



Word & Image

A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry

ISSN: 0266-6286 (Print) 1943-2178 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/twim20>

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To cite this article: Gavin Parkinson (2016) Arrows of surrealist desire: re-reading J. G. Ballard's Unlimited Dream Company, *Word & Image*, 32:3, 294-310, DOI: [10.1080/02666286.2016.1188348](https://doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2016.1188348)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2016.1188348>



Published online: 02 Sep 2016.



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Arrows of surrealist desire: re-reading J. G. Ballard's *Unlimited Dream Company*

GAVIN PARKINSON

Abstract J. G. Ballard's novel *The Unlimited Dream Company* (1979) has not received as much critical attention as the books by Ballard that preceded or came after it, perhaps because it is even less easy than his other fiction to categorize, entering a world of the fantastic and erotic as opposed to the more familiar science fiction, dystopic, and urban terrains mapped by the author. In the scholarship on the novel the central protagonist 'Blake' has been connected with some justification to the figure of William Blake, yet this article shows how that identification can only be fully understood by recognizing the role played by pre-Surrealist writing and Surrealist art as the means towards forging Blake's character and behaviour. Using both Surrealist theoretical texts and those by and on the Comte de Lautréamont, it is argued that *The Unlimited Dream Company* creates a mythic figure and a world that are motivated by desire as the Surrealists understood that term. This article enhances and elaborates that reading by demonstrating that in order to give the freest possible rein to the idea of a world given over to desire, Ballard harnessed the art of Hans Bellmer and Max Ernst and, in doing so, achieved the aim of Surrealism to create a new myth.

Keywords surrealism, desire, unconscious, myth

At the close of her book *J. G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination* (2009), Jeannette Baxter recommends research into the significance, for Ballard's novel *The Unlimited Dream Company* (1979), of the watercolours by William Blake inspired by *Revelations* that share the title *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed in Sun* (1805–10) (figure 1). She asks: '[w]hat bearing does Blake's apocalyptic artistry have on Ballard's Surrealist imagination?'¹ This novel is a relatively overlooked constituent of Ballard's *œuvre*, probably because its entrance into the realm of the fantastic makes it such an odd read (which is saying something for Ballard) and hard to place even in this author's legendarily genre-disobedient output.

When *The Unlimited Dream Company* is discussed, it is usually in terms of Blake's *Milton a Poem* (1804–1810/11), which is exactly contemporary with the watercolours mentioned by Baxter. Both poem and watercolours can be seen as sources for the demonic, libidinous, winged protagonist of Ballard's novel, perhaps an ancestor of Blake's Milton who journeys 'in soft sexual delusions/Of varied beauty'.² Elsewhere, the 'Dragon red' and the erotic flowering of spring that attends the Nightingale's song in Blake's poem, where the rose awakens and 'bursts her crimson curtained bed', could have fed similar episodes of flight and sexual arousal in *The Unlimited Dream Company*.³ The lengthiest reading of the novel, carried out recently by Alistair Cormack, is also an analysis of its Blakean register, in which Ballard is thought of as drawing on Blake not merely 'to represent a visionary rejection of capitalism and [...] a replacement of it by the human world of the imagination',⁴ but more specifically as 'responding to the appropriation of William Blake in the 1960s and 1970s,⁵ like other important British novelists of the time, as 'a means of retaining a commitment to social revolution without appearing to endorse a variety of political and

aesthetic positions that had become associated with authoritarianism or failure'.⁶

Although it is true, as Cormack says following David Punter's briefer, comparable post-structuralist reading in the 1980s,⁷ that the protagonist of Ballard's novel is driven by desire—with the aim of '[r]ejecting, defeating, seducing and consuming the boundaries made from the oedipal structures of the family and the exchange structures of capitalism'—then neither his nor Ballard's purposes are as directly and self-consciously politically revolutionary as that phrase sounds; Ballard's position, after all, was not at all revolutionary in the classic leftist sense.⁸ Furthermore, now that, thanks to Baxter's work, the Surrealist Ballard has fully emerged, it is not really accurate to say as Cormack does that 'the novel does not fit comfortably into any available paradigm of reading Ballard's work'.⁹ Indeed, the overwhelming motif of desire that quickens the pulse of *The Unlimited Dream Company* is one common to both Surrealism and William Blake and it is that conjunction in the novel that I will expose in this article.

Surrealism and William Blake

Although the importance of William Blake to *The Unlimited Dream Company* is established and evident, no discussion has taken place up to now as to how far the novel draws upon specific Surrealist ideas, paintings, and literature, even though Surrealism forms a bridge as straight as an arrow between Blake and Ballard. From its beginnings in the 1920s up to the 1950s—when a watercolour by Blake close in spirit to *Milton a Poem*, entitled *The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea* (c.1805) (figure 2), was reproduced in André Breton's book *L'Art magique* (1957)—Surrealism often cited Blake

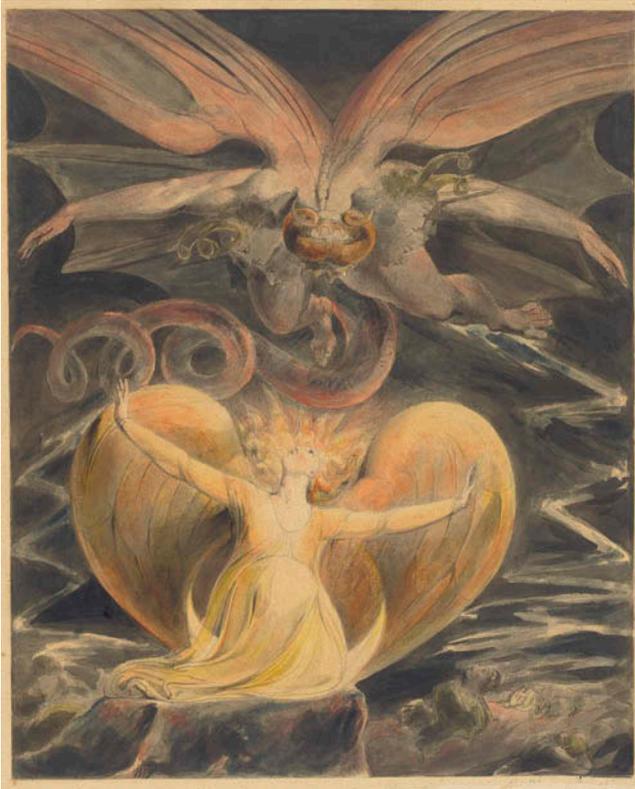


Figure 1. William Blake, *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun*, 1805–10. Ink and watercolour on paper. 40.8 × 33.7 cm. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

alongside the Comte de Lautréamont, the Marquis de Sade and so on as a precursor.¹⁰ If Breton displayed at times some timidity towards his work that was probably because Blake had long been slotted into a mainly non-Surrealist pantheon (one that included Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche and Robert Browning) by André Gide, who had been Blake's main advocate in France since 1914.¹¹ In the 1930s, an image from Blake's *First Book of Urizen* (1794) appeared in the Surrealist-dominated review *Minotaure* alongside an essay by Paul Éluard devoted to the illustration of poetry, and Surrealism's bond with Blake was strengthened definitively soon after with the arrival in 1936 of the movement in English-speaking countries.¹² The New York Museum of Modern Art exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* had seven entries under Blake's name in the catalogue, including the 1797 engravings for Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (a book described by Breton as 'Surrealist from cover to cover',¹³ even though he never mentioned the version with Blake's illustrations), while the *International Exhibition of Surrealism* in London also in 1936 prompted much reflection on Blake as precursor.¹⁴ In the years that followed, both Joan Miró and André Masson were forthcoming about their admiration for Blake, which bordered on reverence in the case of Masson who had been introduced to the works of the English mystic by Louis Aragon in the early 1920s and who drew the first of several Blake portraits in 1938, shortly before embarking on a series of 'visionary



Figure 2. William Blake, *The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea*, c.1805. Ink and watercolour on paper. 40.1 × 35.6 cm. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

portraits' that must have taken their cue from Blake's 'visionary heads' of about 1820.¹⁵

His close friendship with Masson helps to account for Georges Bataille's quotation of Blake around the same time.¹⁶ Bataille's attraction to the English poet was much more powerful and emotive than that felt by most in Breton's group. In the 1957 essay that he devoted to Blake (originally a book review in *Critique*), he wrote of the 'maladjusted quality' and 'indifference to common rules' evident in his work.¹⁷ Sympathetic towards Surrealism by that time, Bataille was largely concerned in his essay with a repudiation of Jungian readings of Blake, particularly that of W. P. Wittcutt then-recent book, of which he stated: 'it is precisely because it is reasoned—even rational—that it remains outside and beyond the shapeless emotion which Blake wanted to convey'.¹⁸ Typically, it was the 'incoherence' and 'poetic disorder' of Blake's writings that Bataille prized and that he felt should be salvaged from academic and psychoanalytic interpretation.¹⁹ Unlike the Jungians he saw no underlying system in Blake's poetry but viewed it through the same means he had recently urged on Surrealism, as 'autonomous' or freed of traditional myth, and therefore delivering neither religion nor myth but an 'absence of myth': a way of rendering myth ironically, that is, through poetry to 'reveal the void'.²⁰ Lamenting that Blake 'has only recently been appreciated by a very few people in France', he expressed amazement that 'so little store should have been set by Blake's relationship with Surrealism'.²¹

This recent appreciation of Blake mentioned by Bataille had come in the form of the Paris leg of the touring British Council exhibition *William Blake: 1757–1827*, which took place in April–May 1947 at the galerie René Drouin. Former Surrealist Philippe Soupault had contributed an essay to the catalogue. Following his acrimonious estrangement from the group in the twenties, Soupault had co-translated *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1789) for the centenary of Blake’s death in 1927, and published a study of him the following year. The catalogue further demonstrates the fascination exercised by Blake on French writers and artists by recording its thanks for the support given the exhibition by twenty-four individuals, including Bataille, Joë Bousquet, Georges Braque, Breton, Albert Camus, Éluard, André Gide, Fernand Léger, Pierre Mabille, André Malraux, Henri Matisse, Jean Paulhan, Pablo Picasso, Raymond Queneau, Jean-Paul Sartre, Philippe Soupault, Jean Wahl, and Christian Zervos.²² For the benefit of the audience of *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, Breton sought to illustrate Surrealism’s aims by quoting two lines from Jean Wahl’s essay in the Drouin catalogue taken from the very same *Milton a Poem* acknowledged as a major inspiration for Ballard’s *Unlimited Dream Company*: ‘Rejetons la démonstration rationnelle pour la foi dans le savoir/Rejetons les haillons pourris de la mémoire pour l’inspiration.’²³

Whatever Blake’s up and down fortunes within Surrealism as a precursor, we can see some continuity from his demand, steered by mysticism, ‘To cast aside from Poetry, all that is not Inspiration/ That it no longer shall dare to mock with the aspersion of Madness/ Cast on the Inspired’²⁴ up to Surrealism’s insistent stand against the ‘absolute rationalism that is still in vogue’,²⁵ as Breton put it in the *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), under the sway of psychoanalysis:

Under the pretence of civilization and progress, we have managed to banish from the mind everything that may rightly or wrongly be termed superstition, or fancy; forbidden is any kind of search for truth which is not in conformance with accepted practices. It was, apparently, by pure chance that a part of our mental world which we pretended not to be concerned with any longer—and, in my opinion by far the most important part—has been brought back to light. For this we must give thanks to the discoveries of Sigmund Freud. On the basis of these discoveries a current of opinion is finally forming by means of which the human explorer will be able to carry his investigations much further, authorized as he will henceforth be not to confine himself solely to the most summary realities. [...] If the depths of our mind contain within it strange forces capable of augmenting those on the surface, or of waging a victorious battle against them, there is every reason to seize them—first to seize them, then, if need be, to submit them to the control of our reason.²⁶

