telling and heroic men who, underneath a leaden sun, shook up the continent from the high planes of Mexico to the pampas in Argentina. And maybe, in the grandeur of Lautréamont's images, in the absolute-ness of his lyricism, are we allowed to search for an element of racial influence and a trace of his first childhood memories.³¹

In Desnos' imagination, Lautréamont came in contact with a Gaucho kind of non-modern, non-Western culture that influenced his ideas of revolution or of new beginnings. The term "racial influence," on the other hand, reveals just how much difficulty the Surrealists had in defining their position against those of the bourgeoisie: appropriating someone because of his biography and his assumptive racial and cultural belonging signals an acceptance of the idea that the category of race offers certain limitations and privileges. Bordering on racial essentialism, this framework remains valid even if the Surrealists turned the French bourgeoisie's

hierarchy of privileges acquired by birth and origin upside down.

This form of “positive racism” can also be found in the second statement concerning Lautréamont’s origin. One has to bear in mind that no photograph of Lautréamont was known before one was discovered in the 1970s, depicting a fair-skinned young man; the Surrealists could then easily depict him as wild as they wished, granting him more exotic “racial” features like a blended Native American heritage—in short, making him more oriental in their imagination. Francis Ponge, collaborator and friend of the Surrealists, saw an Andean raptor in him, circling over the Bibliothèque Nationale and ready to swoop down on the nation’s literary heritage. The anti-French tone is evident from the very beginning, when France’s defeat at Sedan is causally linked with Lautréamont’s arrival in Paris:

It is not accidental that around 1870, time of a terrible French humiliation, a bird of immense proportions, a kind of melancholic bat, condor or vampire of the Andes, a great membranous and ventilatory bird came perching itself on the rue Vivienne [*the street where Lautréamont actually lived, also featured in the Chants*]. The Bibliothèque Nationale is nearby, and since then this bird has not stopped hovering over it, surmounting it both threatening and protecting, flying in circles at twilight, with the sound of rolling drums, in the funeral sky of the bourgeoisie.³²

What generated these projections? In the absence of biographical data the Surrealists turned more intensively to Lautréamont’s texts. Throughout the period of the Orient, André Breton openly admitted the potential for projecting the text onto the spectral figure of the author, first in 1920 and then repeated verbatim in 1928: “indeed, when we want to talk about Lautréamont, we can stick to his works. Isidore Ducasse has vanished so entirely behind his pseudonym that today, we’d think we’d be romancing when we identify Maldoror or even the author of the *Chants* with this young mentor.”³³

In addition to Lautréamont’s distance from bourgeois mainstream, the first link or identification created between the Surrealists-to-be and Lautréamont originated in the poetic quality of his works. These cannot be discussed at length here; suffice it to say that the Surrealists found many structural parallels in Lautréamont’s *Chants* to what they themselves struggled to write: a similar violence in language, an equal delirium when creating images, an analogous desire to break away from the stylistic conventions imposed by the Académie Française, and a comparable tendency to disregard the constraints imposed on content by empirical logic and

prudery. Given the absence of biographical information, nothing contradicted the bonds the Surrealists created with Lautréamont by virtue of his works—and nothing led them to believe that he would have volunteered for the French army or anything else that might have appalled them. On the contrary, since they themselves wrote in the same manner, it was easy for them to imagine that they would get along well with Lautréamont had he been present at one of their regular meetings.

If the agenda of the Orient represents a transition for Surrealism from literary expression to political engagement, the bonds between Lautréamont and the Surrealists based primarily on similarities in literary expression should have eroded. Lautréamont's status within the group however was reinvigorated after the Orient. In order to explain this paradoxical evolution, it is important to bear in mind that Lautréamont was a canvas for projection that could be modified as the group evolved. To put it bluntly, in 1919, the Surrealists felt a vague malaise and admired the expression of the same vague malaise in Lautréamont's texts. By 1925, the Surrealists had come to realize that they wished for the destruction of western society at the hands of the Orient, and that in fact, Lautréamont had shared exactly the same desire. This was a projection, of course, but there was no biographical data, not even paratexts or any other significant source to contradict it. Furthermore, it transformed Lautréamont into an admired role model, something between a muse and an almost-live road companion for the Surrealists. This idealization reveals some similarity to what Silvia Bovenschen described as "imagined femininity,"³⁴ or the glorification of Woman by male authors prior to the Enlightenment. In both cases, the imagined figure remained disconnected from the real situation. Women were denied the social possibility to live out the projections their male contemporaries fashioned for them, while Lautréamont participated in the oriental agenda not by his explicit consent, but rather by surrealist decree.

Before undertaking a closer reading of Lautréamont's texts in order to fathom the degree to which the surrealist oriental agenda existed in, or was projected onto, them, a few words should be said about his non-European origin. As I mentioned earlier, this was the starting point, the fertile soil, on which these projections could flourish.

While the Surrealists' corpus of admired authors or their chosen pedigree consisted mostly of Frenchmen, they also knew foreign writers. However, it seems that the movement as a whole never cherished true Orientals—no Sufi mystics, no Chinese literati, no one from a distinctly non-western culture. This lack of interest or knowledge of non-European literature might be seen as one of the greatest shortcomings of the movement, and mocks all their anti-European impetus, since it

revealed the extent to which the Surrealists remained Eurocentric.

Edgar Allan Poe, for instance, was an American and thus non-European. For the Paris Surrealists, however, America was the “daughter of Europe,” “l’Extrême Occident” to use René Crevel’s pun on “l’Extrême Orient,” the French designation of the Far East.³⁵

Considered a major ailment of the Occident by the Surrealists, positivism was eagerly embraced by all modern countries in the Americas and even more so in the Southern hemisphere. Despite the similarities in European colonization, westernization, and the eradication of native cultures in both places, a significant difference existed between North and South America. In the European imagination of the 1920s, South America was still a wilder place, abundant with exoticism fueled by gaucho romanticism, and became ever more exotic the more the imagination was projected into the past.

Montevideo was not *terra incognita* in France. Many literary and historical books were dedicated to this city, where the number of French immigrants was estimated to be as much as a third of its total population by the mid-nineteenth century. The civil war and the siege of the city from 1843 to 1852, during which Lautréamont was born, were much discussed in France, which, as a military power, had several involvements in the conflict. The gruesome warfare accompanied by starvation, cholera and the launching of infected animal corpses into the besieged city, was also part of the European imagination. It was described in memoirs of participants or in essays by observers with varying degrees of historical accuracy. Within this literature one of the most famous accounts was given by Alexandre Dumas the elder in his *Mémoires de Garibaldi*, and in *Montevideo ou Une nouvelle Troie*.³⁶ The branding of Montevideo as the “New Troy” increased the imagined archaic ferocity of the war and this soon became an idiomatic nickname for the city.

