

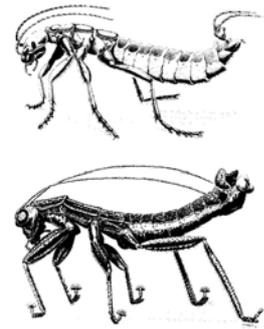
Voices of the Hell Choir

(integral edition)

Contents:

- 1.1 Voices of the Hell-choir (november 2006)
- 1.2 Hell Choir paraphernalia:
 - 1.2.1 Labors of Existence (new year 2007)
 - 1.2.2 Open letter to Guy Girard (1999)
 - 1.2.3 Open letter to Guy Girard appendices:
 - 1.2.3.1 d'une lettre de Guy Girard à Bruno Jacobs du groupe surréaliste de Stockholm (1999)
 - 1.2.3.2 The scream in the Sack (1999)
- 1.3 Communication from the Surrealist group in Stockholm (new year 2004)
 - 1.3.1 Situation of the group
 - 1.3.2 Recent games
 - 1.3.3 The case of JE
 - 1.3.4 Dear friends
 - 1.3.5 The debate over surrealism and politics
 - 1.3.6 Missing persons dept.
 - 1.3.7 A possible opening, a hope of transgressing the political project and an outline of future experimentation
 - 1.3.8 2004 strategy

a communication from the surrealist group in Stockholm



VOICES OF THE HELL CHOIR

Aspects of contemporary surrealist activity, its modes of rhetoric and its ludicism

The history of the postbretonian surrealist movement¹ disenvelops through historical contingencies and particular conditions which are partly common for surrealism on the whole and partly particular for the different cultural/ regional contexts.

It seems like the least common denominator of most contemporary activities is an ongoing playing/ experimentation and critical/ poetological/ methodological/ political discussion. In addition to this, greater or smaller effort is made in a spectrum of other activities, which are still rather fundamental but still more or less optional in each different context. They are * critical positioning visavis contemporary art, literature, science, politics etc * organisational questions/ democracy/ securing information availability/ internal updating, * international contacts/ discussions/ collaborations/ initiatives, * investigating, evoking, evaluating and/or defending surrealist (and pre- and parasurrealist) traditions, * keeping contacts/ collaborating with progressive political and artistic forces on the home ground, * endless walking/ *dérive*/ urban exploration/ mingling with the underground, * keeping each other updated in the fields of everyone's individual creativity, * publications, * public performances, poetry readings, exhibitions, concerts, soirées, etc, * political initiatives, all kinds of sabotage, agitation, leaflet distributing, disturbing or obstructing normal order, detourning the urban environment, etc. The list could be made longer or shorter. Most groups will spend time with a lot of these but not all.

But international communication does not regularly account for all of this, and a lot of it is usually very difficult to discern in groups elsewhere. It's very much channeled through a certain rhetoric, which may seem to dominate the external picture of the group. This rhetoric apparently usually conforms to one of three preponderances; a propagandistic mode, a subjectivistic mode, or an analytical mode. Each of them can be important part of an integrated surrealist project, and each can become more or less sterile when overemphasized or exclusive. It seems like the ludic sphere, and the determination to give the ludic activities their rightful central place, can offer cures for such imbalances or at least the arena for such a cure.

I will discuss these rhetorical modes, and it is important to remember that I am trying to discuss them as objective modes, and not the communicational strategies of specific groups. Each group will be able to draw upon the different modes and employ them for different purposes, typically in different textual genres, but it's quite evident that for each group one rhetoric mode appears to dominate their

¹ "postbretonian" in a temporal sense. But not only temporal, as we will see further on.

output, or at least that part of the output which is internationally available, giving each group a sort of "strategical image" in relation to the other groups. In spite of this objectivity ambition, some critical remarks on specific examples have been grouped under the relevant headings.

Admittedly, these rhetorical modes are all useful in different circumstances, and they also provide a lot of the obvious objective differences between groups. Thus they should not be evaluated in terms of some being legitimate and some not, regardless of whether in order to disregard certain groups as pseudosurrealists or revisionists, or to complacently regret the lack of spontaneous affinity with some. Our solidarity should be solid enough to span over these differences and be able to recognise them among the conditions for communication, but also a continuous topic for any kind of critical discussion between us. Thus, the intention is to pinpoint some of the obvious pitfalls of each mode and some issues that need to be discussed; that is, to provide some input to a multilateral critical discussion on concrete topics within the movement; not to slander or point out anyone specifically, perhaps this time not even to consciously provoke... Unfortunately, in the Stockholm group we have given priority to other things than international communication for many years now (to an extent that at least I deeply regret), but it turned out that only very few were inclined to respond to our international letter of January 2004 at all. Recently, at least two new contacts were surprised that we were still active, having heard the opposite from the French group. So, we haven't had much substantial correspondence with the French for some years, but as far as we know we have been sending each other the usual amount of polite, impersonal, forwarded information and similar, that could be considered the pessimistic baseline of international communication. (The fact that the rumour of our death has been spread by other sources and in other fora too is a partly amusing and partly frustrating but perhaps not too interesting issue.) Several times the idea has been proposed by different groups to collect that kind of general information (with a dose of sifting) into regular reports from each group, and some groups have occasionally tried it as well, but the lack of response (and sometimes the considerable effort of editing it or agreeing on it?) has made this mere occasional outbursts. Then a lot of discussion will go on between individuals who have developed particular bilateral discussions, and a lot of discussion will go on between those who have the time to hang out on internet forums and bomb mailing-lists on a regular basis – a lot of time will certainly be needed, not only to formulate your own ideas and keep defending them against all kinds of misunderstandings, but even more to sift the gems of serious discussion from the piles of mere frustration, ignorance, personal contradictions, personal opinions and other personal expositions. Sometimes ludic invitations and more anecdotal or subjective questionnaires have it easier to produce substantial response, but for a long time we have been feeling that even though such initiatives are generally important to promote, they do also feel a little "loosely hanging" and possibly even having a false ring IF we are not able to discuss critical issues, our fundamental commitments and strategical choices, similarities and differences in these, simultaneously.

The propagandistic mode of surrealism is one of the strongest elements in postbretonian surrealism. It contains hyperradicalism, aggressivity and rash theoretical simplifications. Actually it seems to have borrowed very much of its rhetorics from Vaneigem, whose situationist agitation in itself is little more than a populist-light-surrealism. In reintegrating that part of the situationist arsenal into surrealism along with the other, more interesting parts, we have definitely bought back our own

pig in worse shape. This tendency might have been there in at least some tracts of earlier surrealism too (from 27/1 1925 onwards), but far less before the 60's, far less before Breton's death and before the general leftist upheaval of the late 60's widely disseminated the situationists', Marcuse's and others' simplified or simplifiable theories.

If for a moment we don't refrain from invoking cultural stereotypes this strategy could be considered an americanisation of surrealism, integrating into surrealism elements of the loudmouthed, shallow, un-selfcritical voluntarism typical for the american *stereotype*. But even though several american surrealist groups have been active in employing this rhetorical mode for a long time, it must be noted that: * they are certainly not alone in the world in doing that, * they have also carried the banner of a (necessary but admirable) antiamericanism, and * that from an analytical perspective it would seem highly unsatisfactory to refer to such stereotypes and not look for specific historical explanations.

One such is obviously available, to the extent that the death of Breton did put the surrealist movement in a sort of legitimacy crisis. With Breton as the living embodiment of the heritage, there was never a doubt (at least not internally) who was the carriers of the torch, but without him, there were definitely a lot of different ideas around regarding how to carry on, and who was the more legitimate, the truer to the spirit, etc. In some cases it was a matter of conflict between different alternatives as to how to proceed, in other cases it was more about how to establish a sense of exclusive authenticity without there being anyone around with the authority to entrust you with that. Not unexpectedly this rhetoric is common in new/young groups who are eager to establish their right of speaking in the name of surrealism and claiming its whole heritage in spite of their own lack of experience and "credentials". Aggressivity and "raptured selfconfidence" (as a swedish tract actually proclaimed) is certainly a rational strategy in that context, even where it is also one potentially destructively dominating over other modes in the surrealist activity, and one leading to a number of fatal oversimplifications in the general outlook.

Common flaws intimately intertwined with this rhetoric is of course the general tendency to see things in black and white, including putting a totally unproblematised faith in individual creativity and urge for freedom, in for example eroticism, desire and/or love, and more generally in a given spectrum of valueladen concepts, and a corresponding unproblematised belief in the intelligent design of the conspiracy of all kinds of domination, sometimes even a general depreciation of objective reality as such, and also including the grotesque overevaluation of the revelatory nature of one's own creative and critical work, as well as the identifying of one's own activity/ rhetoric as a sufficient lithmus paper – so that anyone attracted to one's ranting is better than others, while everybody repelled by it thereby proves themselves to be objective enemies of surrealism without any significant contributions or opinions to make. The mechanisms of recuperation are often imagined as a conscious conspiracy of silence and active marginalisation against living surrealism and its revolutionary aspirations. It tends to fuel a practical focus of speaking a lot more *about* surrealism than speaking surrealism, and so *merely defending rather than inventing* surrealism.

So, in this mode there exists an obsession with legitimacy as the "true voice of surrealism" versus everybody else who represent falsaria, and an aggressive self-defence versus all of these. In fact, most inaugural declarations of new surrealist groups starts with (and sometimes spend most of the text with) complaining over the general contemporary misunderstanding of what surrealism is, instead of presenting

what their specific visions/ contributions/ sensibilities might be. This is a bit self-contradictory; of all the things the surrealist project might consist of, the task of correcting misapprehensions of surrealism cannot be considered a CENTRAL issue if the grand revolutionary and creative ambitions are not chimerical.

Art and literature history and criticism (both academic and popular) presents surrealism as if it was a movement and/or style in art and literature. Not surprising, because otherwise they would have no reason to talk about it all, since a surrealist project grasped in its entirety goes way beyond their jurisdiction. If they would grasp it they would be less likely to be content with being historians and critics within art and literature, but even if they were, it would still be the artistic or literary output of surrealism which would be most relevant for them to discuss within their professional field. So what? And then they often do not take a big interest in contemporary surrealist activities, and often deny it in any way they can. But what we do is in no way aimed at getting confirmation and good grades from them, in fact it's only good if we can pursue the core of our activities in peace from the public eye, and only intervene in the public sphere when we choose to do so ourselves from particular strategic angles, without illusions of being fairly represented, isn't it?

Then furthermore, a lot of people present their creative output on the internet, some in local low-brow art events, some in advertising, some in official art. In all these places, some people call their work surrealist without knowing too much of the history or theoretical part of surrealism. For most, the association will be very shallow or arbitrary. A lot of them won't produce works that are of any interest whatsoever for us. Some of them will, more or less independently of how much they actually knew about surrealism.

All these people, employing the term surrealism in the sense that makes it meaningful for their own activity, will often be way off mark and part of objective recuperation – but objective recuperation will work regardless of how we judge single voices. Apart from errors of historical facts (which may not be our task to correct) it will always be only inner criteria that draw the line between relevant and irrelevant conceptions of (comments on, contributions to) surrealism. Anything officially represented in the consensus knowledge of present society is objectively a part of its ideology. In my opinion, the only thing that would make it matter what the marketeers of that ideology say about surrealism is whether it might scare off people that could make substantial contributions to it. And certainly, most people could probably make such contributions under very radicalised circumstances. But probably not at present. We have no interest in followers. In the present, surrealism is factually (and has no particular reason to regret it) a minority endeavour, carried on by those who are interested/energetic enough to have found it and found a way to practice it by inner necessity. To some people, the particular spark of imagination and reenchantment and diehard curiosity towards all kinds of marginal phenomena of objective reality, and/or the desire for revolt against the narrow concepts of rationality, sociality and life on the whole, will be something they recognise in surrealism from their own insatiable thirst; and these persons will probably find this to a larger extent in an academic book of surrealist paintings than in a tract yelling at misunderstandings (exemplifying the notion of the two-way working of recuperation; a ricochet). They will probably not trust the contemporary surrealists of being the foremost fighters for freedom, imagination and love simply on our word for it; they will expect to find it manifested in remarkable works and remarkable investigations.

So why don't we just step down from this struggle over who's a surrealist and who's not. For historical purposes we'll only need a technical definition (like the one

Penelope Rosemont elaborates in her *Surrealist Women*), and for practical contemporary purposes it will suffice for each group to choose with whom it wants to collaborate and with whom not! The only substantial way of establishing surrealism as a presence in its totality in the relevant sectors/ substructures of present society is through the sincereness, energy and intelligence of ones own activities. The only substantial way of establishing oneself within surrealism is by contributing innovation and poetry, sincere critical questions and suggestions. Polemics over legitimacy, over rights to designations, are rather uninteresting even where the causes may be entirely just.