It has been argued that Blake was *subject* to his visions, a pathology that contrasts with the Surrealists’ ultimate aim (in spite of talk of being ‘simple receptacles of so many echoes, modest *recording instruments*’) given here of ‘seizing’ and ‘controlling’ the matter of the unconscious, but the similarities—their initial unqualified reception offered those ‘strange forces’ mentioned by Breton—are obvious.²⁷ Here lies one means by which passage to Blake across Surrealism

could have been made by Ballard, whose attack on the reductive utilitarianism of logic was a standard position in all of his writings and interviews: ‘[r]eason rationalizes reality for us’, he wrote typically in a 1986 review of a book of dreams, ‘defusing the mysterious, but at the cost of dulling the imagination’.²⁸

But it is his openness to desire in all its forms, even the most excessive, which bonds Blake most completely to Surrealism and Ballard. His most fervent, uncompromising, and notorious remarks on the subject are to be found among the proverbs in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (c.1790): ‘[h]e who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence’,²⁹ and ‘[s]ooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires’,³⁰ while earlier in that book Blake anticipated Nietzsche comprehensively (as Bataille noticed) where he declared, ‘[t]hose who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling./And being restrained it by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire’.³¹ No wonder Masson included Blake’s portrait among his ‘Twenty-two Drawings on the Theme of Desire’, described in 1948.³² But how does desire as Surrealism understood it help foster the events initiated by the ‘Blake’ of Ballard’s *Unlimited Dream Company* and how does Ballard mobilize Surrealist writings and art to give them form?

The Unlimited Dream Company

A maladroit, awkwardly expository first chapter (more like Jeffrey Archer than Ballard), told in the first person and looking back at the week-long events of the novel, introduces Blake, its central figure, an unsuccessful twenty-five-year-old former medical student with a fascination for flight, who therefore shares elements of Ballard’s biography.³³ ‘Inclined to regard the adult world as a boring conspiracy’,³⁴ one that he rejects, Blake already exhibits Surrealist tendencies, while memories of his teenage attempt to copulate with the school cricket pitch, his ‘Pied Piper complex’,³⁵ obsession with and dreams of man-powered flight, and the attempted murder (‘without the slightest hate or anger’) of his fiancée display the messianic and psychotic tendencies that predict the events of the novel whilst casting Blake in the role of unreliable narrator.³⁶ Blake steals a Cessna light aircraft one day, ‘accepting the logic of my dreams’, and crashes it into the River Thames next to Shepperton, from which point we are not sure what is real in the novel and what imagined.³⁷ As he opens the cabin door of the plane he experiences ‘a vision’—what Punter called ‘a still tableau on the riverside lawn’³⁸—in which the seven main characters of the story to come are included, immobile: a vision that Blake compares to ‘looking at an enormous illuminated painting’.³⁹ In these establishing scenes, then, the fantastic status of the story as that term was understood by Tzvetan Todorov—as occupying the duration of reader uncertainty between reality and dream, truth and illusion in what is being witnessed—is married to the Surrealist preoccupation with both the unfettered imagination and the place of painting in exploring it.⁴⁰

Blake is told that he was underwater and clinically dead for several minutes, and, given its return over and over again to

the image described in his account of his vision, the whole novel may well be his fantasy fabricated within those few minutes as attempts were made to revive him through artificial respiration. Blake's 'baptismal' (re)birth from the river leaves traces of oil and blood through the first third of the book and is reminiscent of the one Filippo Tommaso Marinetti describes in the 'Futurist Manifesto' (1909).⁴¹ Avant-gardist intertextuality is extended through the similarity between Joseph Beuys's self-mythologizing autobiography and Blake's rescue and recuperation at the hands of the maternal Dr Miriam.⁴² Alongside the religious and mythic shading of subsequent events and behaviour—the embedded narratives of the discovery of the baby Moses and the pietà of the dead Christ are supplemented, presumably by way of Ballard's memory of Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), by echoes of the figures of Dionysus, Icarus, Saturn, non-European Trickster deities, and Nietzsche's Zarathustra, not to mention the lost cities of Atlantis and Ys in the evocation of a 'marine world'⁴³—this incident accentuates the megalomaniacal, messianic and shamanistic qualities of Blake, while his suspicion that someone tried to murder him even as he was being saved from the water introduces the plot dynamic of the detective story.⁴⁴ Ballard further combines these narratives with elements obviously sourced in Freud—the suggestion of a 'double' in the cockpit of the crashed airplane; Blake's 'oedipal' fantasies of sex with Dr Miriam and the actor Stark alongside his actual, violent sex with Dr Miriam's mother Mrs St Cloud; his fantasies of cannibalism; the fusion of sex and violence throughout the novel; collective erotic dreams of flight; rampant narcissism; and even a reference to Freud's renowned text on Leonardo da Vinci and the vulture discerned by Oskar Pfister in Leonardo's *Madonna and Child with St Anne* (c.1508)—to situate in conservative, affluent suburbia a magnetic individual untouched by inner or outer repression or censorship.⁴⁵

Identifying himself with the sun, Blake is gripped and disturbed by a powerful will to copulate with everything and everyone, young and old, convinced that sex is the path to a broader reality beyond the everyday narrow one:

By coupling with [the elderly patients of the clinic], with the fallow deer in the park, with the magpies and starlings, I could release the light waiting behind the shutter of reality each of them bore before him like a shield. By annealing my body to theirs, by fusing myself to the trunks of the silver birches and dead elms, I would raise their tissues to the fever-point of their true radiance.⁴⁶

Confused and prevented from leaving Shepperton on several occasions by mysterious natural forces, the stranger eroticizes and excites the once-staid town, which becomes 'an extension of himself' in the words of one of the novel's admirers, filling up with exotic bird, fish, mammal, and plant life, while its seduced population increasingly fantasizes about sex and procreation.⁴⁷ Blake's desire so completely overlaps with outer reality and has such a powerful projective force

(of the Sheppertonians he says, 'they were waiting for me to "dream" them again') that neither he nor we can discern between the two or know if there are indeed 'two' separate realities.⁴⁸

By the middle of the novel, Blake is revered by the intoxicated townspeople as a 'pagan god' and has been bequeathed the local church by Father Wingate.⁴⁹ He has also discovered at Dr Miriam's clinic that he has healing properties and now, like 'some kind of unqualified medicine man', is playing out his shamanistic destiny by curing the sick with drops of his blood.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Blake's fertile presence has transformed Shepperton into a 'festival town',⁵¹ ripened into an 'overlit' or 'overbright' (to use Ballard's favourite adjectives) luxuriant tropical paradise that is depicted in terms of the paintings of Henri Rousseau, emerging 'as if from the excited palette of a naïve painter of jungles'.⁵² Commuters throw away their briefcases and bask in the sunshine, people give away money and shops hand over their products while children steal sweets under the indulgent eyes of indifferent storekeepers, women have become as flamboyant in their hairstyles as in their dress, elderly ladies flirt in the street, married couples swap partners, and the unstopping of desire in its rawest state has even left Blake subject to a 'sinister paedophilic drive' by which he is repelled even as he finds it irresistible.⁵³

Blake needs no material sustenance following his recovery from the crash: he eats nothing throughout the novel and for most of its second half he is naked, sexually aroused and shining with his own seminal fluid as he decides to 'remake Shepperton in my own image',⁵⁴ accelerating its transformation into a 'primeval forest' by the liberal distribution of his inexhaustible semen, applauded at every step by the delirious inhabitants of the town.⁵⁵ The high point of Blake's ecstatic takeover of Shepperton is his discovery that he can fly (which is the perfectly proportionate outcome of the events of the novel) when he takes to the wing with Miriam in a bizarre marriage ceremony above the town and its cheering inhabitants. This incident also signals the realization of Blake's 'cannibalistic' tendencies as he temporarily takes Miriam into his own body, then teaches the whole population of the town to fly. It hovers above the earth like a flock of birds while Blake incorporates into his body, then expels, many of the townsfolk, finding particular satisfaction in the fulfilment of his Pied Piper complex: 'I had tasted the flesh of these children and knew that they were my food.'⁵⁶ Blake's megalomania peaks as he looks down from a car park upon 'the forest canopy closing above the town', which along with the massive vegetation blocking all its exit roads had sealed Shepperton off from the world.⁵⁷ The intoxicated townspeople are all now naked (even though Blake says they were just as unaware of it as they were of his own nudity) and ordinary reality has given way to a massive, casual orgy presided over by Blake, who has now begun greedily to absorb the young people of the city into his body.

His fall and the end of the forestation of the town are brought about by Stark, who seeks media fame and fortune by shooting and killing Miriam and wounding Blake, following

which the Sheppertonians return to their senses and their sterile reality and physically abuse Blake. He is only saved by the intervention of the three disabled children, David, Jamie and Rachel, and even as he gathers his strength he redistributes it by healing them of their various ailments, and is then finally saved from death by the once more benevolent townspeople, rising into the sky and taking the entire population of Shepperton with him. Stark undergoes the ambiguous (because rapturous) ‘punishment’ of being taken into Blake’s body, Miriam is brought back to life, and Blake rises into the air with her again, absorbing into himself all the people of Shepperton as well as all of the birds, fish, and mammals and the dead of the town. We are left with Blake alone, anticipating the same events on a universal scale, ‘celebrating the last marriage of the animate and inanimate, of the living and the dead’.⁵⁸

Metamorphosis and desire: ‘Blake’ and the Comte de Lautréamont

These final deeds do not register anything so simple as a ‘moral’, nor do they signal Blake’s redemption or a happy end: Blake is neither a self-consciously good nor bad man, and the very same actions in the novel can come across as either iniquitous or virtuous. That is because a moral code is not followed; as Blake says, ‘[a]lready I was convinced that there was no evil, and that even the most plainly evil impulses were merely crude attempts to accept the demands of a higher realm that existed within each of us’.⁵⁹ The only force at play is desire and its discharge leads to what we would call both malevolent and decent behaviour.