When Alvaro Guillot-Muñoz first published in France about Lautréamont’s youth in Montevideo—incidentally in February 1925 while the surrealist Orient agenda was reaching its climax—he did not omit a reference to the “New Troy.”³⁷ The old Troy as featured in the *Iliad* was the interface between the Hellenic isles and the empires to the East. The Surrealists, in their unconditional support for everything non-European and their readiness for projections, could have easily drawn the parallel between the old Troy, which eventually fell by ruse to the European aggressors, and the “New Troy” in which Lautréamont was born under the siege, thereby styling Lautréamont a Trojan, an oriental fighter against the Europeans. In any case, the “New Troy” helped to mythologize Montevideo by analogy, and thus removed it further from the Surrealists’ present-day Occident. Finally, two purely nominal details should not be neglected. The official name of Uruguay was and still

is República Oriental del Uruguay. In addition, one of the more epic episodes of the civil war imported to France was the oath taken by the “Treinta y Tres Orientales” under the aegis of Juan Lavalleja on August 25, 1825.

All these hypotheses about the oriental character of mid-nineteenth century Montevideo in the imagination of the Surrealists can only be considered fertilizer, nourishing their ever more exotic readings of Lautréamont’s works. The main orientalization of Lautréamont occurred through his texts. Two passages, the plot of the *Chants* and the technique behind the *Poésies*, shall now be considered.

First Oriental Close Reading of the Chants of Maldoror—Montevideo and South America

The precondition of the Surrealists’ oriental reading of Lautréamont was his non-European origin. We should, therefore, begin with the passages in which he mentions his native city. The first reference to Montevideo comes in a chapter that begins, “I have made a pact with Prostitution to sow disorder in families.” At the end we learn: “it is not God’s spirit passing over us: it is only the shrill sigh of Prostitution in unison with the deep groans of the Montevidean...”. (*Chants* I, 7). This stance against God and the institution of the family, and in favor of prostitution, was along the same subversive lines that the Surrealists promoted. During the oriental agenda in April 1925, Louis Aragon delivered a speech to university students in Madrid. He gave a compassionate encomium for prostitutes who were forced into their profession by the economic scams of high finance, both possible due to the unchallenged paradigm of “Labor, this uncontested God reigning in the Occident.”²³⁸

Lautréamont’s first canto ends with a peculiar literary gesture in which the author emphasizes his place of birth. The Surrealists surely did not miss this strange inversion of periphery and center in regard to Lautréamont’s aspiration to conquer French literature:

The end of the nineteenth century will have its poet [...]; he was born on American shores, at the mouth of the Plata, where two nations, once rivals, are now striving to surpass each other in moral and material progress. Buenos Aires, the Queen of the South, and Montevideo, the coquette, stretch out their hands in friendship across the silvery waters of the great estuary. But eternal war holds destructive sway over these lands, joyously reaping countless victims. (*Chants* I, 14)

Insisting on his foreign origin must have raised eyebrows in mainland

France—prompting critical reactions among more conventional readers and approval from the anti-French Surrealists. First, it was uncommon for a young and unknown author to prophesy in such a pretentious way that the end of the current century would celebrate him as one of its greatest poets. Furthermore, Lautréamont expresses his ambition in a book filled with idiomatic errors, some of which could be attributed to his bilingualism. For example, an early passage in the book, “dans le commencement de cet ouvrage” (*Chants* I, 2 – “at the outset of this work”), though completely clear, does not conform to proper French usage, which should read instead: “au début de cet ouvrage.” However, the phrase follows literal Spanish syntax (“en el comienzo de esta obra”), leaving open the possibility that it could have been an intentional stylistic device.

In the 1920s, the standards applied to French literature by the watchdogs of the Académie Française remained in effect. The Surrealists themselves rebelled against this totalitarian set of rules defining what was to be considered proper French language and what was not. Their experiences with *écriture automatique* and their poems are all driven by this rebellious impetus against the Académie. Lautréamont was once described by a scholar as a “rastaquouère” of the French language—a foreigner with outlandish behavior who displayed signs of a suspicious wealth.³⁹ The Surrealists admired this storming of the temple of the Académie. Unlike them, Lautréamont had actually grown up outside of mainland French culture and his attack on French literary orthodoxy was for them nothing other than the desired oriental invasion.

In addition to his insistence on Uruguay and his flouting of the Académie, the Surrealists could hardly have missed the fundamental criticism of positivism in this episode. The positivist attitude of Uruguay and Argentina, “striving to surpass each other with moral and material progress...”, would ultimately end in disaster: “but eternal war holds destructive sway over these lands.” As mentioned earlier, the Surrealists considered positivism to be a plague of western society. They intended to blow up the statue of Auguste Comte in front of the Sorbonne, and Breton wrote in the movement’s *First Manifesto*, “the realist attitude, born out of positivism, seems to be hostile to every moral and intellectual flexibility. I hate it, because it consists of mediocrity, hatred and base complacency.”⁴⁰

Similarly, Lautréamont explicitly locates a second episode in South America, as can be deduced from the ornithological indications. Since Lautréamont mentioned the civil war while introducing himself, the Surrealists, like most scholars, might well have read the end of this section as an account of the siege of Montevideo:

Those who lived on the coast had heard strange things told of these

two characters, who would appear on earth amid the clouds in times of great calamity, when a dreadful war threatened to thrust its harpoon into the breasts of two enemy countries, or cholera with its sling was preparing to hurl death and corruption into entire cities. The oldest beachcombers would frown gravely as they explained that these two phantoms [...] were the spirit of the earth and the spirit of the sea, whose majestic forms would appear in the sky during the great revolutions of nature, and who were joined together by eternal friendship, the rarity and glory of which have astonished the endless cable of generations. It was said that, flying side by side, like two Andean condors, they liked to hover in concentric circles among the layers of the atmosphere nearest to the sun; that in those regions they lived on the purest essence of light; that with great reluctance they decided to direct their vertical flight down towards the orbit in which the fear-stricken human globe deliriously revolves, inhabited by cruel spirits who massacre one another on the fields where battle rages (when they are not treacherously and perfidiously killing one another with the dagger of hatred or ambition in the middle of towns), and who feed on beings as full of life as themselves, but lower down in the scale of existence. (*Chant III*, 1)

In this passage Lautréamont juxtaposes two different ways of life. On the one hand, that of the native South Americans, featuring a romantic and animistic conception of the “spirit of the earth and the spirit of the sea” in which nature is eternally and harmonically unified, symbolized in native pagan metaphor by two Andes condors. One of the earliest texts in which the Orient is passionately introduced, Breton’s *Introduction au discours sur le peu de réalité* (“introduction on the scarceness of reality”) from 1924-25, features passages appearing to have been copied directly from Lautréamont’s piece: Breton invokes a genius, a pair of birds flying in spherical light, with the disenchantment of the modern western world beneath them. Bonnet’s comment on Breton’s *Introduction* could also be read with respect to Lautréamont’s depiction of life before the Europeans arrived and committed the original sin: “from this Orient of innocence that Breton invokes, a red dawn lights up; the myth of the paradise lost is not far.”⁴¹

Lautréamont attributes another way of life to the Europeans. These unsolicited visitors came to plunder (“the oldest beachcombers”), and are afraid and puzzled by the wild nature to which they cannot relate (“would frown gravely”). Even after turning the original paradise into a wreck, these pirates nonetheless

continued to empty the soil of its natural resources through colonization, legitimizing their criminal endeavor through the mission to civilize. What they actually brought to the new lands, however, were the already-mentioned cholera epidemics during the civil war. Instead of living harmoniously in the land they robbed, they massacre one another, as if foreshadowing the Surrealists' own experience during World War I. Worse, their base motives lead them to commit stealth murders within the city walls. To most native cultures, personal ambition and the ego had no place in an animistic cosmos.