For the sake of comprehensiveness, let's recognise at this point all the merits of polemical aggressivity as well; inherently, it 1) serves to scare off a substantial lot of polite or recuperative interest or pseudointerest (along with some of the serious interest, for sure), 2) serves to potentially radicalise exchanges of ideas and courses of events as mere provocation, and 3) serves to remind of the fundamental radicality of surrealism and the necessity of "absolute divergence" (which of course, must be reinvented in each specific connection and never relied upon as mere safe abstentionism from risktaking), and furthermore 4) can be simply really fun. Not inherently but historically it has also in recent decades been the preferred forum for * assessment of the potential of real insurrections/ dynamical courses of events (very much in the tradition of the situationists), * critical use of (and thus not only traditional allegiance to) the theories of Marx and Freud.

So, of course it's not wrong with a good rant now and then, but let's try to focus a little more on true enemies and a little less on harmless and uninteresting academics, journalists and home artists, and let's not confuse this ranting with the core issues of surrealist activity.

Several groups in their rhetoric instead utilise a subjectivistic mode, work hard to emphasize the poetic aspect of surrealism through suggestion and invocation, through poetic visions, personal mythologies and radical subjectivity, and through more or less mystification. Within this rhetoric there is sometimes a tendency to regard either or both the propagandistic and the analytical efforts as degrading or compromised. There is very little conscious concern about the reader, and instead the heroic ambition of trying to express ones sensibility in its full content at any price.

In a sense the latter is the mechanism of poetic communication. However within this mode it is also often established a notion of the fragility of the poetic, thus regarding the propagandistic and even more the analytical mode not only inadequate but actually dangerous. The individual creativity and the surrealist tradition are cared for like precious gems, evoked and hailed, and exposed mostly in *safe* connections (own, more or less slick, journals and other highbrow, peaceful fora); never questioned, confronted, scrutinised. This type of defensiveness was a major conflict line in that old polemic between the french and the swedish group over "The scream in the sack". The original tract was an attempt at stating the direction of the swedish group in clearest possible terms. Guy Girard responded with sharp criticism and seemed to mean that this attempt was 1) necessarily destined to fail to convey anything of the spirit of surrealism and 2) actually contrary to and dangerous to the ambitions of surrealism. It turned out to be an issue of controversy even within the swedish group; we all agreed for sure that surrealism and poetry in general in a sense is about expressing that which is not yet intelligible, a sort of utopian communication, a way of letting the irreducible speak without compromise. This is one thing. We can never reduce poetry to formulae, and have no ambition of doing so. On the

other hand, simple logic tells us that poetry cannot be IDENTICAL with surrealist activity or surrealism on the whole (neither as a movement nor as a spirit). Real existing surrealism is rather a cluster of activities/attitudes celebrating poetry, cultivating poetry, investigating poetry and confronting poetry in various constellations and with various methodologies.² Anyway, about the real activities of surrealism, it is definitely a matter of choice at any time whether to speak in a suggestive/ invokative, "poetic", more or less mystifying and/or unintelligible way OR an intelligible way. It's possible that a lot of important information gets lost in the concentration of these circumstances into simple sentences, but the majority of the swedish group thought, and still thinks, that it's at least worth a try.

The individual sensibilities and the nonconditional importance given to these by a very general surrealist attitude are often, within this rhetoric, stressed to the point of denying surrealism its current historic particulars, the set of standpoints and themes reached through the historical experience so far. This type of rhetoric appears to be most common in countries where organised surrealism has had a very long presence, and there may be a wide variety of positions more or less derived from surrealism. To prove in this situation that one's own brand of surrealism is the true one could perhaps best be argued through the objective historical organisational/ personal continuity with the bretonian movement and its accumulated plethora of themes, and not with any particular characteristics of the direction of that surrealism? (On the other hand, the close ties with the rest of the international movement is an alternative legitimating factor, but this was clearly more relevant in the 80s before information technology made it easy for any homegrown artist to take part in an international movement...)

A small amount of mystification can be poetically fruitful in creating uncertainty about certain things taken for granted; but any larger amount of mystification is always manipulative, charlatanic and/or selfdeceiving. (It is necessary to keep in mind the distinction between mystification and mystery. There is a very real sense of mystery in the world which it is a fundamental tenet of surrealism to recognise. But not only to recognise, but also to investigate, experiment and play with. The sense of mystery, wherever it is essential, withstands that. It does not require pious carefulness, avoiding all risk-taking and all questioning.) The "poetic" rhetoric, and the attitudes of those who employ it, frequently are overprotective concerning the individual visions so as to not really contribute them to inter-fertilisation, to collective ludicity, collective intelligence, collective critique, instead admiring them from outside as reified exhibition items on pedestals. This protection of the individual imagination as if it was an endangered animal could in a sense be considered contrary to the methodology and spirit of surrealism, in which collectivity, play and experimentation are fundamental.

Nevertheless, this subjectivistic mode is of course also a greenhouse for real poetic discoveries in the subjective sphere, and is capable of conveying a particular coherence and intensity both collectively and individually. Surrealism would be a lot less convincing if it wasn't for the some classic cases of creators having fearlessly cultivated their personal mythologies and imaginary universa; often these have become part of our collective experience.

² Oops, now we're getting into those tricky spheres of semantics where Guy was actually able to snub us effectively when we had said surrealist tradition was a collection of themes, which is obviously wrong, and so we corrected it into saying that it is the spirit uniting these themes.

In fact, the propagandistic and the subjectivistic modes both tend to evoke a kind of *infallibility* of surrealism, though very differently phrased. If in both ways it is important to state that surrealism has the solution to all problems and that there are no problems within surrealism, in the propagandistic mode this may appear like a strategic point of strengthening one's argument by not admitting any weaknesses, in the subjectivistic mode it would be more of explicitly actually putting one's whole faith in the possibility of miraculous solution to everything in this sphere. In a sense this contains the fundamental mechanisms of mystification. As long as one speaks "vaguely", in the sense of ambiguously, prophetically, rich in images and adjectives, mythological markers and bold arrogance/ selfreliance, in a way the solution to all problems will probably lie within this. This is true not only for surrealism but also for astrology and all kinds of religious prophecies. It is only when this is boiled down to less ambiguous sentences that start ruling out things and not only suggesting infinite possibilities that it will be part of a theoretical framework which can actually unambiguously forward our knowledge on our means and of the landscape we are acting in.³

It also makes it a lot easier to agree between groups, whenever communication is reduced to mutual hailing some basic concepts, ranting about some others, allowing everybody to address them as themes in games, polemics and poetry any way they like, never really asking what someone else actually means by them, never asking for clarification, never exposing differences, weaknesses, totally new areas of investigation or even of agreement...

This is one of the most important factors in the evident lack of theoretical progress in surrealism in general after the second world war, and also the failure to rally to any newer more radical movement as Breton proclaimed; since a mutually agreed vague surrealism indeed infinitely contains the solutions to all problems there is no need to look for any new developments or new insights, and since a vague surrealism is *absolutely* radical there can not logically be any movement more radical. Surrealism keeps containing the most radical possibilities in every single field, and all of those who actually try to formulate actual theories or new strategies within specialised fields will always have the disadvantage of being particular and not drawing upon a poetic totality framework, so they can easily be dismissed as sterile academics or activists, and whatever is useful in their theories (if it becomes too evident that there is something at all) can always be claimed to have been present in surrealism all the time anyway. Yes, in a sense it was probably there, quite implicitly and undevelopedly. In the same sense it was probably present in Nostradamus's prophecies as well. In a sense, it's somewhat embarrassing to see how much homage is still payed to authors of classical great theoretical breakthroughs like Freud, Marx and Hegel, occasionally also to Böhme, Dee, Swedenborg, Darwin, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Fourier, Tristan, Kropotkin, Sade etc, while almost no attention at all is the payed to those who scrutinise and forward, synthesise or parallel, their ideas in our own times. A lot of surrealists actually take pride in maintaining their distance to various currents like contemporary hermetism, natural science, feminism, any strand of poststructuralism, cultural studies, queer theory etc, just because these are *not surrealism*. No, obviously they're not, but whoever allows them a serious

³ The philosophically educated reader will find this argument very popperian. The fact that I agree with this fundamental epistemological point of that boring old fart does not mean that I defend other philosophical views of his, and certainly not his political ones.

study might find out that they may have a lot to teach us in spite of that and partly even just because of that.

There is of course a certain danger of blindness in evaluating the analytical mode of rhetoric within a predominantly analytical/ critical/ objectivistic framework such as the present. But the analytical is very much capable of biting its own tail, and a number of difficulties or dangers with it are easy to point out from within.

First of all, the simple fact that this a dominating mode of speech in several fora outside surrealism, and for several participants in surrealism thus prepares the ground for their desertation into for example academia. And like all other established rhetorical modes, it often degrades into a means for itself, into habit and complacency. It may breed the regressive pleasure of being able to "crush" others' positions and initiatives; actually we are surrounded by examples of how the exertion of this critical assault not only is a forum of a certain pathetic selfreassuring sadism but also an excuse never to really consider anything apart from the already known, so typical in many marxist and situationist-inspired intellectuals, as well as in more or less intelligence-aristocratic supposedly apolitical critics of art and literature etc. Also the lust for selfcriticism and critical scrutiny and "updating" of our heritage often connected with this mode may be blinded by superficial fashions and insignificant spectacular phenomena, thus potentially disrupting internal coherence and becoming severely eclecticist.

From psychological, democratical and group-dynamical perspective too strong an emphasis on the critical will inevitably turn out to be psychologically restrictive for a lot of people with insufficient selfconfidence, creating an atmosphere where ever fewer people take initiatives, and those supposedly fragile themes (emotional or poetical) take an ever-decreasing place. Even if surrealism on the whole is non-utilistic and therefore spurns effectivity and rapidity, an overcritical attitude may serve to slow down output to virtually nothing, which is not necessarily bad in itself except for that one of the things thus strangled is external communication and communication within international surrealism.

Even if it can't be properly accounted for in an analytical context, there is of course also a critique of the analytical perspective from the viewpoint of "pure" sensibility and emotion – it may often FEEL like it misses the point.

The groups and individuals that have been stressing the analytical rhetoric, often have been active in countries where surrealism failed to recently establish itself as an organised movement during classic times. The present agents in these countries thus may find it natural to ask themselves how this came about; if there are any particular discrepancy in the conditions visavis other countries. Those questions are very interesting. Potentially they are also quite misleading if they tend to over-emphasize dissimilarities between national cultures in modern capitalist countries, and refer to national characters as explanations. With or without theoretical arguments they may lead to decreasing interest, decreasing communication and decreasing solidarity with other surrealist groups. In the worst case they may even end up in seeing a need to develop separate national surrealisms.

The games of surrealism inherently counter a lot of the restraints and dangers in each of these rhetoric modes. Playing brings about collectivity as such, openness towards intersubjective phenomena, at the same time a recognition and a surpassing of the specific conditions brought in by the individual. At least ideally games provide confrontation with the truly unexpected, with entirely new possibilities, and with a

new intersubjective subjectivity and communication, and thus elements of a new sense of civilisation. All of this is from a methodological perspective. In fact it is also an important experience in the ludic sphere that the results of our games often turn out unfortuitous and predictable. Sometimes it will do little else than create a superficial feeling of solidarity, or confirm the individual's personal directions, or, which is more interesting to note here, reinforce the dominant rhetorical mode of the group, integrating that rhetoric already in the design of the game.

There are polemical games: which merely in a playful way pay homage to our basic concepts or our heroes, or derides/ridicules central concepts of miserabilism or certain classic enemies or politicians etc (examples would be either the typical or just the uninspired rounds of for example Time-Travellers Potlatch, Ouvrez-vous, For/Against, etc, and a lot of uninspired individual contributions to all kinds of games). Such games are, I would say, not surrealist games in a strong sense, in that they do not employ any actual creativity, do not let the unknown play any part, do not create any particular ambiances or any new knowledge.

The way of playing that corresponds to the largest degree with the subjectivistic mode is mythologising games, functioning through gathering any objects or themes and by any ludic means integrating and cultivating them in a poetical or mythological framework, creating as endresults potentially fruitful ambiances, not the least for the purpose of creating a sense of belonging, cohesion and personal meaning. In that, this mode can be referred to as a quasi-religious mode. It tends to partly collectivise the individual emotional response and develop the shared mythology. A lot of these themes, like central concepts (love, desire, marvellous, night etc) and major sources of inspiration (lautreámont, marx, hegel, freud, breton etc) will then confuse the spectators (and some of the participants) by appearing to be analytical concepts and tools, while they are actually filling the function of mere mythological signs.

The reverted mirror image of that mode would be the objectivistic stance connected with the analytical mode of rhetoric. This will take as its starting point any objectively given phenomena (including as a subclass subjective fantasies!), gather and develop these by experimental/aleatory means (including subjective associations), and then collectively interpret them within an analytical framework. The endresult will there typically consist of the new aspects and new possibilities revealed by the specific chance constellations, and so it may be called a quasi-scientific mode. It tends to focus on the poetical-epistemological potentialities, the new knowledge objectively produced by the ludic and intersubjective development of the arbitrary distribution of meaningful elements.