In other words, *The Unlimited Dream Company* is an experiment of the imagination and writing that proposes the introduction of desire into a society and then examines the outcome. Under the reign of an established moral code of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, we inevitably view the events and behaviours as one or the other. However, as in the most shocking passages of the book that touch on Blake’s ‘paedophilic drive’, they are disapproved of but allowed to overcome moral censorship because that is the logic that drives the behaviour of Blake and the townspeople, so that Blake can say of Father Wingate, who witnesses Blake’s attempted abduction of a little girl: ‘I felt that he did not altogether disapprove, and in some way had grasped the secret logic of this perverse act,’ which is also the logic of Ballard’s novel.⁶⁰ Breton had originally voiced the hope in the *Manifesto of Surrealism* that ‘[p]sychic automatism in its pure state’ would tap the well of desire in the unconscious and surmount the moral censor in its user, yet *The Unlimited Dream Company* imagines the luminous extension into society of a boundless, transformative desire, uncontained by moral as well as social and natural prohibitions, which therefore breaks that society and replaces it with a new one in Ballard’s version.⁶¹

The transformation of Ballard’s writings from the mid sixties, showing evidence of a greater willingness to use explicitly sexual

material, is angled by his well-established knowledge of psychoanalysis as well as Surrealism. So my reading of Ballardian desire is quite different from the post-structuralist one coloured by psychoanalysis given by Puntner in which the novel is understood as a parable for the obstruction of ‘individual desire’ by the ‘public media’.⁶² My aim here is not to grasp Ballard’s writings or psyche by means of specific Freudian (or Jungian) models, but to extract the work of the Surrealist writers and artists that lies more or less latent in his writing and show how that enabled him to depict worlds that were true to certain Surrealist ideas and could even test their efficacy. So I am arguing that alongside the source in William Blake’s writings mentioned above, the means chosen by Ballard in *The Unlimited Dream Company* for playing out the fantastic metamorphoses of the character Blake under the sway of a limitless desire and for charting the blissful transformation of Shepperton beyond the usual social and natural, internal, and external restraints familiar to humankind are the writings and art of the Surrealists and those that preceded them. Of the main precursors of Surrealism, Ballard had read and admired the Marquis de Sade, Arthur Rimbaud, and Alfred Jarry, but he also spoke of a strong attachment to the Comte de Lautréamont (Isidore Ducasse), whose book *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1869) has always been accepted as the most important pre-Surrealist text.⁶³

There was shared ground between William Blake and Lautréamont in Surrealism: Breton mentioned them in the same breath in ‘La Révolution d’abord et toujours!’ in 1925 and would again in the *Entretiens*, his radio interviews of 1952.⁶⁴ Writing at the time of the Blake exhibition at the galerie René Drouin, Pierre Mabille proposed that the inner conflict exposed in Blake’s poetry was similar to that exemplified in the ‘abyss that separates *Les Chants de Maldoror* from *Poésies*’ (the second being Lautréamont’s only other publication, appearing in 1870).⁶⁵ A few years later, Bataille had compared, rather idly, Blake’s phrase ‘all are alike in the Poetic Genius’ from *All Religions are One* (c.1788) to Lautréamont’s frequently quoted ‘Poetry must be made by all. Not by one’ from his *Poésies*.⁶⁶ Although he comments on many authors in *Poésies*, including English ones such as Shakespeare, Milton, Edward Young, Ann Radcliffe and Lord Byron, it is highly unlikely that Lautréamont himself read Blake, however, because the earliest text in French on him only appeared in 1863 following the publication of the first biography of the *pictor ignotus* by Alexander Gilchrist in that year.⁶⁷ In fact, there is a fair chance that Lautréamont had never even heard of Blake.

In his 1966 review of Patrick Waldberg’s *Surrealism* and Marcel Jean’s *History of Surrealist Painting*, Ballard called *Maldoror* ‘almost the basic dream-text of Surrealism’, quoting the same, now very familiar ‘beautiful as’ passages that Jean had used.⁶⁸ This could well have been his first contact with the esteemed pre-Surrealist: in a 1995 interview in which he professed near disinterest in Surrealist poetry at the expense of precedents like Rimbaud and, of course, the Surrealist painting that was always central to his writing, Ballard said ‘I didn’t

come across Lautréamont until about 1965—the New Directions edition [of *Les Chants de Maldoror*], which I've now read many times. I've had that since 1965.⁶⁹ We come across explicit traces of *Maldoror* in Ballard in the 1960s where the reading of that novel crops up repeatedly in the short story 'Cry Hope, Cry Fury!' (1967),⁷⁰ then later when Malcolm X is 'described' in *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970) as 'beautiful as the trembling of hands in *tabes dorsalis*',⁷¹ arbitrarily modelled on Lautréamont's '[t]he beetle, lovely as the alcoholic's trembling hand'.⁷² Ballard's taste for such extravagant similes has been analysed by Roger Luckhurst (after Colin Greenland) as 'a Surrealist strategy [...] the forcing of a conjunction in a "like" of terms which are entirely unlike', however, given Ballard's remarks about his preferences we can now say that he was more indebted to Lautréamont and Rimbaud than to actual Surrealist poets.⁷³

A '[m]irage of sources' giving 'ten references behind the same image' in the words of Maurice Blanchot, *Maldoror* is crammed with reading and more open than most to a diverse array of interpretations.⁷⁴ Assessments of *Maldoror* by those in or close to the movement make it plain enough why Ballard, as a Surrealist sympathizer, should have found in that book a hedonistic model for the barely restrained behaviour of Blake. In an important essay of the early 1920s charging Lautréamont with 'perhaps the greatest responsibility for the current state of affairs in poetry', Breton avowed that a visual art would emerge in his wake spurred by an imagination of 'hallucinations and sensory disturbances in the shadows', whose Truth would go beyond the usual dualistic morality, displayed in an end product that 'no longer has a right or wrong side: good so nicely brings out evil'.⁷⁵ In the late 1940s Marcel Jean and Arpad Mezei took the (admittedly too-literal) opinion that the ocean of the novel symbolizes the 'prenatal unconscious'⁷⁶—an idea that was not alien to Ballard⁷⁷—while one closer to the group at that time, Julien Gracq, viewed the book as 'a volcanic manifestation [...] a lava flow of verses'.⁷⁸ Blanchot expressed some scepticism about both of these readings in his important, lengthy essay of the late 1940s, or at least viewed them as only as 'valid' as any of the many other competing interpretations, declaring: 'the delirium of "interpretation" to which every interpreter occasionally falls prey, begins with the need to restore reason'.⁷⁹ In this phrase Blanchot acknowledged the rootedness in Baudelaire of his own take on Lautréamont and confirmed, in the closeness of these sentiments to those seen above expressed by his friend Georges Bataille on Jungian interpretations of William Blake, the importance to his analysis of Bataille's writings, especially *Inner Experience*, which had appeared six years earlier.

Yet Blanchot himself also made much of the turbulent activity and staging of *Maldoror* in what Breton called his 'beautiful essay on Lautréamont'.⁸⁰ Moreover, Blanchot's analysis is attuned to what I am claiming Ballard extracted from the book for *The Unlimited Dream Company* because Blanchot discerns a direct correlation between the limitless vitality of *Maldoror* and its incidents of metamorphosis:

In the first Chant, we witness the ambiguous anger of the ocean; here the tempest becomes, unequivocally, the madness shared between man and the ocean: Maldoror's boundless hatred, 'ecstasy,' fury great enough to be thought capable of 'annihilating the laws of physics.' Further, this elemental frenzy, this violence that throws him outside human limitations, opens up for him for the first time [...] a quick and decisive way out, toward quite another existence.⁸¹

This 'other existence' is achieved through metamorphosis, argues Blanchot, first intimated in Maldoror's coupling with a shark in the thirteenth stanza of the second Chant; and it is the ocean, he writes, that is 'a constant provocation towards metamorphosis, whose groundwork is being laid'.⁸² Following his grotesque mating with the shark, Maldoror undergoes three major metamorphoses, into an octopus, an eagle, and a hog, but it is after these, when Maldoror sees in the seventh stanza of the fourth Chant 'a human being swimming in the sea, with the large webbed feet of a duck instead of arms and legs and a dorsal fin proportionally as long and streamlined as a dolphin's',⁸³ that, Blanchot says, 'metamorphosis is logically shown to us as the correct way for man to expand his horizons: like the free future of humanity'.⁸⁴ Indeed, according to Lautréamont, this expansion by man has already begun: 'he lives in the water, like the hippocamp; flies through the higher layers of the air, like the osprey; burrows in the earth, like the mole, the woodlouse, and the sublime maggot'.⁸⁵ Blanchot reads Lautréamont's rationalization of man's metamorphosis as follows:

Lautréamont enumerates all the reasons for such an aspiration: moral reasons, freedom from crime, objective reasons, evolution, the appropriation of the place, the instability of the human organism—too complex to be definitively determined—reasons drawn from a poetic dream, a premonition of the possibilities that it places in human existence, at least on the level of the imagination, in agreement with elementary powers, water, air, earth.⁸⁶

He adds that the 'true origin of this project' ends in 'the possibility of suspending or of diverting the laws of nature'.⁸⁷

Like Maldoror, Ballard's Blake undergoes three metamorphoses in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, into a condor, a whale and a stag in that order. Moreover, in his first person narrative he directly relates these to the same three elements that were noted by Blanchot as relevant to the metamorphoses of *Maldoror* as he moves among a herd of deer just before the third transformation: '[w]atching them approach me, I knew that they were the third family of that trinity of living beings, the mammals, birds and fish, which together ruled the earth, air and water'.⁸⁸ For both cases, then, Blake and Maldoror, the metaphor of metamorphosis, which indicates the emancipation from repression, goes beyond simply the social and psychological meanings—the capacity to roam free of the local habitat and the eclipse of rationalism by the lower, bestial instincts—being expressed, rather, through the release of civilized man by

means of his transformation from his physical containment on the two dimensions of the surface of the earth.

Even though there is no evidence that Ballard read Blanchot's or any of these other books on *Maldoror*, it seems incontestable that he would have thought such readings congenial to his own, in which the world becomes the plaything of an erotic imagination unencumbered by mechanisms of repression. In Blake's euphoric metamorphoses in *The Unlimited Dream Company* we rediscover the volatile, violent, and sexual transformations of *Maldoror*, which shattered the usual realistic episodic narrative frame of the nineteenth-century novel. In Ballard's book, these physical transformations, in which, as Blanchot said of *Maldoror*, are 'glimpsed the possibility of suspending or of diverting the laws of nature', act as a metaphor for Blake's complete freedom from the common repressive mechanisms—social and psychological—that are normally accepted or at least endured in civilization.⁸⁹

'Blake', desire and Surrealism

In the early years of urban Surrealism itself, instinctual drives were imagined in quite different form from Lautréamont's, and the theorization of desire beyond Christian and other binaries of good and evil was still taking place within the movement. In the *Second Manifesto of Surrealism* in 1930, Breton sought to give expression to 'what kind of moral virtues Surrealism lays claim to', and to 'proceed beyond the insufficient, the absurd, distinction between the beautiful and the ugly, true and false, good and evil'.⁹⁰ From here, he was led to his notorious statement as to what constitutes a 'Surrealist act'—a declaration known to Ballard and compared by him in the 1990s with the disturbing lack of a 'clear moral compass bearing' in *Crash* (1973)⁹¹—which for all the differences in its characterization recalls Blake's pathological behaviour and remarks in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, and contains even more power to shock now than when it was written:

The simplest Surrealist act consists of dashing down the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger, into the crowd. Anyone who, at least once in his life, has not dreamed of thus putting an end to the petty system of debasement and cretinization in effect has a well-defined place in that crowd, with his belly at barrel level.⁹²

To this, Breton appended a lengthy commentary in a footnote that is hardly ever mentioned when the famous quotation is critically (usually negatively) assessed. Responding to the cheap ineffectuality of those who would ask him what he is waiting for then, Breton argues that his concern in using such an example is with learning 'whether a person is blessed with violence before asking myself whether, in that person, violence composes or does not compose'.⁹³ Rejecting the simple and standard, binary condemnation of violence as 'evil', Breton was seeking to define an ethical position dialectically, whereby passions categorized by the prevailing morality as contradictory

could be explored as an emanation of desire and not prejudicially and selectively repressed.

'Desire' became a visible term in Surrealism only in the 1930s, when it underwent lengthy theorization by Breton. Since I am claiming that desire is pursued to its logical conclusion in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, I should look at how it came to be projected and understood within Surrealism. Breton's most extensive discussion of desire takes place in a book Ballard had certainly not read at the time, *Mad Love* (*L'Amour fou*, 1937), yet the proliferative exuberance of the desiring mind and body that Ballard describes, in its conjunction with nature, brings his novel close to the intoxication theorized and sometimes experienced and expressed in Breton's account, even if that assumes a bizarre intensity in Ballard's fantasy.