The Surrealists had every reason to read this passage in this dichotomy of noble savages and morally corrupt white men. The aforementioned article by Alvaro Guillot-Muñoz on Lautréamont's childhood stressed the divisive role of the civil war among white men: "it was at the time of the fighting between Unitarians and Federalists; a fratricidal war that sealed the separation of the peoples living around the Rio de la Plata."⁴² Furthermore, this schematic juxtaposition of good and evil followed the same binary as their own open letters to the evil Roman Pope and the good anti-Pope, the Dalai Lama, whom they addressed with a very similar emphasis on the purity of his spirit. Again, one can only wonder how similar the structural framework of such a clear-cut dichotomy really is to the imperialist and bourgeois thinking the Surrealists so violently rejected, even if its values are inversed.

Second Oriental Close Reading of the Chants—Noble Savages, Corrupt Europeans

The dichotomy of noble savages and morally corrupt westerners characterizes the entirety of the *Chants*. Another highly explicit passage reads:

Those who call themselves your friends are struck with consternation when they see you, pale and stooping, in theatres, in public places, in churches, or with your two sinewy thighs pressed against that horse which gallops only by night as it carries its phantom-master, wrapped in his long, black cloak. (*Chants* I, 13)

The Surrealists would have recognized that the theater and the church, symbols of occidental culture and religion, seem deliberately chosen to emphasize the inversion of city and wilderness, of power and inferiority. At the beginning of the section, the civilized city dwellers feel empowered by their buildings and the culture they represent to despise the outsider they treacherously call a friend. But as night falls Lautréamont switches the focus entirely to the dark horseman, as if to suggest the disappearance of the city buildings. Suddenly the city dwellers are frightened by this pagan apparition, reminiscent of the black rider in Carl Maria

von Weber's romantic opera *Der Freischütz* (which Robert Wilson, Tom Waits, and William Burroughs re-staged in the 1990s as the musical *Black Rider*). As the quoted passage continues, Maldoror cries out his hatred for the western city dwellers who are disconnected from the original harmony of Nature, the God of animistic thought. Everything they bring about is evil:

O sad remnant of an immortal intelligence, which God created with so much love! You have engendered only curses more frightful than the sight of ravenous panthers. For my part, I would prefer to have my eyelids stuck down, to have a body without legs or arms, to have murdered a man, than to be you! Because I hate you.

He further explains this hatred, questioning the westerners' presence and the moral right behind their arrival, and concludes his argument with the recommendation for these city dwellers to return home:

What right do you have to come to this earth and pour scorn on those who live on it, rotten wreck buoyed up by skepticism? If you do not like it here, you should return to the spheres from where you came. A city-dweller should not reside in a village, like a foreigner.
(*Chants* I, 13)

This passage remains cryptic unless we identify Maldoror with a native South American who reacts to European colonization; Maldoror asks by what right the city dwellers came to these lands to ridicule those who originally lived in them. Historically the Europeans legitimized their mission to civilize and to bring religion through the declared inferiority of the natives they encountered. It was precisely against this belief, widely accepted in France and Europe at the time, that the Surrealists rebelled.⁴³ When Maldoror tells the urban Europeans to return to their corrupted spheres and calls them permanent foreigners in the villages, he definitely speaks with the voice of a South American native. It is clear that in reading this passage the Surrealists would have sided with Maldoror and the native South Americans.

Even if Breton had warned against the direct identification of Maldoror with Lautréamont, the mechanism of identification and demarcation resembled the Surrealists' own anti-colonial activity against the Rif War in Morocco. Lautréamont lets his protagonist Maldoror speak up against colonization and its aftermath, and by virtue of this, he excludes himself from the genealogy of colonizers to which he *de*

facto belongs. Analogously, the Surrealists, most of them French, excluded themselves from the community of French colonizers by letting their anti-war tracts speak up against the colonial war in Morocco.⁴⁴

Here the power of projection that exalts Lautréamont to the top of their pantheon can be observed: by removing Lautréamont from the company of occidental writers and placing him in a shrine, he is freed of the “blood-sin” of European descent. If the Surrealists had accepted this redemption for Lautréamont, their idol and brother-in-arms, they could more easily accept it for themselves, and thereby no longer consider themselves French, in the sense of belonging to the nation of oppressors.

The Oriental Plot of the Chants – A Raid from Montevideo to Paris

We should aim at reconstructing the Surrealists’ reading of the *Chants*. The development of the geographical setting throughout its plot indicates that the Surrealists took the “mouth of the Plata” River at the end of the first canto as a bridgehead for Maldoror’s imminent oriental invasion of Paris in the final canto. Between the two cantos the setting changes and Maldoror appears in different locations. While he clandestinely sneaks around Paris to observe but not intervene with the population, his movements can be read as the paths of a predator circling his prey: “Maldoror is a man of the periphery. He marauds at the fringes of society, penetrates it surreptitiously to claim victims,” as scholar Hidehiro Tachibana has written.⁴⁵ The final showdown begins in the sixth canto. Maldoror enters Paris, as Breton wrote, “in the very light of the apocalypse.”⁴⁶ He is the avenger from the Orient, the non-western Other for whom the Surrealists longed. Acting as a nemesis, Maldoror directs his wrath against the two nations most responsible for the subjection of the Orient and the colonized world—England and France.

Maldoror seduces the young Mervyn, first-born male heir to a respectable English family living in Paris. Maldoror charms the boy with his letters until he is ready to give up the bourgeois values of his parents and agrees to meet Maldoror. At dawn, Maldoror kidnaps his victim, tortures him cruelly and whirls what is left of him across the Parisian sky onto the cupola of the Panthéon. There, on top of the symbol of French grandeur that also holds many of the nation’s greatest men in its crypt, the skeleton of the boy withers, a gruesome reminder for all the students of the Quartier Latin who, the book tells us, speak a short prayer every time they go by. For the Surrealists in Paris, the sight of the detested Panthéon might have become more bearable after reading Lautréamont, since they could look out for the remains of the young Mervyn.

The Orient in the Poésies

Lautréamont's second and final work, the *Poésies*, is just as oriental as the *Chants*. It was equally crucial to the Surrealists who had re-published it in 1919, transcribing it by hand from what they believed to be last remaining copy. Like the *Chants*, it attacks and ridicules the dogma of the Académie Française and bourgeois literary standards in an inventive manner. The *Poésies*, which lack a concrete narrative and are made up of philosophical sentences, can be regarded as crucially oriental in two ways. First, the *Poésies* offer a sustained polemical critique of established Western literature, shaking the very foundation of the cultural superiority with which the European colonizers legitimized their global presence and subsequent economic domination. Second, Lautréamont uses a technique that one could describe in Situationist terms as *détournement*. It consists of the slight alteration of famous quotes from recognized authors, giving them an opposite or at least a very different meaning.