In spite of the different games' firm basis in either mode, they do (more than anything else) still retain the potential of superceding their limitations, merging and producing genuine novelties on either level.

The crisis of legitimacy for postbretonian surrealism remains and does not remain an issue.

In a sense the easiest way to motivate continued surrealist activity is that it is a timeless endeavour. It corresponds with or innermost desires and critiques, and we feel affinities with the surrealist tradition, and so we go on forever whatever happens. In a sense, this is hopefully a part of the driving force for several of us, but note that it is perfectly compatible with for example a Schuster's view of the surrealist movement being objectively dead while the surrealist spirit survives eternally, or on the

other hand with any wellmeaning cultural snob seeing surrealism as a perpetual reminder of the imaginative sources in art and literature.

So, on the other hand, surrealism still claims to be a progressive movement, some kind of a contemporary force, a historical agent, the present face of a specific real historical movement.

Surrealism has definitely developed before. Early 20's surrealism differs from late 20's surrealism differs from middle 30's surrealism etc in themes, in methodology and in strategy. At least from the second world war on, we see that a lot of the development of surrealism takes place partly outside surrealism or in undercurrents of surrealism (but probably before that as well, with for instance Bataille's circle and *Le Grand Jeu*), while an "official surrealism" was actually constructed not only by art and literature historians but actually by the french group themselves, most obviously in choosing to organise the great all-integrating partly-retrospective timeless 1947 exhibition instead of (as another suggestion at the time was) organising a conference for surrealists to develop the movement's direction based on a confrontation and comparison of the very different experiences made during the war. In a sense, surrealism as a unified historical agent died exactly there, where for the first time the forum for coordinating/accumulating surrealist experience chose to develop not the sum and its implications but actually something *else* than the combined individual energies/ experiences, actually thus creating this ghost (or if you will spectacle) of "official surrealism". The major tracts of the late 40's focused on RE-instating timeless themes of anti-colonialist freedom, anti-stalinist freedom, anti-religious freedom, and very consciously did not adress themes or experiences made during the war years (the journals of the same period do contain more than usual of occult-mediumistic themes and display some new artistic themes, but in the spirit of additions rather than developments).

This is NOT to say that the surrealist movement nor the french surrealist group died or reverted at that point. I'm only saying that from 1947 on the surrealist movement was definitely DIVIDED and without a historical focal point. The french group and Breton himself kept up an admirable organisational, creative and critical output and represent the single most important activity center throughout that period, but that is as one group among others, with its specific limitations, rather than a coordination center, focal point or something like that. In a sense, surrealism became "timeless" in 1947 because it became infinitely inclusive, came to consist of the total sum of themes, works and activities that had ever been a part of it, in an indiscriminately accumulative way, instead of moving forward through new discoveries superceding and changing the meaning of the older ones, that is, without historical breaks, without coupure, without aufhebung. So the legitimacy crisis of postbretonian surrealism is actually a problem for the whole postwar period, it was just that the inspiring living presence of Breton made a lot of people unaware of the fact for a few decades until he died.⁴

And what then are the objective advances of surrealism after Breton's death? First of all, I don't know if it's needed or not to point out that the term "advance" is intended as "irreversible development" (and not necessarily "progress for the better", whatever that would mean). Contemporary surrealism in a sense only consists of a very wide spectrum, but for those who have chosen to link up with each other in an

⁴ We were very happy to find this course shift acknowledged and emphasised in Michael Richardson's and Krzysztof Fijalkowski's anthology *Surrealism against the Current*.

organisational/ activist framework (what we like to refer to as a movement) there may still be some themes and some experiences that are shared. Well, we'd probably need nothing less than an international conference to establish that, but my suggestions are:

* A more effective and more explicit network structure, due to two mutually reinforcing factors:

a) Changed communication infrastructure, to which the movement has only partially responded but that partial response is still sufficient to alter our organisational framework, with in several sectors a far more effective networking, new transversal alliances, etc

b) Recognition of the lack of an organisational center and the need to base collaborations on voluntariness and mutual interest, thus creating a non-hierarchical free-association-based structure (and if you will, democratic and anarchic).

* reintegration of "parasurrealist" traditions; most notably the situationist movement and the work of Bataille and his circle, but also Cobra, various groups of Phases and a number of individual artists and writers. However the experiences of several other such efforts remain for the movement to suck up; for example Mass-Observation.

* a hardcore insistence on the ludic as the core of surrealist collectivity and surrealist experience

* a renewed focus on urbanism and walking, partly inspired by the reintegration of situationist psychogeography. (there have been tendencies to forward surrealist focus on rural and natural environments as well, but these have been much more isolated, and usually mere minor parts of more generally focused interests in either geography, biology or so-called "ecological awareness").

* a successive (but still far from fulfilled) re-abandonment of official culture. In a way this was the starting point of surrealism, but rather soon the antagonism softened, and it was for many decades (and sometimes still is) nothing out of the ordinary to have members "double-organised" contributing more or less the same type of the work to the art market, literature market or academia on the one hand and to the surrealist movement on the other hand. Of course this involves partly tricky questions about the nature of work, and about the ability of poetry to function even in coopted settings, where different groups and different individuals will keep assessing the priorities differently. What I'm suggesting here is merely that after Breton's death the pendulum has been on a backstroke, with more new surrealists keeping the distance to official culture than striving for recognition and market shares...

* a recognition/appreciation of the surrealist aspects of popular culture, which of course was partly present for a long time, but first made an irreducible part of the surrealist sphere of interest by the comprehensive investigation and agitation by the Chicago group in the 60s and 70s.

* Music, a sphere made impossible to keep dismissing with a lazy quote of de Chirico's and Breton's (partial) lack of interest, by the number, scope and frenzy of surrealist interventions and investigations in recent decades. These concern the surrealist aspects of popular music (part of the previous point), to a lesser but still significant extent the surrealist inspiration of many 20th century composers, but most of all, the musicking of surrealists themselves including emphasizing the analogies between automatism and musical improvisation, between musical and poetical communication, etc. (Apparently, the partly analogous field of dance remains a minor topic)

* Politics. Most surrealist groups have made some bad experiences in this field and ended up in defending the good old baseline of emphasising the politically

revolutionary aspect of surrealism together with the movement's autonomy visavis all purely political revolutionary organisations, and the freedom to associate with such in a non-sectarian manner to a lesser or greater degree in accordance with one's own assessments of present necessities. A lot of us have also seen the old quarrel between the two classically available alternatives of anarchism and trotskyism as totally fruitless and these alternatives in themselves clearly insufficient or even entirely outdated, and that a non-sectarian revolutionary attitude today must include an openness towards new means of struggle and more recent original theories.

* Critique of the image. Again partly as a result of the reintegration of situationist critique, but also as a part of the general retreat from official culture and a direct response to the present overflow of all kinds of imagery stemming from the commercial sphere but effectively colonising larger part of the mind and the social; several groups (but not all) have been emphasising the need for vigilance and suspiciousness in this area and the futility of merely contributing to this flow as if nothing happened.

Some of these may not be part of the development of surrealism on the whole but belong to only certain cultural contexts, while on the other hand there may be things which I have omitted, either simply not being able to discern them or believing them to be confined to only certain cultural contexts while they are actually better regarded as parts of the development of surrealism on the whole.

Some controversial issues require more international discussion; I did put the critique of the image on the list because it appeared to be a dynamic force that united several points of activity a few years ago, but the discussion appeared to halt prematurely, just like the discussion over religion and notions of sacredness at the same time, which was perhaps even less conclusive but partly recently made topic by Ducornet's initiative of reissuing the 1948 antireligious tract and the subsequent call for new positionings from the Paris group. At the same time, there is a whole field of "anticlerical (or even profane) mysticist" practices paralleling and even tangencing surrealist focus on the imagination which is largely unexplored by the movement. I'm sure there are individuals in the movement who are more oriented than others in this and have suggestions for what currents and writers of recent or contemporary occultism/magic, unorthodox psychoanalysis/ psychology etc that are more worthy of studying than others.

The attitudes towards science remain to be thoroughly discussed. There are two types of questions there. First the fascinating perspective on reality and the immense number of startling discoveries and poetic details made available in, for example, particle dynamics, spacetime theory and the whole of quantum physics, scientific cosmology and astronomy in general, meteorology, systems ecology and microbiology, evolutionary theory and genetics, plate tectonics and geomorphology, quaternary geology and palaeoecology, cladistics and probability theory, cybernetics and general linguistics, etc (as I'm personally able to gather many examples only from the biological and geological fields and not other ones, I'll leave that for some other occasion). All fascinating, but also partly coming into conflict with convictions held dear in the surrealist tradition.

Second the focus on methodology and epistemology. How many remember today that the surrealist watchword *coupure* is actually Bachelard's description of the leap from prejudice to scientific thinking? Actually there is so much to gain in adopting the methodological stance; to design ones projects specifically to be able to give results regardless of ones prejudices, to always ask how things can be known and investigated rather than if they feel true or false, to abandon faith and custom to

be able to identify anything novel, unexpected, counterintuitive etc. In a sense this has always been a part of the core of surrealism, but there is very often a distinct sloppiness in methodology, a tendency to stop halfway and jump to conclusions from there, very often in order to artistically or literarily exploit the investigation and then leave it behind. I'm not saying we should all become scientists (though it would be fun!), simply that there is a lot to gain from straightening up the methodology and pose epistemological questions.

The nature of the traditional allegiance to hegelian philosophy and freudian psychology (despite their continuing relevance!) and the superficial rejection of the whole poststructuralist sphere (despite its many deep flaws!) is something that seems partly shaky and demands a critical discussion in the movement, also being the perhaps most concrete aspect of an the apparent lagging behind in theoretical issues. Antihumanism is actually one of the most radical pillars of modern poetry on the whole, present in surrealist ludic/collective/"mediumistic" practices but very often discussed on only the most shallow of levels or even denied; it remains a critical issue for the surrealists to develop a relevant understanding of specifically in this period. Issues posed by for instance feminism and queer theory, of intergender power relations, microlevel democracy and social domination issues on the whole, have certainly advanced and reshaped the movement during the period, but in these issues the surrealist movement very often seem to be lagging a little bit behind other parts of society, in spite of having some extremely radical perspectives to offer; why it is so certainly demands a discussion. Partly this overlaps with the necessity to refocus on eroticism and its potential and pitfalls in present society where the configuration and role of sexuality is partly much different from in the days of classic surrealism. While we're at it we could also need some fresh perspectives on the role of love.

In all these questions surrealism should have something to say, and possibly a lot of us would be capable of reaching some common understanding of the present necessities. In several of them there appeared to be a broader discussion on its way a few years ago. The difficulties at the time of organising the publication of the international surrealist bulletin seemed to postpone the discussions. (Of course it's possible that the discussion kept on, only we were much out of circulation; in that case, we'd be happy to see the developments!) Anyway, during the years, digital communication has become increasingly available and reliable, so we should be able to carry on a serious discussion more swiftly now, shouldn't we?

*merdarius*⁵

⁵ The text was originally distributed signed by Mattias Forshage, with the enlightening addition: "The text has been thoroughly discussed and largely approved (but not necessarily in its entirety) by the Stockholm surrealist group and also incorporating important comments from Merl Storr of the SLAG group" – but shortly afterwards, *merdarius* surfaced as a public identity for that specific inter-subjectivity.

LABORS OF EXISTENCE

Perspectives of selfdiagnostics of the surrealist group in Stockholm

Still waiting for substantial response to "Voices of the Hell-Choir" to drop in, we take the opportunity to dwell on points tangented by it. Let us now consider the question whether we exist or not.

Let us first of all admit that this is not a very interesting question in itself. The connections where the issue has been raised (a statement by the Chicago group embellished with official representation from Paris <http://www.surrealistmovement-usa.org/pages/news_mini_conference.html>, a Wikipedia article, probably some comments in swedish press which we didn't memorise, apparently rumors spread by the Paris group, some persistent rumors – or rather nagging articles of faith – from some ex-members, plus some internal discussion within the group) will have very different reasons for posing it, and/or different reasons for ignorance, and it must be further specified to produce an interesting discussion. We will use this as a mere pretext for summing up some recent organisational discussions we've had.

Intersubjectivity

Even though few of those posing the question will have a real interest in the ontological level where it is literally posed, that is where we will start.

Does the group as such exist as a distinct, in some sense autonomous, real entity; or is it an abstraction or a mere conglomerate/cluster/organisation of its component parts? Rather than seeking an unambiguous answer to this question we could use it as a starting point to discuss some of the fundamental characteristics of collectivity in a surrealist framework. Now in surrealism we are, to begin with, used to emphasizing synergistic aspects; the collective is more than the sum of the individual contributions, but this is very much a truism. In some senses the collective is obviously also *less* than its individuals, both in some trivial and some frustrating senses. The important thing is to see a qualitative and not merely quantitative difference; the collective is SOMETHING ELSE.