Ballard knew something about the Surrealists' journey to Tenerife in 1935 to organize the first International Exhibition of Surrealism. That is the site for part five of *Mad Love*, in which the recently betrothed Breton ascends the still-active volcano Mount Teide in a cable car with his new wife, Jacqueline Lamba, more aware than usual of the presence of the 'incandescent stone of the sexual unconscious'.⁹⁴ What ensues is a poetic theoretical commentary on desire stirred by the Teide, the views it offers and Breton's memories of Tenerife's natural and (to Breton) peculiar beauty, such as the white secretions of its cacti ('[i]mpossible not to associate with it the idea of mother's milk and also that of ejaculation'⁹⁵), its black sand and, most Ballardian (and perhaps Lovecraftian and Ernstian), its 'Jurassic fauna whose traces you find once more as soon as you scrutinize the human libido'.⁹⁶ Especially from this height, 'passing through this very rough form of desire' gives Breton 'the illusion of recreating the world at once',⁹⁷ which culminates in his entrance into a cloud: '[d]esire,' he writes, 'the only motive of the world, desire, the only rigour humans must be acquainted with, where could I be better situated to adore it than on the inside of the cloud?'⁹⁸ According to Breton, the form taken on by clouds is by no means random: like Polonius in *Hamlet*, we read in them our desire, and in fathoming these depths we read our future that is already established at an unplumbed layer of the mind.

Breton is vigilant in these passages of *Mad Love* as to both the powerful influence his sexual impulse is exerting over his reading of phenomena as he passes through one observation after another and the heightening of his senses under the same sway, going on to write with regret at still not quite having the confidence he would like to have in his passions: '[t]he child I still am in relation to what I should like to be has not quite unlearned the dualism of good and evil'.⁹⁹ This passion is emblemized, he writes, in the depiction of a love that breaks with the morality and regulations set up by state, church, and family in the film by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, *L'Âge d'or* (1930).¹⁰⁰ The obeisance before their sexual desire by its two main characters is one of utter egotism that consumes everything it touches, and, Breton feels, is exemplary for that reason:

who would refuse [...] to take the word 'egotistic' applied to love in its philosophic sense and thus only in this sense, without anything pejorative about it any longer? The recreation, the perpetual recolouration of the world in a single being, such as they are accomplished through love, light up with a thousand rays the advance of the earth ahead. Each time a person loves, nothing can prevent everyone's feelings being involved. In order not to let them down, the involvement must be entire.¹⁰¹

But the full force and realization of desire in love are muted, wrote Breton, by practical matters: 'concern with material necessity,' he complains, 'frustrates love as well as poetry.'¹⁰²

Perhaps not surprisingly, Surrealism's use of the word 'desire' is often judged, wrongly, to propose a total capitulation to the most primal and irrational instincts, hence the stark and nervous question pitched at Breton in a 1946 interview, just after the Second World War, a conflict that seemed to militate against exactly such an ethics (understood in those terms) that placed desire at its centre: 'You've spoken of an all-powerful desire, capable of transforming the world. Is it on desire that you base your action?'¹⁰³ His responses bring us closer to the themes of *The Unlimited Dream Company* as set out above: 'Desire, yes, always,' he says:

We can rely only on this great key bearer. Just as freedom can't be equated with the impulse to do anything one wants, it goes without saying that I set this desire apart from certain forms of unrestrained bestial appetite, such as have recently been displayed. Even under the frantic guise it wears in Sade, we recognize desire, and duly honour it, as utterly *dignified*.

Can you base a morality on that?

Yes, or at least we could in another society founded on the certainty that all passions are good [...] or more precisely, that it is not within man's power to change the nature or goal of these passions, but rather to modify their development to suit universal harmony.¹⁰⁴

Placing complete confidence in desire, here, in the creation of this other society means unlearning 'the dualism of good and evil' as he put it in *Mad Love*, hence the favourable invocation of the figure of the Marquis de Sade (surely another embedded text in *The Unlimited Dream Company*) and the utopian philosopher Charles Fourier, a still recent enthusiasm of Breton's in the 1940s, whose theory of 'Universal Harmony' first advertised in 1803 promised 'to lead the human race to opulence, to sensual pleasures, to the unity of the globe'.¹⁰⁵

The Surrealist success of Ballard's *Unlimited Dream Company* is that it attempts to hold up a mirror to desire before its sublimation through societal repression; like Sade's *œuvre*, it exposes the matter for 'modification', as Breton put it, imagining an unbridled future for the erotic and death instincts. Although it is cast in a fairly traditional narrative form, its representation nevertheless meets the expectation made by Breton in *Mad Love*:

Love, only love that you are, carnal love, I adore, I have never ceased to love your lethal shadow, your mortal shadow. A day will come where man will be able to recognize you for his only master, honouring you even in the mysterious perversions you surround him with.¹⁰⁶

That day arrives with Blake and in that sense Ballardian desire realizes in fiction a future state imagined by Surrealism.

Generating imagery I: Ballard and Hans Bellmer

Clearly, Breton's remarks on desire, his theoretical writings, and perhaps Surrealist rhetoric directly inform Blake's behaviour and many of his first-person statements in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, depicting the transformation of Shepperton into a 'festival town' where Blake aims to shift from dreams and visions to 'a re-ordering of reality in the service of a greater and more truthful design, where the most bizarre appetites and the most wayward impulses would find their true meaning'.¹⁰⁷

However, as with Ballard's earlier fiction, sculptural and pictorial sources are at least as important as written ones in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, and it seems to me that at times Ballard again took inspiration here from the work of Hans Bellmer. Ballard had already looked to Bellmer's second *Doll* (1935–36) when trying to give an account of the forms of objects and of the contortions of the female body in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, describing 'flaccid globes, like the obscene sculptures of Bellmer' and a woman '[h]umped against his right shoulder, her breasts form[ing] a pair of deformed globes like the elements of a Bellmer sculpture'.¹⁰⁸ He must have had in mind the photographs depicting the reposing *Doll* as seated and crumpled (figure 3), but even so, we can see immediately that Ballard is deploying the *Doll* unempirically (or 'inaccurately', perhaps from memory) in these passages since there is nothing 'flaccid' or 'deformed' (in the way that Ballard means to communicate of the female body) about the breasts of Bellmer's *Doll*. Like the orb-sockets attached to the two reversible pelvic girdles that assist the rearrangement of the anagrammatic *Doll* and therefore stand in for breasts, shoulders, abbreviated thighs, or buttocks, its removable breasts are perfect spheres, in fact, as are those of the sculpture *Machine-Gunneress in a State of Grace* (1937). At the best, we could assume Ballard was referring to the more realistic breasts of Bellmer's *The Top* (1938/68), but what he really meant to do in *The Atrocity Exhibition* with these references to Bellmer's work was not so much to convey the actual appearance of the *Doll* as to borrow some of that artist's outrageous latency-made-manifest in the conveyance of a similar world of ego-overwhelmed-by-id in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, where, as he said at the time the book appeared of the message sent out by Surrealist painters, 'the rooms we occupy, the landscapes around us, the musculatures of our own bodies, the postures we assume—may have very different meanings by the time they reach the central nervous system'.¹⁰⁹

As well as being the creator and photographer of the *Doll*, Bellmer was a truly gifted draftsman who produced some of the



Figure 3. Hans Bellmer, photograph of *La poupée. Seconde partie*, 1936. 12.1 × 9.3 cm. Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Sammlung Scharf-Gerstenberg. Inventar-Nr. SSG 10. bpk/Nationalgalerie, SMB, Sammlung Scharf-Gerstenberg/Jörg P. Anders. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2016.

most elegant and lyrical linear works to be found in Surrealism, technically superior even to the pioneering automatist drawings of André Masson. Because they are frequently very spare, without modelling and give the impression of speed in execution, these remarkable works (which settle into a signature style from the mid 1940s) nearly always have the appearance of studies, even the ones meant as accompaniments to narratives by Sade, Bataille, and others. Their line is unfailingly well defined, graceful, and confidently accomplished, the subject matter always the idealized, naked female body actually or metaphorically penetrated, often rendered in an indefinable space or without supporting paraphernalia so that it seems to be floating.

Bellmer's multi-bodied transparent drawings and etchings were of particular importance to *The Unlimited Dream Company* in the extraordinary scenes in which Blake discovers his power to absorb the bodies of others into his own. This is evident where he incorporates the body of a young man, an event that bears comparison not only with Bellmer's drawings but also with his writings (figure 4):

At the last moment, as I eased him into my chest, he gave a sudden cry of fear and relief. I felt his long legs within mine, the shafts of his bones forming splints around my femurs, his buttocks merging into my hands. His sex melted and dissolved upon my penis, the fontanelles of his skull opened again for the first time since his birth. The mosaic of his cranium sank through the sutures of my head. His grimace with all its terror

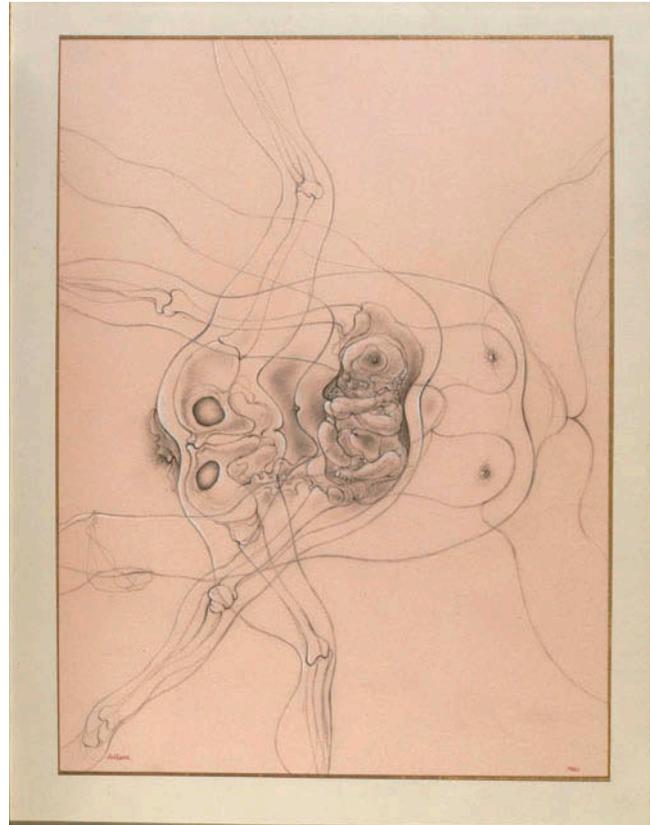


Figure 4. Hans Bellmer, *Untitled*, 1960. Pencil and charcoal with white gouache on pink. 62.5 × 47.0 cm, framed. Courtesy Sammlung Hoffmann, Berlin. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2016.

and ecstasy moved through me like a claw seizing my face. With a last sigh he merged within my flesh, a son reborn into his father's womb [...]

Riding him, I became an androgyne of multiple sex, an angelic figure raised upon the body of this young man. I embraced him within me as I embraced myself.¹¹⁰

The numerous examples in the novel of Blake taking others into his own body, involving Dr Miriam, adults, and children in acts that are cannibalistic, paedophilic, incestuous, narcissistic, and homoerotic, either actual (in terms of the action framed by the narrative) or metaphoric (in the poetic language that is used to describe this action), demonstrate Ballard's capacity to decant assertively into his depiction of Blake's undammed libido the Freudian encyclopaedia of sexual behaviour as gathered and interpreted by Surrealist artists like Bellmer.