If the *Poésies* represents one continuous judgment of Western literature, it is for the most part a condemnation. The stoic pose Lautréamont strikes is directed against the westerner's economic and cultural deployment across the world. Their action is devoid of any ethical basis or humility found in the so-called "primitive" indigenous cultures Lautréamont lauded so intensely in the *Chants*: "the revolutions of empires, the phases of time, the nations, the conquerors of knowledge, all this comes from a crawling atom, lasts only a day, destroys the spectacle of the universe through all ages."⁴⁷

More specifically, his polemic attacks on the foundation of modern western culture are primarily directed against famous writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For Lautréamont it seems as if technical progress, positivism, the social advent of the bourgeoisie, and imperial geopolitics have tainted the literary production of their times:

Since Racine, poetry has not made a millimeter's progress. It has lost ground. Thanks to whom? To the Great Soft-Heads of our age. Thanks to the sissies, Chateaubriand, the Melancholy Mohican; Senancourt, the Man in Petticoats; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Surly Socialist; Anne Radcliffe, the Spectre-Crazed; Edgar Poe, the Mameluke of Alcoholic Dreams; Mathurin, the Crony of Darkness; George Sand, the Circumcised Hermaphrodite; Théophile Gautier, the Incomparable Grocer; Leconte, the Devil's Captive; Goethe, the Suicide who makes you weep; Sainte-Beuve, the Suicide who makes you laugh; Lamartine, the Tearful Stork; Lermontov, the Roaring Tiger;

Victor Hugo, the Gloomy Green Echalas; Misckiewicz, the Imitator of Satan; Musset, the Fop who didn't wear an intellectual's shirt; and Byron, the Hippopotamus of Infernal Jungles.⁴⁸

Next to the outright polemics there are also numerous dichotomies of good and bad, reminiscent of the juxtaposition of western and native-animistic life models in the *Chants*. As early as the third sentence, Lautréamont says of Ancient Greece: "I shall accept Euripides and Sophocles; but I do not accept Aeschylus."⁴⁹ As previously mentioned, the Surrealists repeatedly drew up similar charts, entitled "Lisez – Ne lisez pas," into which they placed the names of famous authors.⁵⁰ This was intended as a blow against the bourgeoisie, who considered all French literature sacred and proof of the nation's cultural prowess and superiority. Nevertheless the clear-cut dichotomy of acceptable and unacceptable authors seems, with some historical distance, extremely close to the bourgeois practice—which the Surrealists vehemently rejected—of segregating worthwhile high culture from worthless popular culture. Such classification of authors was however absolutely necessary for the Surrealists in the creation of their genealogy.

The Surrealists understood their desire to create a genealogy of predecessors as a mark of distinction prefigured in the *Poésies*. Lautréamont argues for what might be called a hive-mind in today's internet parlance. It denotes a pool of ideas into which all like-minded people pour their thoughts without claiming personal genius or authorship, much along the lines of the collective unconscious which the Surrealists discussed intensively and revealed in the collective game of the *cadavre exquis*: "poetry must be made by everyone. Not by one. Poor Hugo! Poor Racine! Poor Coppée! Poor Corneille! Poor Boileau! Poor Scarron! Tics, tics and tics!"⁵¹ Breton in particular seems to have felt the echoes of those tics resonating: "certainly, nothing subdues me as much as Lautréamont's disappearance behind his works and I always have in mind his inexorable: 'tics, tics and tics.'"⁵²

Lautréamont does not stop at devastating criticism or good/evil classifications of literature. He dares to improve upon the great literary works. In a letter from 1870, which the Surrealists knew, Lautréamont describes his ambition regarding the *Poésies*: "I pull apart the most beautiful poems of Lamartine, of Victor Hugo, of Alfred de Musset, of Byron and of Baudelaire, and I correct them in the sense of hope; I reveal how it should have been done."⁵³

This leads to the second characteristic of the *Poésies* susceptible to an oriental reading by the Surrealists. Lautréamont employs a technique very familiar to the postmodern age, but deemed inventive by the Surrealists in the 1920s, all the more so since the *Poésies* date back to 1870. Not without ostentation, Lautréamont

describes and comments on his technique that consists of altering famous quotes from the canonic works of literature: “plagiarism is necessary. It is implied in the idea of progress. It clasps an author’s sentence tight, uses his expressions, eliminates a false idea, replaces it with the right idea.”⁵⁴ He explicitly names the victims of these alterations in the *Poésies*. Thus it is safe to assume that the Surrealists, who had read most of these referenced classical texts, fully understood the intention behind Lautréamont’s technique, even though they may not have recognized all the original references.

Next to those authors mentioned in the letter and some of his own sentences from the *Chants*, Lautréamont takes by far the greatest number of quotes from the moralists Pascal and Vauvenargues (Naruhiko Teramoto has counted them: 35 quotes from Vauvenargues, 31 from Pascal).⁵⁵ For example, when Vauvenargues writes in his *Réflexions et Maximes*,

One cannot be just, if one is human [...]
The moderation of great men limits only their vices.⁵⁶

Lautréamont’s version in the *Poésies* becomes

One can be just, if one is not human [...]
The moderation of great men limits only their virtues.⁵⁷

The results of these manipulations are however completely intelligible sentences that pose no challenge to common sense. In this way they differ from the later “absurd” literary productions featuring “meaningless” sentences, as in the works of Alfred Jarry or the Dadaists. The *Poésies*’ intelligible alterations of classical quotations also appealed to the Surrealists since they rejected Dada’s unharnessed absurdity in favor of a more systematized use of the language of dreams or the unconscious, both excluded by positivists.

Lautréamont here systematizes the wreckage of the bourgeois literary canon. By changing words or inverting the order of sentences, he turns the initial meaning on its head, while otherwise retaining the wise tone of a moralizing sentence. Such sentences were taught in schools and were prevalent in bourgeois social contexts, used everywhere from speeches at functions to headline quotes atop of personal letters. They were marks of class distinction, revealing both speaker and audience as well educated and appreciative of their national culture. The Surrealists must have seen that since the meaning of these sentences could be so easily altered, their value in bourgeois practice was open to ridicule. Lautréamont systematically cracked fine

quotes with this technique, yielding not just a single “poem” but an entire book of *Poésies*. The Surrealists could only marvel at this unknown youth who published a book of unrhymed poems, an iconoclastic gesture unthinkable in his time. And surely did they not miss the anti-French, anti-bourgeois dynamic of the *Poésies*. It is here worth remembering Francis Ponge’s comparison of Lautréamont to an Andean condor, ominously flying over the Bibliothèque Nationale, a comparison made in the context of the *Poésies*’ technique.