It provides a framework of social and historical continuity, rupture and innovation which give things their objective meaning in spite of subjective intentions. It provides a center of attraction and repulsion which remains a (stirnerian) "creative nothing" and may provide the individuals with a sense of serenity, belonging and sacrifice (in various degrees!), and may circumscribe, scrutinise and fuel our individual fields of actions from the viewpoints of both that which we hold dearest and of specific strategies, traditions and compromises, and specifically put perspective to and challenge those specific abstractions of compromises that constitute our individual personalities, and in the process concretely attack the humanist notions of unitarian, selfsufficiently integrated selfs.

But even more, it seems like the units that act and contribute within the group context can be identified with the partaking human individuals only in a physical and/or fairly trivial sense; in many cases it is far more revealing to see the component parts of the group as its INTERSUBJECTIVITIES. These may be analysed/imagined in terms of between-persons, ghosts, (deleuzian) machines, avatars, games, possessive spirits, behavioral loops, or other categories. In this perspective, it becomes obvious that most of the possibilities in the group setting are not available to the individuals individually, and that a lot of initiatives as well as

obstacles to initiatives will reign "automatically" without individual efforts, drawing on the specific intersubjective constellation, or on the specific mode of organisation, or on the ambiance or atmosphere, or on mere habits. Many functions will go on regardless of who is there to fulfill them, and many functions will appear to be centered mysteriously in thin air between people without anyone obviously contributing to them.

In our group we have a few times tried to analyse who the leading avatars are, in order to FEED those deemed dynamical (mostly those characterised by playfulness, enthusiasm, openminded thoughtfulness, self-surprise etc) and to STARVE those deemed stagnantal (mere sociality, selfsufficient cynicism, individual posturing, bureaucracy etc). As it is often avatars rather than individuals who actually make most of the texts, games and artworks we have sometimes given them personal names, and in that sense it would be fitting to describe our group as consisting of, from time to time (and not listing the merely polemically named), the silent hand, the monkey king (Kung Markatta), the vagrant (Lösdrivaren), merdarius, Diabolik, Sven Situation, the Faeroe Islands surrealist group, the raging Charon, the biographed poet, the pilgrim surrealist, the night group, the irrationality surfer, the charlatans of gravity, and dozens of yet unnamed creatures.

In this connection, it can be noted that the "modes of rhetoric" in "Voices of the Hell-Choir" very well could be conceptualised as such intersubjective forms too. Living their own life, but clearly not independently of conscious individual and collective choices.

Purely organisational

Those who doubt our existence probably don't do so from an ontological perspective, but rather question whether we fulfill their specific requirements for existence as a group. What is needed?

1. individual members
2. an organised form
3. some sense of coherence
4. continuous activity.

Obviously this has to be further specified to really rule out anything. For example, the organisational form may be that of an informal social cluster, the sense of coherence may consist in the organisational form alone or the activity alone, the activity may be continuous without being either regular or frequent.

Now for the international surrealists who doubt us there are probably no difficulties for them to admit the we fulfill criteria 1-3 in a manner similar to themselves. It appears to simply be the case that some groups assume that you don't exist as a surrealist group if they haven't heard from you in a few years. Obviously, the implication of this is that they expect everybody to report to them regularly if they want to count themselves as members of the surrealist movement. This might actually be an involuntary "slip of thought" rather than a conscious act. If we still find it meaningful to point this out as possibly symptomatic for certain groups, it is not in order to reproach them for it, but rather to give us all a chance to acknowledge that this is not the way a non-hierarchical network works.

Organisation of groups lies in the core of surrealist activity. In some places the groups become very longlived (while their membership and themes keep changing over time), in some places the specific organisational forms are more ephemeral and/or chaotic, with outbursts of shortlived organisational initiatives

altering with periods of spontaneous informal activity. Many people stay alone, either based on rationalising some initial bad experiences with collectivity, or for very simple geographical or personal reasons. Groups are expectedly more solid as contact points since they will remain while individuals leave, will often have a larger output, and will see a both formal and substantial need to keep up contacts. On the other hand, in some cases individuals will form more reliable contact points anyway since it will be based on personal friendships.

We who have chosen to link up in a network of organised surrealism are all free to stay in contact with whom we like and cultivate collaborations with whom we like. Others may want to occasionally discuss specific choices there, but there are no obligatory reference points to be cleared by. The Paris and Prague groups have no special STATUS because they are the only ones who can boast an impressive more or less uninterrupted continuity from the 20s or 30s, and the Paris and Chicago groups have no special STATUS because they have at different occasions been the most active forces in international organising. If recognition of such a special status on their own part is possibly mostly an illusion, we suspect it to be more solid in some newcomers who may look up to them as idols (on the other hand, some of us who emerged in the 80s and early 90s may sometimes unnecessarily exaggerate our respectlessness towards them – if this is a mere psychological reaction to earlier such idolising we seem to have get stuck a bit. Then again, it is difficult to find individuals who hold specific such views, mostly it's a mere intersubjectivity mode.)

And then the doubts whether certain groups exist are only due to shortcomings in communication. Organisational attempt at regular official reports have often failed, while spreading responsibility for different channels among participants sometimes works fine.

Then there may be some confusion due to the ambivalence of the designation "surrealist group", necessarily retaining a strict and a wide sense, the former as a specific form in an uninterrupted tradition from the group organised by Breton and friends in the early 20s and in collaboration with other such groups, the latter as any kind of grouping consisting of surrealists or with an activity that could be meaningfully described as surrealist. To draw a sharp line between groups that fulfill the requirements of the narrow sense and the rest, or even to merely work hard to define criteria for the former, will today seem strangely conspiratory or nostalgic or both. We should recognise that given the development of society since the 20s, given different cultural climates and customs, and given the vastly variable intersubjectivities as such, there will be no form universally relevant to the surrealist cause, and it will be up to the different surrealists to assess their possibilities and find an organisational form which suits their circumstances.

Mostly the doubts from ex-members and current members are due to certain assumptions regarding this organisational form. From ex-members this is less interesting and usually reflect either their own failure to impose certain forms when they were active, or their unwillingness to move on from earlier such forms together with the group which brought about their departure, or simply the fact that they don't see what the group is doing when they are not part of it.

(Within the group however the doubt is more of an exaggerated but meaningful polemical tool asking whether shared interpretations of the criteria are actually fulfilled. For example, it has been noted that during periods with more informal activity; when a regular meeting time and place is lacking and so meetings, games and events are organised one at a time, these tend to be subsumed to purely

social concerns, so that you often call specifically those you want to meet and not others, and also that the activities planned have to be *pleasing* for people to want to show up or to accept suggestions. Not only does this limit the scope and ambitions of discussions and experiments, but it also leaves out a number of people who are possibly-members, part-time-members, just less-social-members or less-likable-members, who are simply not regularly invited. If membership is not strict and unambiguous – which will often seem unnecessarily sectarian to impose in those cases where it isn't spontaneously obvious – then there must be a way in which every partaking individual could decide for her/himself the degree of participation, which is most easily done by having a regular time and place for meetings, but of course could be done some other way (regular meetings may get boring now and then too and so risk falling into either bureaucratic or merely social modes...). Especially since we prefer under most circumstances not to impose a lot of democratic formalia but make our decisions by consensus on the spot, it becomes very important who has got the opportunity to participate at these occasions. And every now and then we see the the voluntarist activist ghost, the formalist ghost, and the fear of formalism ghost popping up. The first simply finds the more activities the better regardless of content, and tends to voluntarily or involuntarily impose hierarchies based on "degree of commitment" in almost purely quantitative terms. The second believes in organisational solutions to every problem, and makes sure that a lot of work is done merely to keep up the structures regardless of content. The third tries to escape all such explicit structures, loudly denounces them as formalist and either bohemically trusts inspiration as such or simply rests in the safely unspoken.)

Several people may have a vanguardist perspective, based on voluntarism and/or an either hegelian or fashion-sensitive assessing of "historic necessities". In many such views, surrealism is of course outdated in itself, but in others, surrealist groups may have a real existence, if they fight to be in some sense of contemporary forefront of radicality. This perspective may produce questions that are actually very relevant for us, as long as we keep in mind that there is NO COMMON MEASURE of radicality and certainly no external angle which is a reliable scale!

Publicity

We shouldn't deny that there are some, definitely among the non-surrealist commentators, probably among the ex-surrealists and possibly even among the surrealists, who see frequency of publication as the significant measure of degree of activity. Of course the limited output of our group, and especially an assessment of it lacking relevant facts (which most vantage points do), will provide arguments in favor of our non-existence. In this case, we don't mind not existing at all.

For us, publishing has no intrinsic value. Whenever the public sphere is regarded as more REAL than "real life", as is often the case for young people and careerists working hard to affirm the "society of the spectacle", THEN of course exposure in the public sphere EQUALS "self-realisation". Since we're not interested in self-realisation anyway – seeing that the ADULT mode of self-realisation, anonymity within the conventional family, is more easily attained but equally non-attractive – this doesn't need to concern us.

But as surrealists, we are used to stating that "One publishes in order to find comrades". Surrealist publishing thus always remain a case of "messages in a bottle": eternally scattering messages in the hope that they will somewhere invent their target,

that is, finding someone bold, openminded, depraved and/or desperate enough to respond to the challenge in a way unimagined by us, which may or may not be the same thing as simply bringing in their individual sensibilities to our common causes.

However we must recognise that different strategies of searching for comrades may be relevant and/or effective under different circumstances. Regular surrealist publishing may create an audience for itself of those cultural consumists who demand entertainment out of the ordinary. It always runs the risk of simply fulfilling a function by manifesting a WIDTH to the cultural and intellectual SUPPLY; a spectacular ALTERNATIVE. It may force a surrealist group to work as an editorial board instead of experimenting, playing and thinking. It provides an arena for those among us who start practicing public posturing, eventually get addicted to public exposure and usually depart from surrealist activity (except perhaps in cases where the surrealists are flattered to have celebrities among themselves and allow them extra "freedoms") (Do not misread us here. The Stockholm group has parted ways with a certain number of individuals who became public figures so we MUTUALLY LOST INTEREST. Still, within the group we count for example one professional musician and one professional writer, who simply haven't chosen brand placement over poetic work, and one professional journalist and one professional academic, who just don't confuse their daily work with surrealism...)

We said it before: We don't want to join in with the cultural choir. (Ironically we coined the watchword exactly when we were actually doing exactly that by launching our journal Stora Saltet, the relative success of which eventually disgusted us!). If publishing is in a sense independent of particular ideas as to situation, target group or short-term concrete aims; still making publications is a considerable collective effort which will feel like a meaningful experiment in some situations (with some specific concerns) and not in others.

There are also other arenas for searching for comrades. Of course from a mathematical viewpoint, larger circulation equals a larger probability of chance hits. On the other hand, larger circulation usually also means triviality, blunting compromise, more or less adaptation to standard views and standard means, or their likenesses. Those fora where we speak FREELY usually do not amount to a circulation quantitatively larger than, for example, those we are exposed to in our everyday lives (if fairly extrovert, that is). It would be very good if we would all do some more strategical thinking and strategical experimenting.

Depending on where we assess that there might be specific centers of dynamism in the present situation, we might raise occasions to radicalise courses of events by either producing specific open letters or leaflets, or simply talking to people, or organising games, or suggesting common reading, or behaving erratically, or perhaps just remaining a personal contact within the epicentra of the range of specialised fora which may be part of our field of interest in general terms. Individual surrealists will be present in activist groups, study circles, hobby societies, amateur research groups, professional research groups, artists associations, seances etc based on their personal fields of interest. For us, these fields somehow represent facets of the surrealist spectrum, and they can be so for anyone prepared not to stick to the limitations of specialisation within the field. Now, we are not talking about flattering ourselves with being "spiders in the web" in purely virtual networks of exchanges where people only brag about their wide and excentric circles. We are not talking about superficial "meetings" and potential "cross-fertilisations" which has become an official-artistic and liberal-recuperative project. We are talking about recognising the sense of a common core to these different specialised activities, a common core of

emancipatory quest for the unknown in its intersubjective, creative and nonconformist force, which is poetry. Then, there is no need to teach our bohemian artist friends nuances and sensibility – instead they have a lot to learn from strict methodology and serious collectivity. There is no need to sharpen the analytical accuracy of our activist intellectual friends and contest the details of radical theory with them – instead it will be very interesting when they realise that poetry is something to be invented, not something which is already there as such in every political demonstration NOR in spare-time therapeutic "creative writing". Etc, etc. Simply by being there, we will hopefully facilitate their seduction. A rough surface provides a larger interface than a smooth one.

A surrealist group will appear more or less MYSTERIOUS even to those close to it regardless of whether the group in question is in "occultation", or merely introvert, or tries to be extrovert. This is probably because its coherence springs from being an embodiment of a more or less hidden tradition and a nexus which is the interface of that inherited cause, those inherited methods, those inherited unanswered questions and those inherited experiences made, with the present society we live in and our specific subjective and intersubjective modes. Particularly, being so damned ineffective and focusing on the long term, keeping up a moral discussion on individual behavior, keeping up games and ambitious experiments in a systematic way, and scrutinising everyday phenomena for fragments of convulsory meaning, may seem equally repelling and seductive to a lot of people, hopefully contributing to the dynamics of these people confronting their inner demons in a way we all might benefit from. There appears to be no need to work hard neither to keep the group secret nor to advertise it, it seems to work in much the same way regardless of which. However of course, if the group has a regular public output, it will attract some people who just want to expose themselves, and if the group has no regular public output for a long time it relatively decreases its contact interface.