But in its concentrated intermingling of sex with anatomical terminology, which is a notable feature of *The Atrocity Exhibition*, too, betraying both Ballard's past as a medical student and his love of the literature of technical manuals, the writing in *The Unlimited Dream Company* bears striking comparison with certain

of Bellmer's etchings that display the interior of the body. Bellmer experimented on a few occasions with the image of a male or female figure disrobing his or her own flesh, revealing either their own bones and internal organs or another person, on one occasion engaged in an act of self-penetration (1947–48) (figure 5). The effect of the fusion of bodies is achieved more often by Bellmer through a drawn or etched line latticed across the paper support, as in a later image based thematically in 'Death and the Maiden' iconography (1946) (figure 6) where the male and female are snared in a linear mesh that not only pins them into the shallow space of the sheet but merges their bodies and limbs, knotting death and sex into a single suffocating organism that recall the suffering/ecstatic fusion of bodies described by Blake in the novel. This work is related to the etchings carried out for the suite *To Sade* (1961), in more than one of which the detailed focus on penetrating and penetrated genitals without single orientation or context at the expense of faces or heads, or even individual bodies, pushed up to the front plane of the sheet, illustrates the monotonous physicality of Sade's orgies as well as Ballard's record of Blake's capacity to consume physically the good people of Shepperton:

[a]s we embraced she merged with me, her rib-cage dissolved into my own, her arms merged with my arms, her legs and

abdomen disappeared into mine. Her vagina clasped my penis. I felt her tongue within my mouth, her teeth bite against my teeth.¹¹¹

Ballard's compressive feat in writing matches that achieved in drawing by Bellmer, who as a German had direct access to Freud's original texts, and displays these clearly enough as sources in his own writings, which also bear close comparison with the action described in *The Unlimited Dream Company*.¹¹²

Generating imagery II: Ballard and Max Ernst

We left Breton indulging his desire earlier, taking pleasure in 'the illusion of recreating the world at once' from high above Tenerife. As he represents it in *Mad Love*, Breton is descending Mount Teide in a cable car with Lamba while musing on the means by which a landscape can be transformed by an individual's desire. Then he notices, firstly, the stone barriers created by the islanders to prevent landslides down the south side of the volcano, and secondly, a kite bird overhead. The two meet in his mind, which wanders to thoughts of the recent series of paintings entitled *Garden Airplane Traps* (*Jardin gobe-avions*, sometimes translated as *Airplane Swallowing Gardens*, 1934–35) (figure 7) by Max Ernst, 'always more handsome under his kite-bird mask'.¹¹³ It is no surprise that Ernst should enter Breton's thoughts in the course of his meditation on the play of unconscious desire as that was the main motivating force behind Ernst's own work—indeed, Breton even implied Ernst's precognition of the view from above of the 'cellular and empty' terraces constructed by the Tenerifeans—so it should come as no surprise either that he is the one explicitly cited Surrealist source in Ballard's *Unlimited Dream Company* and perhaps the main generative thrust behind its imagery.¹¹⁴

Ballard viewed Ernst as a prophetic artist and frequently looked to his art for guidance as to how to project a degraded future-past in his science fiction of the sixties.¹¹⁵ Ernst presented himself as an individual with seer-like abilities within Surrealism: as a 'blind swimmer' stimulated by resources beyond the five senses and keenly attuned to the capricious, vaporous images of the unconscious. Apart from his collage 'novels', Ernst has become best known for his uses of frottage from 1925, where a soft pencil is rubbed gently across paper, underneath which has been placed a material of very low relief (classically in Ernst's case, wooden floorboards), giving edges that can be caught by the pencil. Ernst's semi-fictionalized account of his first uses of frottage acknowledged its heritage in Leonardo da Vinci's practice of 'gazing fixedly at the spot on the wall, the coals in the grate, the clouds, the flowing stream', while declaring its relevance for Surrealism, laying emphasis on the erotic throb awakened by its hallucinatory and mediumistic practice, simultaneously retrospective and premonitory:

On the tenth of August, 1925, an insupportable visual obsession caused me to discover the technical means which have brought a clear realization of this lesson of Leonardo. Beginning with a memory of childhood [...] in the course



Figure 5. Hans Bellmer, *Nora (Hans)*, 1946. Pencil on paper. 17.1 × 10.2 cm. Ubu Gallery, New York. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2016.

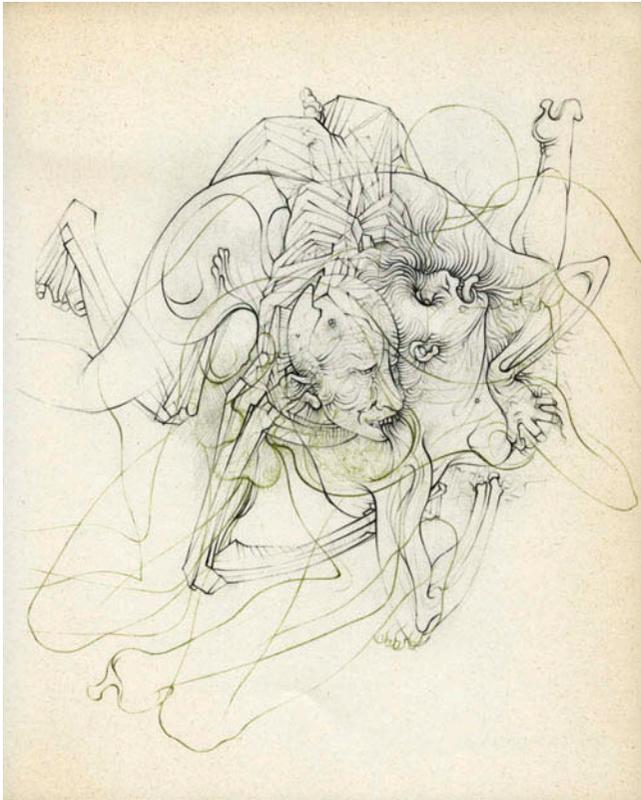


Figure 6. Hans Bellmer, *Dialogue Between a Priest and a Dying Man*, 1946. Etching, no dimensions. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2016. Scanned from the catalogue *Petit Traité de morale. Dix gravures en deux couleurs de Hans Bellmer. 1. Auflage* (Frankfurt: Galerie Sydow, 1969).

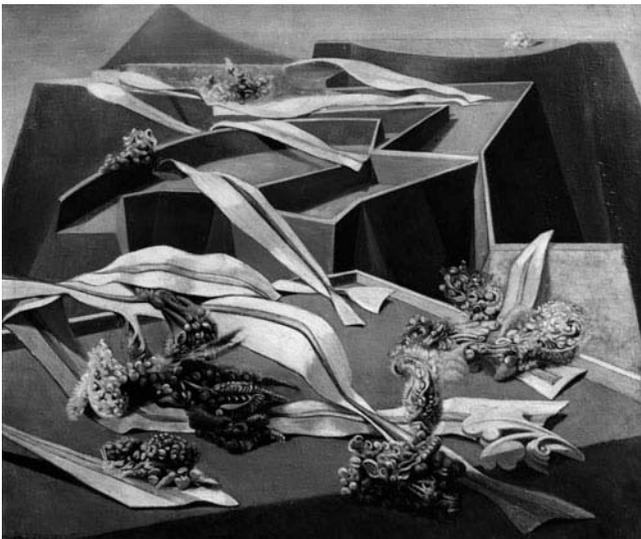


Figure 7. Max Ernst, *Garden Airplane Trap*, 1935–36. Oil on canvas. 54.0 × 64.7 cm. Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice. Courtesy Witt Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2016.

of which a panel of false mahogany, situated in front of my bed, had played the role of optical *provocateur* of a vision of half-sleep, and finding myself one rainy evening in a seaside inn, I was struck by the obsession that showed to my excited gaze the floorboards upon which a thousand scrubbings has deepened the grooves. I decided then to investigate the symbolism of this obsession and, in order to aid my meditative and hallucinatory faculties, I made from the boards a series of drawings by placing on them, at random, sheets of paper which I undertook to rub with black lead. In gazing attentively at the drawings thus obtained, 'the dark passages and those of a gently lighted penumbra,' I was surprised by the sudden intensification of my visionary capacities and by the hallucinatory succession of contradictory images superimposed, one upon the other, with the persistence and rapidity characteristic of amorous memories.

My curiosity awakened and astonished, I began to experiment indifferently and to question, utilizing the same means, all sorts of materials to be found in my visual field: leaves and their veins, the ragged edges of a bit of linen, the brushstrokes of a modern painting, the unwound thread from a spool, etc. There my eyes discovered human heads, animals, a battle that ended with a kiss (*the bride of the wind*), rocks, *the sea and the rain*, earthquakes, the *sphinx in her stable* [. . .].¹¹⁶

Well known for and very proud of his supposedly bird-like profile, Ernst had habitually included birds and bird-like forms in his paintings and collages from early on and they appear among the leaves, trees and insects of the *Histoire naturelle* series of *frottages* of 1925 that he introduces by their italicized titles here. Clearly, *frottage* has its source in the very same stimulation of the sexual unconscious, the same passage through desire that we took with Breton in his ride through the cloud up Mount Teide in *Mad Love*, giving Ernst, too, the 'the illusion of recreating the world at once'.

But it was only in 1928 that the neologism 'Loplop' appeared in Ernst's work in the painting of that year *Loplop, Superior of the Birds* and then in the collage 'novel' *La femme 100 têtes* of 1929 (where a figure from an illustration by William Blake is included), from which point the character of that name became a regular feature, frequently appearing in and 'introducing' collages and paintings up to 1932.¹¹⁷ In *La femme 100 têtes* he is called 'Loplop, le supérieur des oiseaux', usually translated as 'the Bird Superior' or 'Superior of Birds'. Rhetorically designated as an erotic figure, Christ-like and/or Nietzschean, he is romantically linked to 'the Bride of the Wind' in Ernst's autobiographical, narcissistic 1938 preface to the collection of short stories *The House of Fear* (1938) by Leonora Carrington, with whom he lived in the second half of the 1930s:

Behold this man: in water up to his knees, he stands proudly upright. Violent caresses have left luminous traces on his superb pearly body. What on earth is he doing, this man with his turquoise gaze, his lips flushed with generous desires? This man is bringing joy to the landscape [. . .].

Where have these two strange people sprung from, coming slowly down the street, followed by a thousand dwarfs? Is this the man they call Loplop, the Bird Superior, because of his gentle, fierce character? On his huge white hat he has caught in midflight an extraordinary bird with emerald plumage, a hooked beak, and a hard look. He has no fear. He has come from the house of fear. And the woman, whose upper arm is encircled by a narrow thread of blood, must be none other than the Bride of the Wind.¹¹⁸

Framed erotically, Ernst's preface suggesting the union of Loplop and the Bride of the Wind borrows from the styles of folklore and oral legend (including that of the Pied Piper), shaded with elements of magic and the 'chemical wedding' of alchemy, which had long been a theme in the artist's work, and it is close to the spirit of fairy tale and local myth that is shared by Carrington's stories.¹¹⁹ However, it is not certain, in fact, that the man who appears to us here in water, like Blake in Ballard's novel (who also 'brings joy to the landscape'), is Loplop, because of the leap in the narrative between his appearance and that of the 'two strange people'. Moreover, although Loplop must be an alter ego for the artist himself, Ernst described him in the third person in 1930 as 'a private phantom attached to Max Ernst's person, sometimes winged, invariably male'.¹²⁰ The doubling or dividing or questioning of identity (we are not even *told* here that this is Loplop, we are only asked if it is) takes place in the Loplop character by means of various devices, then, and is echoed in the metamorphic, reincarnation narrative of *The Unlimited Dream Company*, along with the contradictory personality traits (gentle/fierce) that speak to Surrealism's and Blake's non-Christian, internally contradictory, multifaceted morality based on desire.