In the summer of 1925, the year of the Orient, Péret and Eluard used exactly the same technique in their short book *152 proverbes mis au goût du jour*.⁵⁸ Here, the targets of ridicule are not the cultured moralists but their *petit bourgeois* counterparts whom the Surrealists equally despised. The two Surrealists altered 152 idiomatic proverbs redundantly used by the *vox populi* to comment on fate and general facts of life. In this way the common people legitimized and perpetuated their social condition instead of pushing for change. For example, Péret and Eluard changed the proverb “Il faut battre le fer pendant qu’il est chaud” (one should mold by hammerblows the iron while it is still hot) to “Il faut battre sa mer pendant qu’elle est jeune” (one should beat his mother while she is still young).

The Appropriation of Lautréamont During the Agenda of the Orient

Before the Orient left its mark on surrealist thinking, there had been earlier attempts to appropriate and defend Lautréamont. In March 1922 the “Comité Lautréamont,” an initiative driven by a war victims’ association, announced plans to hold a ceremony on the Place Vendôme for what they wrongly believed was the fiftieth anniversary of the poet’s death. The Surrealists promptly issued an open letter protesting this abuse of Lautréamont for patriotic ends: “no, we will not tolerate Lautréamont being misused to raise the tone of the Fallen for the Fatherland (M.P.L.P., Morts pour la Patrie). We are determined to use all available means to prevent this masquerade.”⁵⁹

The Surrealists were also asked by the editors of *Le disque vert* for a contribution to the special issue on Lautréamont in the spring of 1925. This public inquiry on Lautréamont was firmly rejected by the five Surrealists who answered the call.⁶⁰ As René Crevel’s answer clearly shows, Lautréamont’s works fostered a strong bond between members of the emerging group. Through intensive discussions they could demonstrate to each other that they had each realized the full impact of Lautréamont’s revelations. From their perspective anyone who wished to attain a comparable understanding of Lautréamont would have to convert to both Surrealism and the agenda of the Orient. Anything short of this full embrace

was a mere profanation, even more so when Lautréamont's merit was submitted to public debate. Consequently the Surrealists defended Lautréamont's works against the general public, which they believed was unable to fully appreciate Lautréamont. Philippe Soupault wrote in the special issue: "it is not up to me, nor to anyone else to judge Monsieur le Comte (Are you listening, gentlemen? Who needs my witnesses?). One does not judge Monsieur de Lautréamont. One acknowledges him when he passes by. And one greets him bowing to the ground."

The megalomaniacal character of this exclusive appropriation of Lautréamont became even more evident the following year when Eluard informed the readers of the *Révolution surréaliste* about the special issue. In a pastiche of Lautréamont's own tirade against the Great Soft-Heads, he insults the contributors who dared to offer their judgment of Lautréamont in the special issue of *Le Disque vert*. Even Paul Valéry, for whom the Surrealists held great esteem at the end of the 1910s, received his share. Through their anti-French vociferation, the Surrealists felt they had burned any bridges that might have allowed for a return to mainstream society. They thought they had finally evolved from outsiders to outcasts, and took Lautréamont along on this adventure. Henceforth any individual daring to utter anything concerning Lautréamont without the consent of his rightful heirs, the Surrealists, was considered an enemy of the movement: "let the fire, turning against ourselves, burn us eternally if we cannot destroy the shame that they inflict upon us."⁶¹

There was however a second aspect to this obsessive appropriation of Lautréamont. Along with its purely artistic productions, Surrealism dared to face the world as a movement with a name and a seditious political agenda. There was more pressure for them to define the movement in coherent form, as a concept, as a philosophy, and as an all-encompassing alternative way of life. This posed difficulties since most communications remained in the form of texts, poems, or works of art. The daily lives of the members were only partly controlled by a movement that had no formal leader, although Breton surely could be considered one. How surrealist was it, for example, for painters in the group to make contracts with the established art world? When Joan Miró and Max Ernst collaborated without official license by the group on the expensive stage design of the Ballets Russes in 1926, the more orthodox Surrealists disrupted the show and distributed leaflets condemning the painters.

In this context, Lautréamont appeared to be the ideal Surrealist. There were no known facts about him to contradict the figure that the Surrealists desired and imagined. It was easy to use him as a utopian standard for a perfect Surrealism. And as the criteria for being a genuine Surrealist were barely stated in affirmative terms, it

was easy to condemn not only the general public but also fellow group members for failing to meet the surrealist standard of the phantasmagorical Lautréamont.

Beyond the Orient: Lautréamont as a Symbolic Technology of Power for Internal Politics

The Guillot-Muñoz brothers, who had collected anecdotal testimony from those who had known Lautréamont during his childhood in Uruguay, came to Paris in the late 1920s.⁶² By that time however the wild, exotic, and oriental details about Lautréamont's South American life had become secondary for the Surrealists. They did not need any biographical information to justify their oriental reading of Lautréamont because the Orient as a political agenda had lost significance for them; the movement had evolved politically and was now trying to engage with communism.⁶³

We have seen that Lautréamont attained an exceptional status within the movement. To invoke him had become something almost holy in Surrealism. None of the members would speak of him without the utmost respect and no one dared criticize him. Even as late as 1951, Breton did not shy away from a long controversy with the existentialist philosopher Albert Camus for his critique entitled "Lautréamont or banality."⁶⁴

Lautréamont's position within Surrealism thus took on a function reminiscent of a religious sacrament: he who gained the grace of Lautréamont was a true Surrealist; he who lost it was banished from the movement. Many disputes within the surrealist movement were fought over Lautréamont, many excommunications sealed by invoking him. In many cases however these battles were only symbolic acts and symptoms of complex political motivations that cannot be discussed at length here.⁶⁵

The first victim of an exclusion symbolically performed through Lautréamont was Joseph Delteil. He had answered the *Le disque vert* call for papers in the same way as the other four Surrealists. By the end of the year, his relations with the group had worsened and his exclusion was proclaimed: he was insulted in Eluard's pastiche of Lautréamont's Great Soft-Heads.⁶⁶ Delteil had become an enemy of Lautréamont, hence an enemy of Surrealism.

Philippe Soupault, whose role in the rediscovery of Lautréamont can be traced back to his participation in the hand-copying of the *Poésies* in 1919, also answered the *Le disque vert* inquiry along the surrealist line and was excluded from the group in late 1926. The following spring, he published a volume of Lautréamont's complete works along with an intensive commentary.⁶⁷ Despite the exclusion Soupault may have remained interested in the political reading of Lautréamont from the times of the Orient, as he still intended to politicize him. Somewhat too zealous, he failed to check some of his findings and confused Félix Ducasse, a

political agitator and public orator of the 1860s, with Isidore Ducasse, the Comte de Lautréamont. In April 1927, Aragon, Breton and Eluard published the tract *Lautréamont envers et contre tous* (“Lautréamont by hook or by crook”), in which they denied Soupault the right to speak for and of Lautréamont. On the basis of intensive research, they sneeringly publicized the confusion of Isidore with Félix Ducasse, after which Soupault’s editor retracted his publication from bookstores.⁶⁸

In these two cases, the highly symbolic, even phantasmagorical character of Lautréamont for Surrealism reveals itself in its full light: what had changed in Delteil’s and Soupault’s affiliation with Lautréamont? They were initially considered rightful holders of his legacy while still in the group, and later imposters of the highest degree as soon as they were excluded. Soupault’s historical slip notwithstanding, it would have been extremely difficult for the remaining Surrealists to rationally prove that the two renegades now misunderstood Lautréamont. In the Surrealists’ delirious appropriation of Lautréamont the only persons who rightfully deserved him were active members of the group. A man could fall from grace overnight. Again, given the similarities in unconditional, even irrational power at work in both the Surrealists’ exclusions and, for example, medieval excommunications by the Roman Catholic Church, one can only wonder at the internal contradiction within a group that otherwise fiercely condemned religious practices and hierarchies.