Then the internet has provided a forum which is admittedly in some ways fundamentally new, particularly in how it eases the increase of QUANTITY of communication, and how it creates channels of no control whatsoever. This is really great for the traditional "message in a bottle" task. We should never forget of course, that the population of internet users, even though global and demographically diverse, retains a strong dominance of semi-adult american males, and that the most active individuals often have corresponding lack of social skills in other fora, and that access is still extremely unequal depending on infrastructural and cultural specifics in large parts of the world. But what the hell. Every channel has its limitations, and the characterisation of the internet population is a mere statistical one, to which everybody encounters substantial exceptions. But as surrealists we are used to looking for the ambient content of places, and the character of the internet AS A PLACE is not a very exciting one with its lack of nuances, lack of mystery, lack of smell and touch, etc. And obviously a very strong internet presence is more or less correlated with not being outdoors, not meeting people, not collaborating with those geographically at hand, not physically interacting. Now general sensual curiosity will reduce that to a personal motivation problem and it won't be further discussed.

At present we do appear to place at least some hope in internet communication. Mere technical obstacles keep us from keeping our webpage updated. Semi-official and personal blogs etc work much smoother. Who knows when we will print something next. The boredom of editorial tasks and the difficulties of distribution made us lose our lust for conventional publishing after we did *Lucifer* in 2000. After that our publications have been strictly underground (which of course has its pitfalls

just like official publicity, not the least of which is its apparent safety). Except for our massive individual contributions to a recent unprincipled artists anthology called *Autistisk Kilskrift*, a very interesting experiment <www.styxforlag.com/autistiskilskrift.html>. To a methodological mind, failure is often much more success. We have no taste for purity and we do occasionally plunge into collaborations we don't know what to expect from. The trial-and-error method is the most universally available for such connections. The disappointments seem inexhaustible, and hopefully there has been some methodological stance allowing conclusions to be drawn.

Obviously, for artists non-predictability, radicality, experimentation, risk-taking and non-prejudicedness is often principled ("absolute") but in practice almost always a more or less deliric openness specifically towards the surrounding market ether and the "opportunities" provided by the agendas of some specific agents bumped into more or less "by chance". We don't mind appearing oldfashioned or rigid in that respect. Even the slowness and thoughtfulness that is preferable with regards to the public sphere usually drives the entrepreneurs and journalists crazy and ruins the "chances" anyway...

Nevertheless, nothing will make us really enthusiastic except that which challenges our ordinary modes of thought. Being unpredictable is certainly not an end itself, but often a good means to some specific end. The unknown does not thrive in voluntary ignorance, but in persistent senses of mystery.

merdarius, new year 2007

Date: Tue, 28 Sep 1999 18:46:47 +0200

OPEN REPLY TO GUY GIRARD

Guy Girard has sent us an ambitious and detailed criticism of our declaration "The Scream In The Sack" (see appendix 1 & 2 below). We would like to emphasize that Guy Girard – except for a couple of minor points – has understood the content and the spirit of it completely and extensively.

To reply to his criticism is therefore most relevant, because it exposes differences within the surrealist movement that we are happy to discuss in a wider context. Our admittedly deficient but nevertheless thought-out declaration, "The Scream In The Sack", has met with predominantly negative reactions within the movement – this pleases us immensely – but now, at last, there is someone who speaks out against us!

Defense of intelligible speech

Surrealism is the imaginary solution of the contradiction between Enlightenment and Romanticism. In the philosophical meaning it is surrealist. From the beginning it has also had scientific ambitions (or pseudo-scientific ones, as it is situated outside all scientific institutions).

More than a few surrealists in the world have acquired an elementary humanistic education at universities or through other ways. They are consequently able to read Marx, Hegel, Freud, Sade, Lautréamont, Herakleitos, Nietzsche, Benjamin, etc. and understand their writings in a reasonable way. This basic knowledge, however, is not available to all. We live in a class society with unevenly distributed educational opportunities and literacy rates.

For sure, surrealism can never become a mass movement or a popular movement. But nor should it ever give up the ambition to intervene in the social struggle that permanently storms everywhere, to influence a larger number of people through its radicalism, its unusual perspectives, its spirit. This is not done through incomprehensibility. Guy's criticism on this point could easily be interpreted as elitist. It is not enchanting enough to speak intelligibly.

That surrealism puts becoming before being is obvious. A fundamental point regarding surrealism is its refusal to reduce what it speaks about to the already familiar, to the easily surveyable and unambiguous. It is therefore not surprising if surrealism sometimes must sound unintelligible. But from there to assert that one never can express a clear and intelligible assertion about surrealism is idiocy.

We regret certain things in our declaration. Remorse is a truly surrealist virtue – one too seldom given its due by too many conceited surrealists. In our group we have always stressed the importance of taking risks. To subject oneself to the possibility of getting lost. Sometimes some have gotten lost so thoroughly that they have stayed lost and not wanted to acknowledge their crazy path; the other of us draw our conclusions with lighter or heavier feet.

Trying to write a short intelligible text about surrealism is such a risk. We know that it is much easier to agree on sweeping, lyric formulations precisely because they do not require any responsibility from us. That is why we have aimed at avoiding the seductive, the suggestive and the passionate.

There is another issue concerning intelligible speech that is more important. Guy doesn't take it up, probably because it puts much more at stake for the whole movement. It is the question of the relationship of the surrealist group to the public sphere. In the beginning of the history of our group were imbued with presumptuous secretiveness and the paranoid feeling of having penetrated all tricks of power. We rejected a priori a public sphere – and a whole population – we were, in fact, lacking knowledge of.

Our overestimation of ourselves has decreased through the years and our desire to communicate has grown. We still consider the public sphere to be a deceitful, hostile and commercial alien who is always ready to exploit us for its own purposes. But we are nevertheless prepared to try the highways, the media and the latest internet connections. The desire to communicate leads us to expose ourselves to the risk of making mistakes even there. As long as we are watchful and serious, we will also be able to find accomplices through such channels. And we believe nevertheless that it is in the interest of surrealism to communicate and to be questioned in broader circles rather than becoming a sacred secret to be kept within a secluded brotherhood.

We deny the contradiction between thought and emotion, between reason and poetry. Often the difference lies in different speeds. Slow reflection breeds kinds of formulations different from enthusiastic frenzy. In a world of faster and faster information and image flows, we shun negligent texts and simple pictures. We demand an abyss of reflection. We can never be slow enough. Nor intelligent enough. That does not mean that one should stop writing. But the writing is conditional,

which is a consequence of that surrealist attitude that is pragmatic and empirical in the midst of all its dialectics.

Defense of the attack on the individual

Guy Girard defends Stirner's and Freud's bourgeois individual subject and claims that it is only on the ground of the individual that the "utopian" can be built. He may be right. We don't know and are not particularly interested. To us, utopia is but a literary genre among others, often especially appealing as it comprises the fantastic and a kind of freedom of thought. But we deny utopia as a political instrument. On that point we agree with Marx.

In our view the individual and the subject are the fundamental myth of our time. We are not content with rejecting "one-dimensional man" – the consumer – but want to get at a deeper illusion. We deny the individual subject as an essence and a fundamental unity. Kantianism sucks. Our loneliness – a vulgar materialist fact – is contradicted by the collective character of our thinking. That is also why we enjoy being wrong. Neither do we consider that a surrealist group is a "freely chosen collectivity". Natural right thinking was already obsolete in the 19th century even if our times' neoliberals still hold on to that idea.

We do not believe in the lonely genius; it is but a signature behind which a wilderness of collective energy is raging. Thus: fight against the subject and everything that looks like it. Related to that is our hatred for charismatic leaders who readily spice their empty texts with dusky metaphors.

Defense of a surrealist scientific mind

Surrealism was from the beginning inspired by both natural and human sciences. A break took place after World War II. When Breton, who for tactical reasons wanted to rally the movement around diffuse manifestations rather than around theoretical discussions or conflicts within surrealism, personally became fond of certain occult phenomena – not the latest fields of science – a certain obscurantism took root, which to a greater or lesser extent, still marks us today. We try to turn away from that, and maintain instead the ambition to carry out a critique and a practice animated by a scientific spirit – without sharing science's stiffened forms.

The self-evident surrealist stand for wildness and passion includes a terrible desire for more reality. We do not want to transform reality (including other people) into base materials for our thought or into object of our desires (as has often been the case with the surrealist view of Woman, for example). We demand that surrealists be permanently being shaken by the sight of the reflected participation of their own deficient persons in the dynamic magnetic field of materia and meaning that allow them to exist.

That is where a scientific attitude is important. We mean that free questioning, systematic investigation, critical inquisitive thought, passionate love for knowledge, in short scientific mind in its fundamental and best form, is superior to any religious or sacred occupation. But we do not want to degenerate to idealism and raise some contradiction between "science" as an idea and the science we see around us today which too often serves the most repulsive interests in an oppressive way. The science that exists is the science that is meaningful to relate to. Long live astrophysics! Long live evolutionary biology, geomorphology, linguistics and meteorology! Death to religion and the charismatic leader!

Short about art

Guy interprets our attitude towards art as a "constriction of the imaginary for the benefit of a shrinkage of critical reason". He possibly aims at our critical attitude regarding the image and its function in society and our subsequent suspicions concerning the surrealist image. We would hardly constrict the imaginary; rather, we would smash the images that stand in its way. The surrealist image is all too often but a hobby, a masturbation, a self-confirming ritual. One may call us the Zwinglians of the surrealist movement – rather than its papists.

Art has its possibilities for freedom and its oppressive mechanisms, both within the market-sensitive contemporary art sphere and within the more traditional, noninstitutional and hobbylike surrealist art sphere. Fruitful exceptions can be found in both spheres. The surrealist art sphere can be much more fun to devote oneself to. But we can neither accept nor understand a contradiction between these two in which the surrealist art sphere would constitute a reserve for the true essence of art and the contemporary art sphere the opposite.

A few semantic issues

Our standpoint on morals and Guy's on ethics is probably only a question of semantics and/or personal preferences. Everybody knows that the collective within surrealism has always been an arena in which to examine consistency or inconsistency, risk taking, consequences of and responsibility for actions.

Guy's criticism of point VI in our declaration is on the other hand totally correct. The surrealist tradition does not consist of themes. Instead, it is a form of a historic continuity of the spirit that links given themes into a kind of totality. We have corrected our text and thank Guy for his remark.

The issue of surrealism in general

One of the deepest surrealist insights is that most dangerous and most criminal in everything human is free thought. What we need to ask ourselves is how that free thought – which works according to that real functioning of thought that we readily want to be able to represent and also actually learn to use for the benefit of mankind! – can express itself in our mad, pluralistic and tolerant time, a time that cuts both ways as signs tend to lose their meaning.

During the from serf to lord self-evidently religious Middle-Ages, atheism was the expression of unrivalled free thought. But today? In the 1910s, it was an unrivalled free action to expose a urinal in an art gallery and call it art. But today?

These and similar issues are what surrealism should devote itself to. The issues of freedom, thought and imagination in relation to history and contemporary times. Instead many of us seem to grasp at any kind of diffuse invocations that can inspire and cheer them up, either "the sacred" or "the magical image". Are we really that depressed? Well, perhaps.

We are tempted to issue a moratorium, a temporary but absolute halt to all nauseating "surrealist poems", those fusty "surrealist pictures", those conformist "surrealist theoretical texts", those always-alike "surrealist journals". Turn off the surrealist TV-set.

This doesn't mean that we aspire to a negative poetry. We do not believe that silence is the best poem or emptiness the best picture. Neither do we think that destruction is the only creative act worthy of the name. We would not be surrealists. Rather, we want to listen more – curiously, ardently and critically – to listen to the new words, to search for the new images and to feel the new movements like a vibration in the asphalt. No more my-desire-like-a-rabbit-in-the-pocket-of-your-onion-that-is-flapping-in-the-moonlight-with-the-scaly-thighs-of-the-marvellous-etc-etc."

Moreover, the distressing lack of the surrealist movement's presence in our epoch is astounding. The feeble attempts at criticism of "post-modernism" for instance that have been glimpsed within the movement, and which for certain are totally legitimate, reveal at the same time a fundamental lack of knowledge and perspective. What would the surrealist critique of the 20s and 30s have been worth had surrealism not stood in the world without screening off against everything and everybody that did not want to call itself surrealism?

It is time to seriously confront the following question: where is the surrealist spirit to be found today? It is up to the international movement to furiously throw itself into the adventure of that question, or else it will look like a philatelic association or anything else, a social network without crime.

September 1999

The Surrealist Group In Stockholm

Aase Berg, Carl-Michael Edenborg, Mattias Forshage, Bruno Jacobs,

Riyota Kasamatsu, Niklas Nenzén, Sebastian Osorio.