Ballard was well aware of the Ernst–Carrington relationship and its abrupt and traumatic conclusion at the beginning of the Second World War, when Ernst underwent internment and imprisonment and Carrington temporarily lost her reason and was institutionalized.¹²¹ Carrington's art, persona, and experience even provided Ballard with the characters of Lunora Goalen in 'The Singing Statues' of 1962, Leonora Sulley in 'The Day of Forever' of 1966 (painter of 'bishops and cardinals moving in procession across ornamental landscapes'), the beautiful, unstable, wealthy widow Leonora Chanel of 'The Cloud-Sculptors of Coral D' of 1967 (the first and third of these in the 1971 collection *Vermilion Sands*) and Vanessa Carrington in 'Zodiac 2000' of 1978.¹²² Around the time that he was beginning *The Unlimited Dream Company*, Ballard introduced Carrington under her own name, presumably to evoke her own brush with insanity, as 'the former Broadmoor laboratory technician and amateur dramatics coach' and mistress of the deranged Dr Robert Loughlin in 'Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown' (1976), where we are informed as follows:¹²³

A vital role seems to have been played during these last days [in the narrative of Loughlin's insanity and murder of his wife] by the series of paintings by Max Ernst entitled *Garden Airplane Traps*, pictures of low walls, like the brick-courses of

an uncompleted maze, across which long wings have crashed, from whose joints visceral growths are blossoming.¹²⁴

Following this, Ernst is quoted: 'Voracious gardens in turn devoured by a vegetation which springs from the debris of trapped airplanes. [...] Everything is astonishing, heart-breaking and possible [...] with my eyes I see the nymph Echo [...]',¹²⁵ lines taken from 'An Informal Life of M.E. (as told by himself to a young friend)'.¹²⁶ Ballard had used the same title 'Notes Towards a Nervous Breakdown' for one of the short sections right at the beginning of *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970), and in the later 1990 annotations to that novel he explicitly aligned Ernst's *Garden Airplane Traps* and quotation with that fragment, adding '[t]he nightmare of a grounded pilot', confirming that the inspiration for the basic plot of *The Unlimited Dream Company* lay in those works, deeply admired by Breton and recalled by him on the way down Mount Teide.¹²⁷

If it is clear that Ballard drew upon Ernst's paintings for the narrative of the novel, then equally important was the Ernst–Carrington biography alongside the Loplop texts by Ernst and others—including one by Breton himself comparing Loplop to the imaginary vulture of Freud's essay on Leonardo, which Ballard refers to in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, as we saw—because the themes of the Bride of the Wind and the flight of birds are significant ones in Ernst's work of the 1920s and 1930s.¹²⁸

As well as the crashed airplanes menaced by foliage of the *Garden Airplane Traps*, a cluster of paintings of the mid and late 1920s exploring bird themes, flight, and marriage such as the noisy, busy, near-monochrome *100,000 Doves* (1926) (figure 8) and *Bird Marriage* (1925) lie behind the fabulous spectacle at the outset of *The Unlimited Dream Company*, where we read 'the centre of Shepperton has become a spectacular aviary, a



Figure 8. Max Ernst, *100,000 Doves*, 1926. Oil on canvas. 81 × 100 cm. Private collection, Paris. Courtesy Witt Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, London. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2016.

huge aerial reserve ruled by the condors'.¹²⁹ Made by means of the technique of *grattage*, an extension of *frottage* in which a palette knife is used to scrape away at differently coloured paint layered onto canvas that has been set on top of an uneven surface comprising string, coins, and other objects, the jagged, thinly drawn, broken contours of the tilted mass of birds incised onto the surface of *100,000 Doves* and packed into the picture frame act as both a visual and a textural representation of a raucous, squawking, scratching, pecking flock. Such paintings heavily inform Chapter Ten of Ballard's novel, 'The Evening of the Birds', in which Blake 'raked the sky with the claws of a great raptor'.¹³⁰ Soon he is joined in flight by a vast flock of birds—'[a]ll over Shepperton birds were appearing on the rooftops, raised by my cries from the sleeping minds of the people below'¹³¹—as, '[f]ollowed by this concourse of birds', they make their way to Miriam St Cloud's house: 'I wanted us all to mate with her on the wind,' he continues.¹³² The language makes the source and debt precise, and when he awakens near to Miriam following his night flight, after he had 'suffocated within a vacuum of beating wings',¹³³ Blake recalls with joy, 'I had flown as a condor, the superior of the birds.'¹³⁴

The Romantic, squally style of Ernst's paintings of the time—in which horses, women, birds, and part-human beings are depicted in flight, swift movement, or exposed in one way or another to storms—is that of the 'Bride of the Wind' paintings, the first of which dates from 1927, ten years before Ernst's actual encounter with Carrington, and the year after he first used the term in the title for one of the *frottages* of *Histoire naturelle*. Featuring horses apparently mating, these range from the spare, fluidly drawn version in which Ernst's line seems to follow the unwound string that lay beneath the canvas or was lashed onto it (figure 9) to those in which the horses are filled in

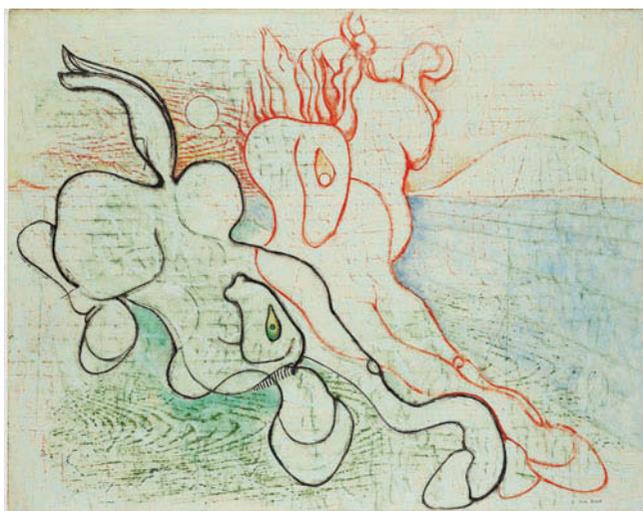


Figure 9. Max Ernst, *The Bride of the Wind*, 1927. Oil on canvas. 73 × 92 cm. Private Collection. Photo: © Christie's Images/Bridgeman Images. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2016.

with greater detail, but seem equally to hover above the earth. Ballard does not follow the appearance of these paintings in the narrative detail of *The Unlimited Dream Company* but the whole of the final quarter of the novel seems informed by them, in which Blake endeavours to wed Miriam, dressed in a wedding gown, 'ready for her marriage with the air'.¹³⁵

Peter Webb has asserted that for Hans Bellmer, 'knowledge derives from the migrations of desire, from desire's detours, evasions, masks, feints, halts and leaps', and we saw Breton argue exactly that in his attempts to track the movement of desire in *Mad Love*.¹³⁶ A few years later in 1942, as he was inventing the myth of The Great Invisibles, Breton wrote of Ernst's 'legendary life' and work—'pregnant with events destined to be realized on the plane of reality'—in the context of the requirement for 'a new myth', in which Ernst's life and *œuvre* were shown to have excelled by their willingness to obey the commandment: '[p]lace your desire beyond reach and you will recreate it ceaselessly'.¹³⁷ In the remarkable and unrelenting final quarter of *The Unlimited Dream Company*, the limitless desire of Blake, emblemized in his ability to fly, reaches a heady pitch sourced in the aesthetics of desire that forge Bellmer's multiply positioned, overlapping, transparent bodies engaged in sex and Ernst's turbulent, flying horses and women. The two meet in accounts of Blake performing for the townspeople like a conjuror: 'I drew dozens of birds into my body, snatching them from the air and bundling them through the trap-doors of my hands. [...] My body was a chattering madhouse of angry birds.'¹³⁸

But as I showed, the novel's sources in pictorial Surrealism are framed by an ethics of desire indebted to Lautréamont's retreat from dualistic moralities and theorized in *Mad Love* by Breton, who admired Blanchot's book on the nineteenth-century poet precisely because no other study had 'been better able to call attention to that deep pulsation within a work that is entirely focused on "desire" and whose movement is patterned after the erotic experience'.¹³⁹ And it was from Lautréamont's representation of uncapped desire through metamorphosis that Ballard extrapolated Blake's antics and attitude in *The Unlimited Dream Company* in a key passage quoted from above:

Already I was convinced that there was no evil, and that even the most plainly evil impulses were merely crude attempts to accept the demands of a higher realm that existed within each of us. By accepting these perversions and obsessions I was opening the gates into the real world, where we would all fly together, transform ourselves into the fish and the birds, the flowers and the dust, unite ourselves once more within the great commonwealth of nature.¹⁴⁰

Although he overlooked the book's multiple and continuous references to both William Blake and Surrealism, in this sense Anthony Burgess was quite right to call *The Unlimited Dream Company* 'blindingly original and yet as basic as a dream of the whole human race' in his blurb on the back cover of the novel. For the way it combines a multitude of religious, mythological, and folkloric archetypes to create an entirely new figure, *The*

Unlimited Dream Company observes to the letter William Blake's statement in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: 'All deities reside in the human breast,' creating a new myth that is finely tuned to the theory and imagery of Surrealism in the figure of the formidable Blake.¹⁴¹