Finally, it is in the same tract against Soupault that we see the first evidence of Lautréamont’s elevation to preeminence among Surrealism’s many literary predecessors: “we protest, and we continue to protest that Lautréamont enters History, that he is allotted a place between somebody and somebody, for example between Baudelaire and Rimbaud.”⁶⁹ Lautréamont’s unique status within Surrealism would find more prominent and pronounced expression in Breton’s *Second Manifesto* of 1929-30. To prove its independence and uniqueness as a historical phenomenon, the movement purged from its pantheon of predecessors the better-known biographies they had come to disapprove of. Only Lautréamont, of whom virtually nothing was known, is saved:

I would like to clarify that one has to distrust the cult of men, regardless of how great they appear to be. With one exception: Lautréamont, I do not see anyone who would not have left any ambivalent trace in his life. It is useless to further discuss Rimbaud: Rimbaud was wrong, Rimbaud wanted to fool us [...] Too bad also for Baudelaire [...] Let’s spit, en passant, on Edgar Poe [etc.].⁷⁰

This second manifesto was intended to close the movement's ranks in a great display of unity after the mass exclusions of 1929. The renegades are harshly attacked and insulted for their unreliability in order to maintain the political thrust of the movement as a whole. Some of them tried to join Georges Bataille's journal *Documents* to proclaim an alternative Surrealism. In *Un Cadavre*, named after the 1924 pamphlet against the late Anatole France, the renegades polemically replied to the accusations by the still very much alive Breton. Robert Desnos' contribution "Thomas l'Imposteur" is especially telling. He criticizes Breton of having abused Lautréamont as a tool for social discipline within the group in order to push through his personal and insubstantial goals for Surrealism.⁷¹ In his sketch for a free Surrealism entitled *Third Manifesto of Surrealism*, Desnos argues for the removal of the "Pope" Breton and his inquisition and requests Lautréamont for the true Surrealism.⁷²

Further tensions arose when Breton and the remaining Surrealists were informed that Desnos was holder of a "Carte de vampire permanent," a ticket of permanent vampire. This is the name of the membership pass for a nightclub in Montparnasse called "Maldoror." On February 14, 1930, the Surrealists raided the club. In the brawl that followed René Char is severely wounded by a knife stab in the upper thigh. Jules Monnerot, close to though never a part of Surrealism through his affiliation with Bataille, commented on this incident, using Desnos-like religious metaphors: "to name Maldoror a nightclub was a sacrilege. Exaggerating somewhat, one could say that the most holy of the surrealist group had been compromised, and that they reacted to this offense with violence."⁷³

That same year Louis Aragon tried to bring Lautréamont firmly back under the control of the official movement.⁷⁴ For him the contradiction between the celebration of evil in the *Chants of Maldoror* and the drive for hope and goodness in the *Poésies* could be resolved into a synthesis. Aragon thus intended to include Lautréamont's entire œuvre into the concept of dialectical materialism. This would have positioned him within the agenda of revolution and alongside the political organs of Marxism, with which Surrealism was determined to align itself, now even more so since it had eliminated the members it had deemed counter-revolutionaries. Yet this initiative to anchor Lautréamont in the politics of the moment failed, quashed by the most powerful arm of applied Marxism, the *Cheka* or secret service of the Soviet Union. Shortly after publishing his article on Lautréamont, Aragon traveled to the U.S.S.R. and returned with coercive mandates to abjure crucial foundations such as Freudianism and to submit the movement to the directives of the French Communist Party. After more than a year of Aragon's half-hearted disavowals of these mandates, internal complications, and the spreading of discord

brought about by new initiatives from the Communists, Aragon was finally expelled from the surrealist movement in early 1932. This was undertaken through a bogus trial with manipulated pieces of evidence, ironically reminiscent of the tactics of the communist apparatchik to whom the Surrealists sacrificed Aragon in order to stay independent.

Eluard issued a separate, more personal document that proclaimed his exclusion. It ends with the last sentence from the first book of *Poésies*: “all the water in the sea would not be enough to wash away one intellectual bloodstain.”⁷⁵ Again, the exclusion is sealed by an invocation of Lautréamont. Since this procedure had occurred in recurring patterns, it reveals yet another aspect of the quasi-religious awe Lautréamont provoked in the surrealist imagination. To seal the group’s exclusion in his name was an official act of the highest symbolic value; Lautréamont was invoked with the Maldororian air of a supreme avenging deity.

The critic André Perinaud humorously called the three young editors of *Littérature*, who had rediscovered Lautréamont and laid an important foundation of Surrealism, the “Three Musketeers.”⁷⁶ After Soupault, Aragon was also excluded by invoking Lautréamont. Henceforth only Breton would be the official custodian of Lautréamont. The days of belligerent Lautréamont appropriation were however over. In the 1930s the movement became deeply involved in contemporary politics, from evading Stalinist control to fighting the fascists. It seemed there were more urgent battles to be fought.

Conclusion

Lautréamont became the preeminent forebearer of Surrealism through his inclusion in the movement’s first political agenda, the Orient. His overseas origin predisposed the Surrealists to reread his works from the perspective of their own anti-occidental thinking. This was possible only through the near-complete absence of any biographical data that would have contradicted the figure they desired to see. This made the imagined Lautréamont extremely malleable and easily aligned with other desires after the short agenda of the Orient ceased.

The Surrealists appropriated Lautréamont with increasing vehemence, fashioning him into a quasi-demigod, the utopian Surrealist fighting in their ranks. Again, no biographical data would contradict such a claim. The Surrealists initially united to fend off any outside claims on their idol, thus tightening the coherence of the tentatively emerging group. Later when the movement had stabilized after opting for an affiliation with the political arm of dialectical materialism, Lautréamont was also used against members who had become undesirable. Renegades were denied any right to the model Surrealist and separated from the ideal of Surreality that

Lautréamont represented.

In addition to the obsessive imagination at work in the making of their Lautréamont, it is worth noting three internal contradictions in the Surrealists' practice in relation to their idol. First, there is the problematic racially motivated drive to appropriate Lautréamont because of his place of origin, even if its purpose is to attack the entire system of racial imperialism. Second, the classification of acceptable and unacceptable historical authors that led to the cult of a single genius closely resembles the bourgeois cultural practice against which the Surrealists positioned their narrowing anti-canon of predecessors. Third, the irrational and apodictic seriousness compressed in the symbolic act of the group exclusion and delivered in the name of Lautréamont has elements of the merciless displays of power one would find in medieval ecclesiastic practice or in twentieth-century totalitarian justice, both designated archenemies of Surrealism.