Reservations: Kalle Eklund, Maja Lundgren

APPENDIX 1.

D'UNE LETTRE DE GUY GIRARD A BRUNO JACOBS DU GROUPE SURREALISTE DE STOCKHOLM

(6 juillet 1999)

(...)

Cependant, sur le fond même du texte, et sur sa forme je persiste dans ma rude critique. Bien sûr, je ne suis pas en Suède et ne puis mesurer par rapport à quel abîme d'incompréhension vous vous trouvez placés, pourtant je ne pense pas que ce genre de déclaration catégorique – je disais catéchisme, et cela ressemble à des articles fait pour être appris par coeur dans une impensable école de formation surréaliste – soit digne d'intérêt. Car avec un tel texte, à qui parlez-vous, à des poètes inconnus ou à

des épigones? Le surréalisme ne s'apprend pas point par point selon un quelconque code, mais il se reconnaît et l'on se reconnaît dans sa complexité en devenir, et sans doute par le sensible et d'imprévisibles mouvements d'exaltation, d'imagination et de révolte qui font se dire que c'est par là que ça se passe, et que là sont les amis avec qui l'on désire partager et inventer quelque chose d'autre, c'est le surréalisme, une déjà longue histoire certes, et des légendes, qui ont leur force justement parce qu'elles ne peuvent se réduire à cet arrêt sur image/sur idéologie qui me paraît être le plus grave défaut de votre texte.

Ce n'est donc pas une bonne lanterne que vous allumez là. Trop simpliste en effet, au risque de faire fuir les gens véritablement intéressés et intéressants qui, je les imagine selon les surréalistes que je connais, n'auraient surtout pas envie de voir un tel esprit enfermé dans un corps de doctrine écrit apparemment par souci pratique de donner des réponses et non par désir de poser des questions. Et j'avoue que l'idée d'imaginer ce texte publié et diffusé de surcroît sur internet m'agace terriblement: s'imaginer logé à si peu inventive enseigne!

D'autant plus que de çà de là, il y a des points sur lesquels je suis en désaccord. Croyez-vous vraiment que, point I., l'idéologie bourgeoise condamne, méprise (contempt) la pensée humaine et son pouvoir d'invention? Le moindre documentaire TV sur les prestiges de la science par exemple, dira le contraire, au nom justement de cet anthropocentrisme mi-idéaliste, mi-matérialiste qui s'estime être le plus performant rejeton de la «pensée humaine», en cette fin de siècle à Wall Street et partout ailleurs qui lui ressemble.

Point IV. Je dirais «éthique» plutôt que moralisme. Problème de traduction sans doute, mais l'éthique implique une réflexion, une conscience de soi et de ses rapports à l'autre, perfectible; tandis que par morale je n'entend que soumission à des lois, et donc reconnaissance de la légitimité des tribunaux et des polices.

L'égo individualiste: quoiqu'il en paraisse à travers le «moi» aliéné des citoyens consommateurs, la question de l'individu, du moi comme du sujet, de sa formation et de son devenir ne se traite pas ainsi en deux phrases. Que l'on se reporte plutôt à Stirner comme à Freud pour s'interroger tout d'abord ce qui constitue le sujet, son aliénation et sa possible libération au travers de l'enrichissement des rapports avec l'inconscient comme avec une collectivité librement choisie dont en effet l'esquisse peut être celle du groupe surréaliste. En cette époque propice à toutes les psychoses et états «borderline», je pense qu'il faut affirmer que rien d'utopique ne peut se construire qu'à partir de l'Unique, qui me paraît être la négation créatrice de l'homme unidimensionnel.

Un scientisme critique? Si bien sûr un plus large intérêt parmi nous est souhaitable envers le domaine scientifique et ses alentours dits para-sciences, je n'attends rien d'un quelconque scientisme, critique ou non, dans la mesure ou en tant qu'idéologie de la science, le scientisme s'estime seul à détenir les clés de la connaissance, par un usage d'ailleurs aux antipodes d'un véritable projet émancipateur.

Point V.: Désolé, mais les surréalistes se sont beaucoup occupés d'art, et s'en occupent encore beaucoup, puisque – toute critique sur le rôle de l'artiste et de l'art comme marchandise étant toujours à remettre à jour – le domaine de l'art est d'évidence domaine d'invention et de réalisation (symbolique si vous voulez) du sensible. Je parle bien sûr de ce qui de civilisation en civilisation, jusqu'à notre utopie se réalise comme art magique. Ce n'est pas parce que l'art contemporain officiel est l'ignominie que l'on sait, c'est à dire un instrument hélas bien rôdé de censure du sensible et des enjeux libérateurs et poétiques du sensible que nous allons abandonner dans sa totalité l'expression artistique véritablement créatrice à une critique iconoclaste qui développe un refoulement de l'imaginaire au profit d'une hypertrophie de la raison critique, l'échec des situationnistes pouvant à cet égard nous servir de leçon.

Enfin je m'arrête au point VI (car il me manque la dernière page de votre texte!) Attention aux glissades de mots: le surréalisme n'est pas la tradition surréaliste, (laquelle n'a aucun sens s'il n'est précisé qu'elle se fonde sur une série de ruptures) qui n'est pas un répertoire de thèmes maintenant classiques (horreur!) à décliner selon l'humeur ou le programme du jour. Il ne s'agit pas de thèmes (l'amour: un thème!) mais de ce qui oriente la vie, qui fait tenir, réponse formulable ou non, face à l'envie de se flinguer. Et vous en parler, l'air détaché, comme d'une collection de manies intellectuelles, à peine plus conceptuelles que les techniques qu'elles appelleraient inévitablement pour mieux noircir du papier! C'est avant tout cela qui me gêne dans votre long [mot illisible], c'est en apparence – car je ne doute pas que vous l'avez en vous – le manque de passion, la froideur clinique poussée sous le joug de l'agit-prop, à parler si doctrinalement de ce qui nous bouleverse, et qui bouleverse ceux à qui nous choisissons de parler.

Car tu me dis que la rédaction, pendant de longs mois, fut parmi vous l'occasion de débats passionnés, mais pour aboutir à ce compromis apostoliqué. N'y aurait-il plutôt moyen, selon une

écriture plus vivante, d'exposer ce qui fait vivre votre groupe, autrement la puissance poétique de poser des questions, plutôt que la mince certitude de faire se trémousser une charrue idéologique?
(...)

APPENDIX 2.

----- THE SCREAM IN THE SACK

I

We denounce capitalism. Capitalism is a system of exploitation and oppression poisoning the social relationships in every meaning. Bourgeois ideology is polluting the mental climate with its enstupidizing and mendacious image of reality and its contempt for human thought and inventive powers.

II

We reject everything that restrains the full realization of human life. This life is being stolen from us before we learn to know it. We only vaguely discern it through traces of freedom, beauty and excitement. Surrealism is split as it is inspired by split experiences. We want to expand these fragments and place them in a context; more reality. It is also a struggle against the narrow-minded thinking that only pays regards to that which is utilizable in short terms and superficially well-known. This thinking separates us from each other and from imagination. We find glimpses that inspire to action in evil, the incomprehensible, utopian, mad, raving, contradictory, etc, but also in the good, the banal and the worthless.

It is not a question of ranking, but rather to open up for the totality of all possible wishes.

III

Surrealists have devoted themselves to philosophical, political, artistic, moral and scientific preoccupations, but surrealism cannot be reduced to any of these. Surrealism is a tradition which is mediated by people organised in a movement. A movement which has a specific spirit and experience. Throughout its history it has always devoted itself to the poetic phenomenon and its problems, and it has always strived to make poetry something which is to be found everywhere.

The aims of surrealism take shape in its direction of movement. It thinks in a utopian way; it tries to imagine all that is desirable. There is a liberating function in this conjuring and poetic activity: when the established order is criticized, thought acquires life and the habitual modes of thought are thrown over. The desirable demands revolt.

Surrealism always begins with the very experience of life. In the tension between feeling the whole pain of misery and experiencing the marvellous, surrealism subsists in its entire ache. A permanent concern of the movement is to explore, with all means, man with all his creativity, misery and freedom, his social and antisocial inclinations.

Surrealism instigates and plants new mental disturbances.

IV

Surrealism may not be original in its radicalism, its enlightenment or its romanticism. But it has four characteristics that may be unique: its collectivity, its consciousness of tradition, its moralism and its epistemology.

Collectivity, consciousness of tradition and moralism all attack the individualist ego. By placing oneself in a certain connection one disturbs and puts aside the reign of the ego. In that way surrealism is the very opposite of an individualist culture where associations are made only to serve the personal interests of the individuals.

The surrealist community wants to constitute an embryo of a society. This sociality is based on the fact that the combined individual energies can be surpassed and what is more also take genuinely unexpected routes. What the critique against the individualist ego is all about is letting loose the revolutionary creativity and poetry that arises between people, not discipline and schematic solidarity.

Surrealist culture is marked by attention, filled with desire as well as conflicts, on the lines backwards. It is about assimilating experiences from about thirty countries and eight decades of creation, research and activism in the framework of the surrealist movement. And also to continuously discover an ancient tradition of profound spirit of liberation: the "presurrealist" tradition of artists, thinkers, prophets, poets and movements, possessed with imagination and radically romantic. Not the least it is about tracking such a tradition within ones own linguistic and geographical area.

Various stands taken during the history and daily life of surrealism make the collective a moral instance. Not in the way that the group dictates the actions of its members. But group activity offers an opportunity for a basic repudiation of the established order, for greater radicalism and acuteness, through support and criticism; it offers a chance to preserve decency and dignity.

This is particularly difficult and interesting when it comes to the sphere of culture in its narrowest sense. Art, literature, music or criticism are mere expressions among others that some of us devote themselves to – expressions in which we place a great deal of the specifically surrealist hope. However, as a market and a structure this cultural sphere only disseminate a more prestigious variety of the same indifference, the same illusory alternatives and the same publicity for the established order that mass media do. In relation to this individual surrealists of course choose different alternatives of acting. But surrealism itself remains in total opposition to bourgeois culture with its ballyhoo and campaigns, its institutions, its prestige, collegiality and pie-throwings.

On the moral-political level surrealism to a great extent is about restraining daily politics from becoming the only politics. Revolutionary struggle contains much more than the most short-sightedly burning questions, which often lead to propagandism, censorship and social realism. By stressing morality surrealism also constitutes a base of resistance against the moral reaction: against family, against nation, against religion, against puritanism.

The epistemology of surrealism attaches much importance in retaining the ambiguous in opposition to both common sense and common knowledge that strive to make the world unambiguous. In combining dialectical and analogical thinking surrealism sees the most human, playful and lively path to knowledge.

Analogical thinking: interpreting the world and existence through comparisons in line with old mystical patterns. Yet still to do it without metaphysical pledgings; to make oneself available to experiences, systematically explore, only not believe (in god, transcendent realities, the soul etc).

Dialectical thinking: to cultivate a historicizing conflict perspective. We also advocate a critical scientism (or rather pseudo-scientism since it is a question of taking up characteristics of science without partaking in its culture), i.e. experiments, analytical mentality, carefulness in observation and interpretation, matter-of-fact documentation, self-criticism. But all of this together with anti-academism, moralism, poetic sense, activism and a respect for peripheral, enigmatic or accidental ways of knowledge.

V.

(Art has never been a major concern for surrealism, least of all today when art as a sphere is obviously degenerative and devoid of poetical spirit, and furthermore exploits human freedom and creativity. We turn against the institutionalisation of human creation for the benefit of the few, and instead want to put forward the possibility of art forming independent collective research projects. Facing the inflated artist role we react as the man in the street: the stupid, the sterile and the pretentious doesn't get better just because it is called art. The feeling that the world is richer than we see is a concern of everybody, and of art. We would like to be able to describe our standpoint in relation to today's art, but do not succeed in summoning enough interest.)

VI

The surrealist tradition can be regarded as the continuation of a spirit uniting a set of traditional themes: mad love, the strange content of dreams, the glimpses of poetry in everyday life, chance phenomena (meagre ones as well as gracious). Other important areas are automatism, games and experiments, eroticism, drifting.

Can we expect something today from these classical surrealist themes and techniques? Previously for several of us they appeared as magical machines with the power to replace the entire economic, philosophic and esthetic spheres. Today however we take care not to see them as solutions, even though they keep conjuring up unexpected and marvellous things.

VII

We also find it self-evident that surrealist activity today and in Sweden cannot be just anything offered by the tradition. In the same time as we try to problematise our conditions, spontaneously the things we do have a certain direction, that may appear in part original in comparison with other surrealist groupings. Still it's rather different emphasizes and new conclusions from the tradition than with breeches with it. Above all we have a strong inclination towards the concrete and material, the sensuous and documentary. Not the least our eagerness to shun all religiosity and estheticism has made us focus on the materially given. More reality; discovering what there really is in the streets. Searching

details and connections, now in a notoriously systematic way, now intoxicatedly and inspired, now clumsily random, emphasizing the inexhaustability and liberating potential of reality.