NOTES

- 1 – Jeannette Baxter, *J.G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination: Spectacular Authorship* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 221.
- 2 – William Blake, 'Milton a Poem' [1804–1810/11], in *The Complete Illuminated Books* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 246–96, at 247.
- 3 – Blake, *Complete Illuminated Books*, 290, 278.
- 4 – Alistair Cormack, 'J.G. Ballard and William Blake: Historicizing the Reprobrate Imagination', in *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions*, ed. Jeannette Baxter and Rowland Wymer (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 142–59, at 145–46.
- 5 – *Ibid.*, 156.
- 6 – *Ibid.*, 157.
- 7 – David Punter, *The Hidden Script: Writing and the Unconscious* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 9–27.
- 8 – Cormack, 'J.G. Ballard and William Blake', 147.
- 9 – *Ibid.*, 144.
- 10 – See, for instance, the important 1925 tract that appeared in *La Révolution surréaliste*, no. 5, signed by the Surrealists, 'La Révolution d'abord et toujours!'; repr. in José Pierre, ed., *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives, 1922–1969*, Tome I: 1922–1939 (2 vols) (Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1980), 54–56, at 55 n. 3; and The Surrealist Group, 'Originality and Freedom' [1942], in *What is Surrealism?*, ed. Franklin Rosemont (London: Pluto, 1978), 206–8, at 207. For his dissociation of the 'monsters' of twentieth-century art (of Salvador Dalí, Pablo Picasso, Giorgio de Chirico, Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst) from 'the imaginary beings that religious terror has given birth to, coming from the more or less disturbed imagination of a Jerome Bosch or a William Blake', see André Breton, *Communicating Vessels* [1932], trans. Mary Ann Caws and Geoffrey T. Harris (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 49–50. There are several mentions of Blake, but the analysis is surprisingly slight (referring mainly and limply to his creation of a "mythologie personnelle") in André Breton, *L'Art magique* [1957] (Paris: Phébus, 1991), 203–4.
- 11 – Anna Balakian, 'The Literary Fortune of William Blake in France', *Modern French Quarterly*, 17, no. 3 (1956): 261–72, at 262–63. For details of Breton's hostile severance from Gide in 1922, see Mark Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of André Breton*, revd and updated (Boston: Black Widow, 2009), 157.
- 12 – Paul Éluard, 'Physique de la poésie', *Minotaure*, no. 6 (1935): 6–12, at 7.
- 13 – André Breton, 'What is Surrealism?' [1934–36], in Rosemont, *What is Surrealism?*, 112–41, at 122.
- 14 – Blake usually crops up in similar exhibitions and publications among English and British precursors; see David Gascoyne, *A Short Survey of Surrealism* [1935] (San Francisco: City Lights, 1982), 82, 105, 132; and the lengthy quotation from Blake's *Jerusalem The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (1804) (along with the admission that 'some of my fellow Surrealists have many reserves to make about Blake', due to his 'obscurity' and 'mysticism' and the Surrealists' 'materialism', apparently): Herbert Read, *Surrealism* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936), 79–81. Individual British Surrealists' responses to Blake are reviewed by Mei-Ying Sung, 'Blake and Surrealism', in *Blake 2.0: William Blake in Twentieth-Century Art, Music and Culture*, ed. Steve Clark, Tristanne Connolly, and Jason Whittaker (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 102–19. Paul Nash's interest in Blake runs throughout his work, pre dating, informing and following his Surrealist phase; Andrew Causey, *Paul Nash* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980).
- 15 – Michel Leiris, 'Éléments pour une biographie', in *André Masson* [1940], ed. Jean-Louis Barrault et al. (Marseille: André Dimanche, 1993), 7–17, at 12. The importance of Blake to the portraiture of Miró and Masson and, potentially, the 1937 Blake and Turner exhibition at the Bibliothèque Nationale is noted by David Lomas, *The Haunted Self: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 191–96. For the interest in Blake shown by Miró, Masson, and Ernst, see Sung, 'Blake and Surrealism', 105–7. The best summary of Masson's quotation of Blake in his art and writings remains the still-unpublished Katherine Beales, *'The Human Form Divine': André Masson and William Blake* (M.A. thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1990). For a gushing appreciation of Masson as nothing less than 'la réincarnation du grand William Blake', see Patrick Waldberg, 'André Masson ou le monde dans un grain de sable', *XX^e siècle*, année 31, no. 32 (1969): 29–41, at 29.
- 16 – 'Un Proverbe de Blake dit que si d'autres n'avaient pas été fous, nous devrions l'être'; Georges Bataille, 'La Folie de Nietzsche' [1939], *Acéphale*, no. 5 (1939): 1–8, at 6. Given his theme of Nietzsche's madness, we must take this as a poor translation by Bataille of Blake's proverb '[i]f others had not been foolish, we should be so'; Blake, 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' [c.1790], *Complete Illuminated Books*, 106–33, at 115. This is confirmed by the alternative, more accurate, translation: 'Si d'autres n'avaient été stupides, il nous faudrait l'être', given among the proverbs culled from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in Georges Bataille, 'Dossier William Blake', *Œuvres complètes* (12 vols.) (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 9: 377–415, at 391. One of the same group of proverbs, '[d]rive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead' (rendered as '[J]aites passer la charrue sur les os du mort'), gave the title to the commemorative essay on Bataille by André Masson, 'Le soc de la charrue', *Critique*, 19, no. 195/196 (1963): 701–5, at 705. Masson himself should have been compared not with Henri Matisse and Miró but with Heraclitus, Blake, and Nietzsche, according to Bataille, 'Les Mangeurs d'étoiles', in Barrault et al., *André Masson*, 25–28, at 26. A similar compliment was paid the Surrealist artist Victor Brauner a few years later by the poet René Char in a letter of 1943: '[o]nly Blake can compare to you'; quoted in Didier Semin, 'Victor Brauner and the Surrealist Movement', in *Victor Brauner: Surrealist Hieroglyphs*, ed. The Menil Collection (Hatje Cantz: Ostfildern-Ruit, 2001), 23–41, at 33.
- 17 – Georges Bataille, 'William Blake' [1948], in *Literature and Evil* [1959], trans. Alastair Hamilton (London: Marion Boyers, 1993), 77–101, at 80.
- 18 – *Ibid.*, 87. See W. P. Witcutt, *Blake: A Psychological Study* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1946).
- 19 – Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, 89, 95.
- 20 – *Ibid.*, 85. See the short entry that first appeared in the catalogue of the International Exhibition of Surrealism in Paris, *Le Surréalisme en 1947*, in which we read: '[t]he absence of God is greater, and more divine, than God'; Georges Bataille, 'The Absence of Myth' [1947], in *The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism*, ed. and trans. Michael Richardson (London: Verso, 1994), 48.
- 21 – Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, 98 n. 1.
- 22 – William Blake, *Chants d'innocence et d'expérience*, trans. M. L. Soupault and Philippe Soupault (Paris: Éditions des Cahiers Libres, 1927) (this was the only book on or by Blake in Breton's library); Philippe Soupault, *William Blake*, trans. J. Lewis May (London: John Lane/Bodley Head, 1928). According to his biographer, Bataille had also intended to write a book on Blake: Michel Surya, *Georges Bataille: An Intellectual Biography* [1992], trans. Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson (London: Verso, 2002), 549 n. 26. For his extensive notes and translations, see Bataille, 'Dossier William Blake', in *Œuvres complètes*, 9: 377–415.
- 23 – André Breton, 'Devant le rideau' [1947], in *Œuvres complètes* (4 vols.) (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), 3: 740–49, at 744; Jean Wahl, 'William Blake: Païen, Chrétien et Mystique', in *William Blake: 1757–1827* (Paris: Galerie René Drouin, 1947), 19–23, at 20. In fact, Wahl misquotes or mistranslates the couplet from *Milton a Poem*, removing Blake's reference to Jesus in the passage, which actually reads: 'To cast off Rational Demonstration by

Faith in the Saviour/ To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration'; Blake, *Complete Illuminated Books*, 292.

24 – Blake, *Complete Illuminated Books*, 292.

25 – André Breton, 'Manifesto of Surrealism' [1924], in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 1–47, at 9.

26 – *Ibid.*, 10.

27 – *Ibid.*, 27–28. For a comparison between Blake's 'immediate dictation' and Surrealist automatism, see Sung, 'Blake and Surrealism', 103–4; and for a commentary on Blake's experience as one of being *subject* to the 'inner voice', and close to Surrealism, see Pierre Mabille, 'William Blake', *Cahiers d'art*, année 22 (1947): 117–27, at 118.

28 – Ballard, 'In the Asylum of Dreams' [1986], in *A User's Guide to the Millennium: Essays and Reviews* (London: Flamingo, 1997), 235–36, at 235.

29 – Blake, *Complete Illuminated Books*, 113.

30 – *Ibid.*, 116.

31 – *Ibid.*, 111.

32 – André Masson, 'La Balance faussée', *Les Temps modernes*, année 3, no. 29 (1948): 1381–94, at 1390–94; André Masson and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Vingt-deux dessins sur le thème du désir* (Paris: Fernand Mourlot, 1961).

33 – J. G. Ballard, *The Unlimited Dream Company* [1979] (London: Paladin, 1990).

34 – *Ibid.*, 11.

35 – *Ibid.*, 13.

36 – *Ibid.*, 14.

37 – *Ibid.* For a close forerunner to the novel concerned with similar dreams of flight and featuring the Cessna airplane, see J. G. Ballard, 'My Dream of Flying to Wake Island' [1974], in *The Complete Stories of J.G. Ballard* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 811–19. There are other, perhaps less relevant, short stories that include both reveries of flight and the Cessna that long precede and postdate *The Unlimited Dream Company*, such as 'The Ultimate City' (1976) and 'Myths of the Near Future' (1982), the second complete with a protagonist who imagines himself as a glowing, winged man and who has a 'peculiar obsession with the Surrealists'; Ballard, *Complete Stories*, 1061–84, at 1066.

38 – Punter, *Hidden Script*, 22.

39 – Ballard, *Unlimited Dream Company*, 17.

40 – Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* [1970], trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 25.

41 – Marinetti is in his car and swerves into a ditch to avoid a pair of cyclists: 'Oh! Maternal ditch, almost full of muddy water! Fair factory drain! I gulped down your nourishing sludge; and I remembered the blessed black breast of my Sudanese nurse. ... When I came up—torn, filthy, and stinking—from under the capsize car, I felt the white-hot iron of joy deliciously pass through my heart'; Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, 'The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism' [1909], in *Marinetti: Selected Writings*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (London: Secker & Warburg, 1972), 39–44, at 40–41 (Marinetti's ellipses). Evidence of the author's admiration for Marinetti and the Futurists is given in the 1990 notes added to J. G. Ballard, *The Atrocity Exhibition* [1970] (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), 158.

42 – Beuys's mythic autobiography emerged c.1970, but only came out in English simultaneously with the writing of *The Unlimited Dream Company* in interviews with Caroline Tisdall carried out in September–October 1978, receiving their first airing in Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1979), 16–17. For a historiography of the story, see Peter Nisbet, 'Crash Course: Remarks on a Beuys Story', in *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy* (Sarasota: John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, 2001), 5–17.

43 – Ballard, *Unlimited Dream Company*, 41. For a study of Ballard that notes further possible references to Dionysus, Orpheus, and Osiris in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, Ballard's 'most mythic' work, while leaning heavily on Campbell's book without, apparently, being aware of Ballard's knowledge of it, see Gregory Stephenson, *Out of the Night and Into the Dream: A*

Thematic Study of the Fiction of J. G. Ballard (New York: Greenwood, 1991), 122, 117.

44 – For more on Ballard's work in the context of the detective story and the *fait divers*, see Baxter, *J.G. Ballard's Surrealist Imagination*, 171–217.

45 – Ballard, *Unlimited Dream Company*, 135. Sigmund Freud, 'Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood' [1910], in *Art and Literature, Jensen's Gradiva, Leonardo da Vinci and other works* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 151–231.

46 – Ballard, *Unlimited Dream Company*, 82.

47 – Anthony Burgess, *99 Novels: The Best in English since 1939* (New York: Summit, 1984), 118.

48 – Ballard, *Unlimited Dream Company*, 144.

49 – *Ibid.*, 97.

50 – *Ibid.*, 102.

51 – *Ibid.*, 105.

52 – *Ibid.* By comparison, see the description of the character Travers as 'the first of the new naïves, a Douanier Rousseau of the sexual perversions'; Ballard, *Atrocity Exhibition*, 120.

53 – Ballard, *Unlimited Dream Company*, 108.

54 – *Ibid.*, 124.

55 – *Ibid.*, 130.

56 – *Ibid.*, 163.

57 – *Ibid.*, 167.

58 – *Ibid.*, 220.

59 – *Ibid.*, 175.

60 – *Ibid.*, 109.

61 – Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 26.

62 – Punter, *Hidden Script*, 10.

63 – Although it is not quite right that the estranged former Surrealist Soupault's book on Blake indicates 'Surrealist sponsorship and the Surrealist point of view', as Anna Balakian claimed, it is true that it 'bore the aura of similarly composed studies on Rimbaud, Lautréamont, the Marquis de Sade, Jarry, and others'; Balakian, 'Literary Fortune of William Blake', 263.

64 – André Breton, *Conversations: The Autobiography of Surrealism* [1952], trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York: Paragon House, 1993), 62–63.