The appropriation of Lautréamont by the Surrealists in the mid-1920s remains an interesting early case study of entangled history. Particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, critics in both France and Uruguay tended to claim Lautréamont as a national hero, sometimes forcefully deployed against the other nation. These claims proved easy to advance since fundamental biographical data remained missing until the 1970s. The Surrealists' appropriation arose from the same lack of data and desiring projection but developed in a direction opposite that of most of their compatriots. They did not claim Lautréamont for France but against France, and his South American origin was not read as a sign of his belonging to Uruguay, but rather paved the way for his entry into Surrealism.

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1 Michel Pierrssens, "Ducasse savant," in *La cuestión de los orígenes/La quête des origines: Lautréamont & Laforgue*, Block de Behar, Caradec, Lefort, eds. (Montevideo: Academia Nacional de Letras del Uruguay, 1993), 204.

2 The reader may refer to a recent essay explaining the fascination Lautréamont held for surrealist artistic production: Shane McCorristine, "Lautréamont and the Haunting of Surrealism," *Collegium: Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences* 5 (2009): 31-49. I took notice of this publication only after finishing revision of the present essay and agree with what the author describes as Lautréamont's influence on "intra-surrealist strife."

3 The definition of the surrealist "Orient" will be extensively discussed later in the text. For the sake of readability, the quotation marks around the Orient will be henceforth omitted.

- 4 The term is used here in the sense Michel Foucault conceived it, first in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).
- 5 Le Comte de Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror* (Paris: 1869); Isidore Ducasse, *Poésies* (Paris: Librairie Gabric, 1870). All English translations of Lautréamont in this text are from *Maldoror and Poems*, translated by Paul Knight (London: Penguin, 1978). All other translations, either of Surrealists or secondary literature, are my own.
- 6 Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror* (Paris: Léon Genonceaux, 1890); Ruben Darío, *Los Raros* (Buenos Aires: Escapa-Calpe, 1952 [1896]).
- 7 Alvaro Guillot-Muñoz, *Lautréamont à Montevideo* (Paris: La Quinzaine littéraire, 1972), 49-51.
- 8 Juan M. Filatigas, *Impresiones Poemáticas* (Montevideo: La Cruz del Sur, 1927), 74. See also Pedro Leandro Ipuche, *Isidoro Ducasse (conde de Lautréamont), poeta uruguayo* (Montevideo: Peña Hnos., 1926).
- 9 *Le disque vert*, Special Issue: "Le Cas Lautréamont" (Spring 1925).
- 10 André Malraux, "La genèse des Chants de Maldoror," *Le disque vert*: 119.
- 11 Alvaro Guillot-Muñoz, "Isidore Ducasse (Comte de Lautréamont)," *Revue de l'Amérique latine* (Feb 1925): 98-105; Alvaro and Gervasio Guillot-Muñoz, *Lautréamont et Laforgue* (Montevideo: Agencia general de librería y publicaciones, 1925); Alvaro Guillot-Muñoz, *Lautréamont à Montevideo*, op. cit.; François Alicot, "A propos des 'Chants de Maldoror,' Le vrai visage d'Isidore Ducasse," *Le Mercure de France* (Jan 1, 1928).
- 12 Pablo Neruda, "Lautréamont reconquistado," in *Cantos Ceremoniales* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1961), 87-91. Original Spanish: "Era sólo la muerte de París que llegaba / a preguntar por el indómito uruguayo, / por el niño feroz que quería volver, / que quería sonreír hacia Montevideo, / era sólo la muerte que venía a buscarlo."
- 13 François Caradec, *Isidore Ducasse: Comte de Lautréamont* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975 [1970]).
- 14 Jean-Jacques Lefrère, *Le visage de Lautréamont* (Paris: Pierre Hory, 1977), 48ff. The authenticity of the photograph is challenged by McCorristine, 40.
- 15 Emir Rodríguez Monegal and Leyla Perrone-Moisés, "Isidore Ducasse et la rhétorique espagnole," *Poétique* 55 (Sept., 1983), Paris; "Lautréamont español," *Vuelta* 79-80 (June-July, 1983), México. Lautréamont wrote by hand into a Spanish translation of the *Iliad*, which was much more violent and (homo)erotic than contemporary French translations. Influences on his *Chants* can be traced back more compellingly to this than to French translations, leading to the belief that he was able to read Homer in Spanish.
- 16 Emir Rodríguez Monegal and Leyla Perrone-Moisés, *Lautréamont Austral* (Montevideo: Brecha, 1995).
- 17 Monegal and Perrone-Moisés, *Lautréamont Austral*, 93.
- 18 Marguerite Bonnet, "L'Orient dans le surréalisme: mythe et réel," *Revue de littérature comparée* 4 (Oct-Dec 1980): 411-424. A short summary is in *Vers l'action politique*. Archives du Surréalisme II, Marguerite Bonnet, ed. (Paris: Gallimard 1988), 7-9. See also *Tracts Surréalistes et Déclarations Collectives 1922-1939*, José Pierre, ed. (Paris: Le terrain vague, 1980); Georges Durozoi, *Histoire du Mouvement Surréaliste* (Paris: Hazan, 1997), 90-95; Maurice Nadeau, *Histoire du Surréalisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1964), 67-90.
- 19 André Breton, *La Révolution Surréaliste* 1 (Dec 1, 1924): 31.
- 20 "Réunion du 23 janvier 1925 au bar Certà," in *Bureau de recherches surréalistes: Cahier de la permanence octobre 1924 - avril 1925*, Archives du Surréalisme I, Paule Thévenin, ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 113.
- 21 "Réunion," in *Bureau*, 114.