The same hope we place in the imaginary images; just because they too are concrete, sensuous and obsessive. But we also want to emphasize that these images are not necessarily visual, which they usually are in surrealist art and writing, but just as well audial, tactile, or in the form of a participation in the matter of objects and even more in the matter or physics of language.

Our aim always to emphasize the materiality and immanence of the poetic has made us put a stress on that cornerstone of the surrealist tradition which is games and drifting, and on the interest in objects and in the city. Furthermore we turn with curiosity to nature and to a base materialism emphasizing the useless and worthless. While the achievements of the surrealist imagination and imagery easily have permitted themselves to be used by official art and literature, and even more by the advertisement industry, we know turn our eyes towards the remains, the totally alien and the useless.

Most concretely this has been manifested in an exploration of the worthless places of the city. But its also connected with the emphasis on more reality in a stress on the human. As an answer to the extension of the personality market, where we are encouraged to design our personalities and lead our lives as business concepts, we find today greater reason than ever to threaten, deceive and harass the ego, expose ourselves in our human contradictoriness, unmanageableness and why not ridiculousity, to expose us to the play of coincidences, the emptiness of laziness, the anxiety of deviation, the imperatives of collectivity, the compulsions of creativity and the aberrations of reality.

The formula will be, first as last, more reality.

(January 1999; left unsigned and published as such in *Lucifer* 2000)

Communication from the surrealist group in Stockholm

(New Year 2004)

Situation of the group

Recent games

The case of JE

Dear friends

The debate over surrealism and politics

Missing persons dept.

A possible opening, a hope of transgressing the political project and an outline of future experimentation

2004 strategy



Giuliano Medici, NN, MF and a painting by JA in the stage adaptation of JAs "Funbo Horror" (dedicated to JE) at "Rights of anger" at Fylkingen, Stockholm 020620

Situation of the group

For some years now, one of the things that has been among our most important conditions is that the number of active group members declined tangibly – some moved abroad, some felt dissatisfied with collective activity, some turned to cultural careers, and one went to prison (Recently however that tide seem to have turned). We felt some nausea about our former publications and the fact that it was still possible for them to play a part as, and be appreciated as, *minor cultural journals*. We felt an even larger urge than usual to wander, both to physically walk instead of sitting in meetings, and to drift and question anything we knew. This came out as a general strategy of *vagrancy*. During this, it became evident that there were some basic pillars forming the necessary minor demands on ourselves on the level of concrete attitudes for a surrealist activity.

1) non-conformism

2) collectivity

3) curiosity

4) care for the poetic phenomenon

It seems like the absence of either of these represent the demarcation line versus all the different varieties of non-surrealism, pseudo-surrealism or just fruitless surrealism that we suspect would lead to dogmatism and stagnation *or* to reconciliation.

Then, on the level of specific activities, we can sum up four practical principles for our activities during the past few years; which cannot be regarded as long-term constants but rather strategic choices guided by shared emotional inclinations or judgements of the specific present situations, that we cannot say when we will move on from:

1) abstentionism from publishing (or more exactly – keeping any publishing activity **underground**: it must be admitted that we during this period have produced a few minor publications)

2) non-sectarianism (notably versus political activist groups and versus the artists meeting point of Fylkingen, up to points where we admittedly have temporarily forgotten the specifically surrealist aspect of surrealist activity)

3) vagrancy (that is physical mobility, restlessness in leaving the static café/pub/restaurant/home/social-center milieus, tendency towards spatial and temporal denivellation, "loose lifestyle", outlawishness, individual economic poverty, etc)

4) a distinct desperation (on the emotional, moral and political levels: the remarkably increased level of repression – of which the violence in Göteborg and the sentences of JE and others are but the most ridiculously open examples, the vanishing social security systems/public solidarity institutions, the so called "war on terrorism" on every level, the lethal farciness of almost every single piece of news, etc; creating a deeper than ever de-solidarisation with this society and impossibility of reconciling with it. This was also the subject of our leaflet on the anniversary of the Göteborg riots.)

Under these circumstances, we shall not try to deny that our creative output is on a rather low level. The collective creativity is entirely limited to scattered and ephemeral outbreaks within organised games. The individual creativity often appears as a personal affair, situated outside group activity and remarkably traditional for

each individual as regards the medium chosen. Then of course, the excessive walking, rational/irrational talking, various experiences of psychic excursions/rarities, and trying to find new forms of activity outside of habit, is a field of collective and individual creativity that it would be regressive or formalistic to deny, but nevertheless one that does *not in any way render unnecessary* or outdated the "traditional" ways of exteriorising/materialising the concrete poetic necessity or poetic vision.

During these years a few examples of notable outbreaks of collective creativity remains: 1 1/2 public surrealist shows at Fylkingen: the surrealist soiree concerning oblivion in September 2000, and the collective stage adaptation of two musical compositions by JA within the "Rights of anger" first anniversary of the Göteborg riots in June 2002 (the latter also including an individual work by JB and Svankmajer's film "Byt" among other things), the three LÖSDRIVAREN issues, the two DIABOLIK issues, and a number of games (which we will account for further on).

Individual works to have surfaced includes various musical pieces and performances by JB, regularly published comics by JA, poems by EKO (and occasionally HB, KE, MF), KE's "Erotic manifesto", a pamphlet on the social democratic conspiracy, and an introduction to the surrealist conception, critique and hopes of *reality* in a live role playing magazine.

And just to remind you, we acknowledge in passing that except for some details (a few unhappy wordings and a few specific questions which perhaps haven't maintained their relevance in the form in which we addressed them) we stay in basic accordance with our groups 90's tracts: The scream in the sack, the Open letter to Guy Girard (anticritique regarding the former), The poetic against the mystic, and Stone, Scissors, Paper; above all in their basic attempt to pursue collectivity, nonconformism and communication at any price.

Recent games

While JE was locked up, we held regular fortnightly meetings in prison. The prison provided just as much poetical data and mythological scenario as any other facility, landscape or urban environment, so we chose to ignore the fact that enclosing should also deprave the general sensibility of the imprisoned subject.

Number four of our poetical fanzine LÖSDRIVAREN (The Vagrant) was devoted to the poetical experience of the division between inside and outside occurring during imprisonment. The "Notes on the mythology of Åby state prison" collected and investigated the different mythological material that was discovered during the meetings in prison. We found out that the basic aspect of Åby was centered around the development of cryogenetical techniques and mummification. The obvious parallel between high-technological freezing and ancient preservation was highlighted with occult signs presenting different means of escaping.

Another game we played was "The phenomenology of the Cell: simultaneous experiment". For a short period – especially during the hour between 0.00 and 1.00 on the 25th of April, but including relevant messages starting with EKO's nightmare just before visiting prison on the 20th (Hitler's birthday) – we decided to try to dream about different states relating to the experiment of the cell. The result was

horrifying: not only did we have very accurate dreams about the cell, but some friends – without being aware of our game – also sent us information of their dreams about the cell.

“Introjected Dream-memories” was yet another game we played in prison. NN read artificial dreams to us that he had collaged from different news and articles. After some hours or days, the participants wrote down the memory of the dreams, thus creating a mnemotechnical fertilization of the artificial dreams.

“Biography for the poet” was a game where the participants very rapidly wrote down a word on a piece of paper and then passed it along to the next participant who wrote another word etc. We used as many papers as there were participants. Out of the resulting poems we created a biography for the fictive author of the poems.

“Messages from nowhere” we learnt from the Chicago anthology “Surrealist subversions” and produced rather rich results.

We also tried the “Old night” game suggested from Britain; trying to find the night at noon. We made a preliminary methodological study where we walked all together, and then a parallel experiment with everybody in different places, and we intend to proceed with trying to find night at dawn.

A game called “A case and a solution” was inspired by Rabelais-reading. In a 90s enquiry we touched upon whether surrealism could be useful or not in contributing to real everyday problems such as constipation, Göran Persson, overpopulation, AIDS, and insurance authorities. We wanted to explore this. In the form of a common discussion (but it might just as well be tried as written internal enquiry) we identified problems we perceived as real problems in everyday life, and produced suggestions for their solutions on three simultaneous levels; 1. logically, abolishing the problem with a mental act; 2. excessively, in the manner of Rabelais; 3. insurrectionally, by producing a *situation* of social dynamism.

A game that we haven't completed yet is our investigations into the intersubjectiveness of the members of the surrealist group (intersubjectiveness in the sense of “objective subjectiveness in-between the individuals”). All participants write down personal questions (for example: what is X's relation to water? Why does X need to make love with his own negation?) Then randomly one person is chosen to answer the questions, but pretending to be another person in the group (which is also randomly decided). The preliminary results have been very interesting, but all answers will then be combined to evoke the subjectivity of the trickster monkey king in our midst, which we haven't carried out yet.

The case of JE

JE is now out of prison.

Dear friends

Recently we have seen and appreciated especially several initiatives from the surrealists of Ioannina, Greece and of Portland, USA. We usually have rather good contacts with british and spanish surrealists. We've also seen signs of good old Chicago alive and kicking, with renewed energy and also with a new relevance to their traditional attitudes. From Prague though we still await the international bulletin which was said to be ready quite a while ago and we all contributed to printing costs, what happened? We were also surprised to see (in the latest S.U.R.R.) a manifesto called "Barrière d'Enfer", not primarily because we perceived it to be a definitive implicit polemic against the direction our group has been travelling for a long time making "More reality!" the foremost surrealist watchword, but even more because we saw in it perhaps the first time active surrealists consciously abandoned the insistence (so dear to Breton) that the two watchwords "We must act"(Goethe) and "We must dream"(Lenin) for us surrealists remain but one, the french of today instead seemingly clinging to a dualistic denunciation of reality which we find not only anti-dialectical but downright anti-surrealist.

The debate over surrealism and politics

During the heat of last summer we dwelled a lot in a confused discussion about surrealism and politics, confused not so much regarding the individual statements which often have been very clear-sighted and non-controversial, but more in our arguing quite beside each other while being able to see a number of separate issues as the central one. This led to parallel "internal campaigns" of politicisation of the group and "surrealisation" of the group which the major proponents of each perceived as opposed to each other though in practice they were not only possible, but as we subsequently found out necessary, to combine.

Let us first recollect what the question of surrealism and politics is and where it has come today.

The question of surrealism and politics has of course been debated at great length over the years, though often at remarkably general, simplicistic or non-contemporary (historic or just outdated) levels of discussion. Often someone has had to step forward and bring some order in what should be obvious: that the revolutionary engagement of surrealism consists of a continous scandalisation of bourgeois civilisation and an invocation of radical freedom, that this leads surrealism to collaborations and alliances with various revolutionary groups, without ever being able to restrict its aims to the purely political, thus keeping all such alliances provisional and tending to keep them non-sectarian.

Beside the mainline, a number of alternative strategies, equally derivable from surrealist standpoints and sensibility – have kept popping up more or less regularly (Navilleist, Eluardist, Artaudist, Dalíist etc) and independant of whatever potential they might have had they have remained parentheses on the collective level largely

because they have implied, in practice, a monstrous faith in individual reason and voluntariness and thus a break with basic collective surrealist solidarity.

On the other hand, let's not try to deny that the mainline and the various alliances and strategical moves made under many circumstances probably are animated more by habit and by bureaucratic concerns than by inner dynamics of the cause and true collective spirit.

The basic problem regarding surrealism and politics is, from the surrealist viewpoint, WHY POLITICS AT ALL, when politics in everybody's experience is the sphere *par preference* of stupid compromises, shortsighted tactics, lies and repressive consent, and that devotion to a political cause seems to imply a basic recognition of the supremacy of instrumental, superficial, compromising concerns over the fundamental, maximalistic, non-conformist, all-encompassing ambitions of a non-restricted radical endeavour like surrealism.

This was a problem for a large number of surrealists during the original politisation of the French group in 1925-30, a problem that many individuals overcame by their solidarity with the common adventure but several regrettably didn't overcome (Artaud of course presenting the most moving explication of this refusal to compromise). Even nowadays it seems that for approximately half of all new people attracted to surrealism this represents a major obstacle.

When our group was founded in the middle-80s, half of the people came from Trotskyism and half from creative interests – for the latter, if perhaps it was surrealist works in written poetry and visual arts that triggered their enthusiasm, then the necessity of collective organisation, social nonconformism, the transformation of life in general, were tasks easily deduced or organically reached, but certain other aspects of shared surrealist culture had to be learned: that surrealists in politics should be communists, that surrealists in music should prefer jazz and blues, that surrealists in drugs should prefer alcohol, etc etc, seemed rather arbitrary choices that were adopted in order to get into the surrealist culture on the whole as it seemed and not at all by any inner necessity or evident cohesion.

However it seems inevitable for many of us to engage in daily struggles of more short-term or thematically restricted kinds, not the least in order to hope and work for their enlargements and their synergistic and chance effects in producing new social relations and change. Even though politics still most often remains a restricted sphere, it does so significantly less if the field of politics isn't limited to the most traditional choices of anarchist activism and Trotskyist sectarianism.