65 – Mabille, 'William Blake', 126.

66 – Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, 99 n. 7; Blake, 'All Religions are One' [c.1788], in *Complete Illuminated Books*, 17–27, at 22; Comte de Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems* [1869 and 1870], trans. Paul Knight (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), 279 (translation modified). Gide wrote: 'L'astre Blake étincelle dans cette reculée région du ciel où brille aussi l'astre Lautréamont'; galerie René Drouin, *William Blake*, 13.

67 – Balakian, 'Literary Fortune of William Blake', 261.

68 – J. G. Ballard, 'The Coming of the Unconscious' [1966], in *User's Guide*, 84–88, at 85; Marcel Jean with Arpad Mezei, *The History of Surrealist Painting* [1959], trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York: Grove, 1960), 97. For the 'beautiful as' passages, see Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems*, 216–17.

69 – Ballard quoted in an interview for the magazine *21.C.* with Nicholas Zurbrugg, 'J.G. Ballard: Empire of the Surreal', *21.C.* Retrieved June 23, 2015 from http://www.jgballard.ca/media/1995_world_art_magazine.html/. See also Lautréamont, *Maldoror* [1869], trans. Guy Wernham (New York: New Directions, 1965).

70 – J. G. Ballard, 'Cry Hope, Cry Fury!' [1967], in *Complete Stories*, 722–34, at 725, 726, 727.

71 – Ballard, *Atrocity Exhibition*, 135.

72 – Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems*, 186.

73 – Roger Luckhurst, *'The Angle Between Two Walls': The Fiction of J.G. Ballard* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 174. In fact, it is not clear that Greenland is referring to Surrealist poets as Luckhurst assumed: '[r]andomness and surprise call into play the associative faculties of the brain, and undiscovered connections spark: the Surrealists' purpose, and Ballard's, precisely. He reproduces their effects, the bizarre juxtapositions which enshrine an enigmatic, irreducible authority'; Colin Greenland, *The*

- Entropy Exhibition: Michael Moorcock and the British 'New Wave' in Science Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 103.
- 74 – Maurice Blanchot, *Lautréamont and Sade* [1949], trans. Stuart Kendall and Michelle Kendall (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 60, 56.
- 75 – André Breton, 'Characteristics of the Modern Evolution and What it Consists Of' [1922–24], in *The Lost Steps* [1924], trans. Mark Polizzotti (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 107–25, at 117, 117–18. Also see Breton, 'Les Chants de Maldoror by the Comte de Lautréamont' [1920], in *Lost Steps*, 47–50.
- 76 – Marcel Jean and Arpad Mezei, *Maldoror* (Paris: du Pavois, 1947), 19.
- 77 – For comparable remarks by his characters about the sea as an 'image' or a 'symbol' of the unconscious, see J. G. Ballard, 'The Reptile Enclosure' [1963], 'A Question of Re-Entry' [1963], 'The Venus Hunters' [1963], and 'Prisoner of the Coral Deep' [1964], all in *Complete Stories*, 426–34, at 430; 435–58, at 437; 480–503, at 491; and 569–73, at 570.
- 78 – 'manifestation [...] volcanique', 'coulée de strophes'; Julian Gracq, 'Lautréamont toujours', in Comte de Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror et œuvres complètes* (Paris: La Jeune Parque, 1947), 7–29, at 15.
- 79 – Blanchot, *Lautréamont and Sade*, 82–83, 56, 71.
- 80 – Breton's remarks take place in the course of his brief riposte to Albert Camus's attack on Lautréamont that had recently appeared in *Cahiers du Sud*: André Breton, 'Yellow Sugar' [1951], in *Free Rein* [1953], trans. Michel Parmentier and Jacqueline d'Amboise (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 244–46, at 245.
- 81 – Blanchot, *Lautréamont and Sade*, 104 (translation slightly modified).
- 82 – *Ibid.*
- 83 – Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems*, 170.
- 84 – Blanchot, *Lautréamont and Sade*, 120.
- 85 – Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems*, 170.
- 86 – Blanchot, *Lautréamont and Sade*, 120.
- 87 – *Ibid.* For an overview of readings of animality 'not reducible to animals' in *Maldoror*, including those of Blanchot and mainly Gaston Bachelard, and the 'bliss of metamorphosis' present on every level of the text, see Eugene Thacker, 'Apophatic Animality: Lautréamont, Bachelard, and the Bliss of Metamorphosis', *Angelaki*, 18, no. 1 (2013): 83–98, at 94, 90.
- 88 – Ballard, *Unlimited Dream Company*, 114. To my knowledge, the only author who has commented on the significance of the elements in *The Unlimited Dream Company*, as 'a sequence of alchemical transformations' in his case (while underplaying any importance of Lautréamont in the *œuvre*), is Stephenson, *Out of the Night and Into the Dream*, 121, 165.
- 89 – Blanchot, *Lautréamont and Sade*, 120.
- 90 – Breton, 'Second Manifesto of Surrealism' [1930], in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 117–87, at 124, 125.
- 91 – Quoted from 1997 in J. G. Ballard, *Quotes*, ed. V. Vale and Marian Wallace (San Francisco: Re/Search, 2004), 292.
- 92 – Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 125.
- 93 – *Ibid.* (translation modified).
- 94 – André Breton, *Mad Love* [1937], trans. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 67. This section of the book first appeared as André Breton, 'Le Château étoilé', *Minotaure*, no. 8 (1936): 25–39. Late in life, as though he were describing geologists or botanists, Ballard wrote: 'I remembered that the Surrealists had made field trips to the Canaries, fascinated by the black volcanic beaches and the extraordinary fauna and flora'; J. G. Ballard, *Miracles of Life* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), 253.
- 95 – Breton, *Mad Love*, 70.
- 96 – *Ibid.*, 73.
- 97 – *Ibid.*, 71, 73 (translation slightly modified).
- 98 – *Ibid.*, 88.
- 99 – *Ibid.*, 76.
- 100 – *Ibid.*, 78.
- 101 – *Ibid.*, 79 (rendering of translation slightly modified).
- 102 – *Ibid.*
- 103 – Breton, 'Interview with Jean Duché' [1946], in *Conversations*, 196–208, at 206.
- 104 – *Ibid.*, 206.
- 105 – Charles Fourier, 'Universal Harmony' [1803], in *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier: Selected Texts on Work, Love & Passionate Attraction*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Beecher and Richard Bienvenu (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), 81–82, at 82.
- 106 – Breton, *Mad Love*, 76.
- 107 – Ballard, *Unlimited Dream Company*, 106.
- 108 – Ballard, *Atrocity Exhibition*, 82, 92. For more on gender and the *Doll* in *The Atrocity Exhibition*, see Luckhurst, 'Angle Between Two Walls', 109–10, 116–17.
- 109 – Ballard, *User's Guide*, 88.
- 110 – Ballard, *Unlimited Dream Company*, 173. For further comparable passages, see 152, 159.
- 111 – *Ibid.*, 152.
- 112 – I do not have space to discuss Bellmer's psychoanalytically informed writings here, which dwell on physical posture as the outcome of unconscious desire; Hans Bellmer, *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious, or The Anatomy of the Image* [2001], trans. Jon Graham (Vermont: Waterbury Centre, 2004), 6–14. Ballard could not possibly have known more than fragments of these, but a comparison of them with his work would be far-reaching. In his postscript to Unica Zürn's *Oracles and Spectacles* (1954), Bellmer wrote: 'the sentence may be compared to a body, which invites us to disarticulate it, in order that its true contents may be recomposed through an endless series of anagrams'; quoted in Therese Lichtenstein, *Behind Closed Doors: The Art of Hans Bellmer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 175. Cf. Jean Baudrillard's tantalizing remark about the opposition, in Ballard's *Crash*, of 'the dispersion of the body as anagram in the order of mutilation' to the 'useful', producing capitalist body; Jean Baudrillard, 'Crash' [1974], in *Simulacra and Simulation* [1981] (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 111–19, at 112.
- 113 – Breton, *Mad Love*, 90.
- 114 – *Ibid.*
- 115 – For more on this and on Ballard's debt to Joseph Campbell, mentioned above, see Gavin Parkinson, 'Surrealist Painting as Science Fiction: Considering J. G. Ballard's "Innate Releasing Mechanism"', in *Surrealism, Science Fiction and Comics*, ed. Gavin Parkinson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 174–93.
- 116 – Max Ernst, *Beyond Painting and Other Writings by the Artist and his Friends* (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1948), 7. For a similar account more avowedly contextualized within Surrealism, see *ibid.*, 24–25. For the source quotation, see Leonardo da Vinci, *Notebooks*, ed. Thereza Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 173–74, 162.
- 117 – Werner Spies, *Max Ernst—Loplop: The Artist's Other Self* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1983), 9–11. For Ernst's appropriation of a male figure from Blake's 1808 illustrations for Robert Blair's poem 'The Grave' (1743) for *La femme 100 têtes*, see Samantha Kavky, 'Authorship and Identity in Max Ernst's *Loplop*', *Art History*, 28, no. 3 (2005): 357–85, at 364.
- 118 – Max Ernst, 'Preface, or Loplop Presents the Bride of the Wind' [1938], trans. Marina Warner, in Leonora Carrington, *The House of Fear, Notes from Down Below*, trans. Kathrine Talbot and Marina Warner (London: Virago, 1989), 25–26.
- 119 – M. E. Warlick, *Max Ernst and Alchemy: A Magician in Search of Myth* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 1–2, 85–86.
- 120 – Quoted in Spies, *Max Ernst—Loplop*, 9.
- 121 – Now a permanent anecdotal feature in the biographical and historical arc of Surrealism, the events have been related many times by historians and the protagonists; Carrington, *The House of Fear*, 14–19, 163–209. Ballard would have read about it in Jean and Mezei, *History of Surrealist Painting*, 291, 300.
- 122 – J. G. Ballard, 'The Day of Forever' [1966], in *Complete Stories*, 669–82, at 674.
- 123 – J. G. Ballard, 'Notes Towards a Nervous Breakdown' [1976], in *Complete Stories*, 849–55, at 850.
- 124 – *Ibid.*, 852.
- 125 – *Ibid.*

126 – Ernst’s text is itself a collage of previous writings and interviews, first published in this form in the catalogue of the artist’s retrospective held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1961, but probably culled by Ballard (from two separate quotations) when it was reprinted in the catalogue of the Ernst exhibition held later the same year at the Tate Gallery (*Max Ernst* (London: Arts Council, 1961), 14). The lines first appeared slightly differently in English in the same text from which was quoted at length above; Ernst, *Beyond Painting*, 10.

127 – Ballard, *Atrocity Exhibition*, 1–2, 15.

128 – André Breton, ‘The Legendary Life of Max Ernst Preceded by a Brief Discussion of the Need for a New Myth’ [1942], in *Surrealism and Painting* [1965], trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 155–65, at 164.

129 – Ballard, *Unlimited Dream Company*, 8.

130 – *Ibid.*, 56.

131 – *Ibid.*, 57.

132 – *Ibid.*, 58.

133 – *Ibid.*, 60.

134 – *Ibid.*, 62.

135 – *Ibid.*, 148.

136 – Peter Webb with Robert Short, *Hans Bellmer* (London: Quartet, 1985), 161.

137 – Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 159, 164.

138 – Ballard, *Unlimited Dream Company*, 155.

139 – Breton, *Free Rein*, 245.

140 – Ballard, *Unlimited Dream Company*, 175.

141 – Blake, *Complete Illuminated Books*, 117.