- 22 Cf. to the following documents in the same volume, and Durozoi, 92-95.
- 23 *La Révolution Surréaliste* 3 (April 15, 1926): 16f.
- 24 Durozoi, 95. Bonnet, "L'Orient," 416f.
- 25 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 1 and 4.
- 26 "Lettre ouverte à M. Paul Claudel, Ambassadeur de France au Japon" (July 1, 1925), in *Tracts Surréalistes*, 49ff.
- 27 For Germany as part of the Orient see Paul Eluard, "La suppression de l'esclavage," *La Révolution Surréaliste* 3 (Apr 15, 1926): 19; Bonnet, "L'Orient," 419 ff.; Nadeau, 79.
- 28 Bonnet, "L'Orient," 424.
- 29 Entry in Péret's handwriting for December 1, 1924, in *Bureau*, 65.
- 30 Quoted by Jean-Jacques Lefrère, *Isidore Ducasse: auteur des Chants de Maldoror, par le comte de Lautréamont* (Paris: Fayard, 1998), 7.
- 31 Quoted by Monegal and Perrone-Moisés, *Lautréamont Austral*, 97.
- 32 Francis Ponge, "Adaptez à vos bibliothèques le dispositif Maldoror-Poésies," *Cahiers du Sud* 275 (1st semester 1946): 4.
- 33 André Breton, "Les Chants de Maldoror," in *Œuvres complètes* I, Marguerite Bonnet, ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 234; Breton, *Nadja*, in *Œuvres complètes* I, 651.
- 34 Silvia Bovenschen, *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit: exemplarische Untersuchungen zu kulturgeschichtlichen und literarischen Präsentationsformen des Weiblichen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979).
- 35 Bonnet, "L'Orient," 415.
- 36 Alexandre Dumas (Père), *Mémoires de Garibaldi* (Paris: Le Vaseur, 1910 [1860]); Dumas (Père), *Montevideo ou Une nouvelle Troie* (Paris: N. Chaix, 1850).
- 37 Alvaro Guillot-Muñoz, "Isidore Ducasse," 102.
- 38 Louis Aragon, "Fragments d'une Conférence (faite à Madrid, à la Residencia de Estudiantes le 18 avril 1925)," *La Révolution Surréaliste* 4 (July 15, 1926): 24.
- 39 Sylvain-Christian David, *Isidore Lautréamont*, (Paris: Seghers, 1992), 246; the definition of "rastaquouère" is translated from *Le Petit Robert: Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Paris: Robert, 1989).
- 40 André Breton, *Manifeste du surréalisme*, in *Œuvres complètes* I, 313.
- 41 Bonnet, "L'Orient," 414.
- 42 Alvaro Guillot-Muñoz, "Isidore Ducasse," 102.
- 43 Even as late as 1931, the Surrealists campaigned against the "Exposition Coloniale Internationale" and its display of European achievements in the colonies.
- 44 One tract the Surrealists co-signed was Henri Barbusse's "Appel aux travailleurs intellectuels," see Bonnet, "L'Orient," 412. Another tract against the Rif War was "La Révolution d'abord et toujours," *La révolution surréaliste* 5 (Oct 15, 1925): 31.
- 45 Hidehiro Tachibana, "'Une vieille araignée de la grande espèce' et la narration moderne: Un essai de lecture post-colonialiste des *Chants de Maldoror*," *Cahiers Lautréamont* 63/64 (2002): 344. The evolution of the scene sets is analyzed by Jean-Luc Steinmetz, "Le journal imaginaire d'Isidore Ducasse, auteur des *Chants de Maldoror*," in *La cuestión de los orígenes*, 109-120.
- 46 André Breton, "Isidore Ducasse, Comte de Lautréamont," in *Anthologie de l'humour noir*, in *Œuvres complètes* II, Marguerite Bonnet, ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 987.
- 47 *Maldoror and Poems*, 286.
- 48 *Maldoror and Poems*, 265 ff.
- 49 *Maldoror and Poems*, 255.
- 50 Just one example is *Catalogue de la librairie José Corti annonçant les publications surréalistes* (Paris: José

- Corti, 1931), back cover.
- 51 *Maldoror and Poems*, 279.
- 52 Breton, *Nadja*, 651.
- 53 Isidore Ducasse, letter to the editor Verbroeckhoven (February 21, 1870), in *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: José Corti, 1961), 400.
- 54 *Maldoror and Poems*, 274.
- 55 Naruhiko Teramoto, "Le statut de Pascal et de Vauvenargues dans les *Poésies*. La 'poésie' à travers et au-delà de la maxime," *Cahiers Lautréamont* 39/40 (1996): 289-303.
- 56 Quoted by Teramoto, "Le statut," 294f. Original French: "On ne peut être juste, si l'on n'est humain"; "La modération des grands hommes ne borne que leurs vices."
- 57 Quoted by Teramoto, "Le statut," 294f. Original French: "On peut être juste, si on n'est pas humain"; "La modération des grands hommes ne borne que leurs vertus."
- 58 Paul Eluard and Benjamin Péret, *152 proverbes mis au goût de jour*, incl. in Paul Eluard, *Œuvres complètes*, Lucien Scheler, ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 153-161.
- 59 "Lettre ouverte au Comité Lautréamont" (March 1, 1922), in *Tracts surréalistes*, 8.
- 60 Philippe Soupault, "Mon cher ami Ducasse," *Le disque vert*: 10-13; Joseph Delteil, "Le Comte," *Le disque vert*: 40. René Crevel, "Lautréamont, ta bague d'aurore nous protégé," *ibid.*: 46f.; André Breton, *Le disque vert*: 90 ff.; Paul Eluard, *Le disque vert*: 95.
- 61 Paul Eluard, "Le Cas Lautréamont: d'après le 'disque vert,'" *La Révolution Surréaliste* 6 (Mar 1, 1926): 3.
- 62 Alvaro Guillot-Muñoz, *Lautréamont à Montevideo*, 41-45.
- 63 A 1926 essay heavily concerned with Marxism testifies to this: André Breton, "Légitime défense," *La Révolution surréaliste* 8 (Dec 1, 1926): 30-36, 35: "We are not contradicting ourselves with regard to the use of certain expletive words like 'Orient.'"
- 64 Albert Camus, "Lautréamont ou la banalité," *Cahiers du Sud* 285 (1st semestre 1951); André Breton, "Sucre Jaune," *Arts. Beaux-Arts, Littérature, Spectacles* 328 (Oct 12, 1951): 1 and 4. The controversy dragged on until 1952.
- 65 My master's thesis dealt exclusively with the exclusions of Pierre Naville, Louis Aragon and Salvador Dalí: *Die surrealistische Bewegung und die Beziehung zu den Mitgliedern in Paris in den 1920er und 1930er Jahren. Die Ausschlüsse von Pierre Naville, Louis Aragon und Salvador Dalí*, (Humboldt University Berlin, 2006).
- 66 Eluard, "Le Cas Lautréamont," 3.
- 67 Philippe Soupault, *Œuvres complètes du Comte de Lautréamont (Isidore Ducasse): Les Chants de Maldoror. Poésies. Correspondances* (Paris: Au Sans-Pareil, 1927).
- 68 Critical commentary by Philippe Bernier in André Breton, *Œuvres complètes* I, 1724.
- 69 Louis Aragon, André Breton, Paul Eluard, "Lautréamont envers et contre tout" (April 1927), in *Tracts surréalistes*, 65-67.
- 70 André Breton, *Second Manifeste du Surréalisme*, in *Œuvres complètes* I, 784.
- 71 Robert Desnos, "Thomas l'Imposteur," in *Œuvres*, Marie-Claire Dumas, ed., (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 480.
- 72 Robert Desnos, "Troisième Manifeste du Surréalisme," in *Œuvres*, 487.
- 73 Jules Monnerot, *La Poésie moderne et le Sacré* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), 206.
- 74 Louis Aragon, "Contribution à l'avortement des études maldororiennes," *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution* 2 (Oct 1930): 22-24.
- 75 Paul Eluard, "Certificat," in *Tracts Surréalistes*, 230. See also the collectively signed tract "Paillasse!"

Tracts Surréalistes, 223-228.

76 André Breton, *Entretiens 1913-1952 avec André Parinaud*, in *Œuvres complètes* III, Marguerite Bonnet and Étienne-Alain Hubert, eds., (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 444.