We are sad to see that some comrades even believe that it is still relevant to discuss surrealism's adherence to either anarchism or Trotskyism. Though of course individual surrealists must be free to be politically active/ convinced in either camp, and that it may be perfectly relevant for surrealist groups to collaborate on specific issues with either, or for surrealists to stress whatever specific and historic affinities they might find especially interesting, however it must be stressed that neither anarchism nor Trotskyism has at any time been the political equivalent of surrealism, the objectively given ally of surrealism, nor the political standpoint evidently deducible from surrealism. And even as individual alternatives they are both today clearly sagging; anarchism in its ever inherent simplicism, which seems to imply in every single moment the possibility and even necessity of deducing the right political viewpoint from individual desire and individual reason alone and not at all from given objective circumstances or from any kind of complicated theory, Trotskyism in its narrowminded traditionalism and bureaucracy, its fundamental assumption that

nothing substantial has changed in society the past 70 years and that there remains a large revolutionary communist global workers movement that are merely cheated by stalinist or post-stalinist usurpers of power of its organisations and states.

The notion of an original political line developed from surrealism have often been tempting but rarely got very far. (Perhaps *Contre-Attaque* represent one of the most ambitious attempts so far, and that still didn't get very far politically.)

Still, it is remarkable to what extent situationist politics provide a good suggestion of a surrealist politics. Not only in its uncompromising critique of bureaucracy and self-sacrifice in revolutionary politics, not only in its analysis of the material reality of the symbolic order of power through a generalised system of *non-participating* in spectacle society, but above all in its insistence that all politics take as its starting point the fundamental frustration with present everyday life and its insistence on releasing the emancipatory/ creative powers of subjectivity by an unloosing of the unknown through the construction of situations.

Actually, several people within the surrealist movement have for decades proclaimed the need to see the situationist movement as more or less an internal dissident project; just like the *surréalisme-révolutionnaire*, like Bataille and his circle - not only are the starting points surrealist, the participants close to or recently out of surrealism, but the aims and strategies themselves objectively surrealist. Thus these groupings have made important experiences that perhaps for one reason or another were impossible to arrive at within organised surrealism and then in retrospect have a lot to teach the surrealists. It seems highly relevant to regard the the activity of the Situationist International as to a large degree consisting of the very project of developing autonomous surrealist politics.

It must be recognised too that in the 60's many notions that were far closer to surrealism than the endless pie throwing game of anarchism and trotskyism, were broadly introduced into revolutionary politics, notably of course through the wide diffusion of situationist ideas (or for that part postsituationist or prosituationist) but remarkably heterogenous in origin and scope. Since then, such more or less objectively surrealist ideas have often been present as small-scale reminders, internal critiques etc in the marginals of traditional leftist movements. But at least in the ideas and struggles of the italian autonomous left the critique of everyday life seems to have retained a wider and more central role.

Today, with the globalisation movement and the international diffusion of zapatist, autonomist and post-autonomist influences, in many countries we see the traditional trotskyist and anarchist movement continue fading away at the same time as the "objectively surrealist ideas in politics" have gained a much broader diffusion and influence than ever. The situation in this respect may of course be very different in different countries, but in sweden, beside the eternally backward-minded parliamentarist tacticians and orthodox sect builders (but actually even within their ranks!) the notions of critique of everyday life, social factory, spectacle society, experimental strategies, questioningly wandering, exodus, radical subjectivity, construction of situations etc etc are important guidelines in the whole extraparliamentary left movement. In this sense, we find politics today more surrealist than for several decades.

But, these notions, potentially or superficially surrealist as they may be, are everywhere intertwined with either traditional short-sighted utilistic strategics, violently anti-poetic postmodernist jibbering, ordinary fruitless individualism and dozens of minor brands of more or less bad ideas that may be judged compromising,

conservative and even reactionary concerning matters of the mind, everyday life, and/or morals. The political scene presents (to an even larger and much more important extent than the academic world) a vast arena of eclecticism and confusion where the most radical suggestions always seem to appear alongside with all kinds of banalities, misunderstandings and pure bullshit.

The sphere of political activism is founded in democracy, openness and voluntariness and thus doomed to dwell on the level of the least common denominator, whether that be in action, in the campaigns, demonstrations, interventions, sabotages performed, or in the rational-verbal compromise of analysis/ outlook. It is extremely important to keep in mind that this sphere of activism on the one hand will continue to create actions, methods, slogans and pamphlets that are more or less perfectly surrealist on the objective level, and on the other hand remains fundamentally apart from surrealism in the formers constituting aspect of compromise, its necessary eclecticism, its halt well before the magical invisible dividing line that demarcates surrealist activity in its epistemological break with common sense, its omnipotent poetic criterion, its insatiable creative hunger, its binding insistence on a radical experimental methodology and collectivity, its mental uncompromising. Surrealism can never merge into the activist sphere without mentally extinguishing the surrealist project in its specificity. Several bad experiences have been made.

But still, on a political level the theoretical discourse of so called autonomous marxism has proven to pose interesting problems and perhaps solutions that transgress the simplified positioning between different leftist schools. We have not yet discussed at length the implications that autonomous marxism may have vis a vis surrealist politics, but some theoretical inquiries that we find interesting are:

- the divergence from capitalist social relations taken as the affirmation of a diversity of different ways of being. This accounts in political terms for some of the political implications of surrealism that we have seen in vague, tentative or very general terms, that surrealist activity in itself not only becomes an anti-capitalist practice, but also an intransigent line in the experimentation for the social foundation of another society.

- the possibility of alliances and cooperation with groups or movements that participate in the creating of 'autonomous' spaces, actions or practices, without having to adhere to the traditional pattern of bureaucratic compromises and utilistic tactics.

- the introduction of experimentation (on a social, epistemological and organisational level) in the political sphere, contributing to the development of the communist movement (in the sense of "that which moves in the direction of another society" and expressly not identified with any organisation or similar) as an open-ended process which expands the field of the possible, instead of reducing it to the pre-concieved plan of this or that organisation.

Thus, the focus is shifted away from the traditional view that a forthcoming (and constantly postponed) social revolution will be necessary for the realisation of conditions that may expand the vision of a poetry 'made by all', in favour of a daily subversion that accumulates the "fundamental paradigm shift in all social relations" (in accordance with our old thesis from "Stone, Scissors, Paper"). However, we still do not know what may be acquired by the crossfertilization of surrealism, autonomous marxism and empirical experimentation.

Missing persons dept

Simply for your knowledge, without wanting to make a big issue out of it, we take this opportunity to state the *nature of the detachment* of a few individuals that several of you know and have been in contact with as group representatives or for personal reasons or otherwise.

Bruno Jacobs maintains, as several of you know, his quest for true poetic disturbances and keeps in contact with surrealist comrades without being part of the swedish group.

Aase Berg and Carl-Michael Edenborg, the two people that got absorbed into publicity during the *Stora Saltet* phase and neither wanted to nor could partake in collective surrealist activity afterwards, today appear as each others diametrical opposites in relation to surrealism: AB as an antisurrealist for surrealism and CME as a prosurrealist against surrealism. AB, who always proudly and self-allegedly has been a person of contradictions and theoretical ignorance, has publicly taken stands against her surrealist past because she is now *interested in reality*. While working as the editor of sweden's leading official literary magazine *BLM* she remains one of the very finest surrealist poets in this language and publishes her poems regularly with wide acclamation among the literary critics. CME, in his quest for provocative publicity stunts for his publishing house Vertigo, finally gave in the respect for surrealist collectivity, tradition, morality and action that he had kept even after ceasing to contribute to collective surrealist activity several years ago. His final words was "speaking out" about his past in an entertainment newspaper, summarizing the experience of the surrealist group of the 80's as experimenting with anal sex and extreme lifestyle until one member of the group went insane and he himself had children instead. Still he does sometimes publish books of surrealist interest and likes to refer to the surrealist tradition in his newspaper criticism and his TV appearances as pornographer and pornography expert. This is evidently one of the last phases in his grandiose "suicide of the spirit" that he has pursued for long – initially his cynicism and quest for simplification felt fresh and intellectually challenging but in the long run he has done nothing but provided an example that rhetoric violence, superficial marxism, pornography and coprolaly can be a rather succesful marketing concept. We're sad to say that the only lesson we learnt is what we already knew: the public sphere is contagious in the simplest, most uninteresting sense; and pure recuperation remains the most effective antisurrealist strategy.

A possible opening, a hope of transgressing the political project and an outline of future experimentation

Exodus out of surrealist habits and jargon, café life, manner of discussion, for a multiaspectal communication, richer vagrancy?

Antisecterism also on the theoretical level, versus/between situationism, autonomism, zapatism, empireism, nomadism/schizoanalysis an even post-structuralism generally; adopt and develop experimental and methodological stances (NB qualified experimentalism has nothing to do with simple lack of method, spontanism and trial-and-error, but rather careful experiment design to ascertain what epistemological results are reachable) – should we even refrain from the eternal taking sides over Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Bakunin, Freud, etc? Nevertheless epistemological liberalism is the villain behind a lot of the dilutedness/eclecticism that make all good ideas smell bad in cultural and political contexts! – particularly every ambition to depreciate the revolutionary contributions made by Hegel, Marx and Freud always lead to compromise and snow mash. But if the poststructuralist perspective for instance always represent one step forward and two steps back, we remain interested in what becomes visible in that single step – to steal the new experience back to the arsenal of poetry.

Continuing antisecterism versus experimentalist artists and political activists, but severe critique of activism and art, stressing the fundamental epistemological rupture and the non-utility of the poetic spirit and spiritual noncompromising.

Creation of situations, Nougéan manipulations, slight disturbances, in the urban environment and elsewhere, establish glimpses and vertigo, adventure the reality views of people.

Contribute to and question reality with surrealist games, keep investigating whatever contributions scientific method may bring.

Seduction towards the abysses of the spirit through poetic confusion, finding ways of communicating the unhandlable, the real function of poetry, where and how it can gain instigating and insurrectional qualities.

**The surrealist group in Stockholm
August-December 2003**

**Christian Andersson
John Andersson
Helena Boberg
Johannes Bergmark
Kalle Eklund
Jonas Enander
Mattias Forshage
Tova Gerge
Emma Lundenmark
Riyota Kasamatsu (exile)
Niklas Nenzén
Eva Kristina Olsson
Sebastian Osorio**

Our webpage <www.surrealistgruppen.org> is sometimes updated, and we shortly will add hidden pages for the exclusive use of our friends and comrades all over the world, including our recent publications etc, The addresses will shortly be communicated.

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2004 STRATEGY

The provisional Stockholm Surrealist New Year Squad (CA, JB, JE, MF) had gathered in a pub in Stockholm 031230 in order to develop specific strategies for the year 2004. As it was, this turned out to be performed in the form of the old surrealist game of For... Against..., evidently based upon the french Read...Don't Read game, and perhaps first put in print by Ilmar Laaban in an exhibition catalogue for the Imaginisterna in the 40s.

We scribbled down words in either of two columns, in the usual mode of "passing-scrap-of-papers-around-quickly-enough-for-no-one-to-grasp-connection-and-control"; thus the single words are probably motivated intellectually or emotionally by the individual player who wrote them, but the resulting connections are new, unintentional and the interesting part. The results are edited, deleting some of the connections as far too banal or personal.

FOR hell, AGAINST today
For the dream, against in consequence
For chaos, against manners and customs
For drugs, against loyalty
For order, against the royal guard parade
For unexpected alliances, against history
For Action! Action! Action!, against the king
For food, against the queen
For method, against personality
For history, against mother
For Surrealism, against father
For denivellation, against children
For awakensness, against general nivellation
For being in love, against sex-appeal
For play, against objections
For slimy surprises...

WITH blood, WITHOUT excuses
With the forehead, without clothes
With animals, without basis
With the shadow, without a score
With hands, without humor
With feet, without death
With love, without credit marks
With ourselves, without sounds
With noise, without compromises
With method, without banalities
With order, without press releases
With calm, without fate
With overwhelming emotions, without rhetoric
With exposed weak spots, without afterthought
With the abyss, without perfume
With the weather, without body

SHOW continuation, HIDE writing
Show the wound, hide the purpose
Show exposed weak spots, hide the gaze
Show the true face of the enemy, hide home
Show excrements, hide the beard
Show confusion, hide the wish
Show fairy tales, hide the disease
Show the births, hide the sexual intercourses
Show shaving foam, hide pertinence and cleanliness

REMEMBER the horse, FORGET the day
Remember tradition, forget name
Remember the mistakes, forget personality
Remember the sound, forget the keys
Remember the space in-between, forget the rumour
Remember the rumour, forget geometry
Remember the rain, forget the origin
Remember mycology, forget the future
Remember digestion, forget the current
Remember water, forget taste
Remember lust, forget the intention
Remember laziness, forget absence
Remember the ravens, forget sexual intercourse
Remember the compass, forget street names
Remember contagion, forget the placement
Remember fruits, and remember moss